Globalization and the Political Loyalties of Individuals: Europe in Transition

MIKKO VÄHÄ-SIPILÄ
University of Tampere, Finland

Abstract - This paper deals with certain aspects of how political loyalties in a globalizing Europe are being exposed to pressures for change. The viewpoint is that of a ‘displaced’ individual political actor, and the aim is to locate those socio-political signals that are relevant to the formation process of political loyalties. The central argument is that as the legalistic conception of national citizenship is losing some of its significance, the individual experience of instant political influence becomes important.

Introduction

This paper seeks to shed light on the question of how globalization will affect the political loyalties of individuals in Europe, particularly in the European Union (EU). The analysis will revolve mostly around theoretical problems concerning the legitimacy of traditional parliamentary democracy and the consequent individual reactions, and some concrete examples will be provided. The underlying argument in this paper is that European societies are in the midst of a period of transition: a shift towards a globalized political framework in which the very basis for political legitimization and citizen influence has to be reconceptualized. This transition is not a novel phenomenon, and arguments somewhat similar to those presented in this paper have been made before. What I shall try to provide, however, is a timely analysis of some of the most interesting trends in political loyalties characteristic in Europe today.

1 The author would like to thank Juha Kokkala, Erja Yläjärvi, and Antti Vähä-Sipilä, for their useful comments and linguistic help in the preparation of this paper.
I will approach the research question by observing the most interesting political discourses characterizing contemporary Europe, and analyzing certain socio-political impulses linked to globalization that are relevant from the point of view of political loyalties. Operating mostly on the level of discourse can lead to highly abstract conclusions, therefore I will attempt to draw a coherent picture by bringing in a sufficient amount of practical examples to support the more theoretical discussion.

The immense heterogeneity of European political life makes it difficult to give any exhaustive answers to the problems surrounding the formation process of individual loyalties. Furthermore, when pondering the genesis of political loyalty, it has to be kept in mind that loyalty is not always rational. Instead of trying to provide universal explanations to the research problem, I will concentrate on a limited set of tendencies typical of this period of transition, such as the decay of the concepts of national sovereignty and democracy, the heterogenization of civil societies, the emergence of supranational structures (namely the EU), and the growing importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and movements. At the end of this paper I will place special emphasis on the role of environmental movements in the globalizing Europe.

In the contemporary world, social problems are being redefined as global problems. According to Malcolm Waters, this undermines the sovereignty of the state in three different ways: it redirects individual political preferences, delegitimizes the nation-state as a problem-solver, and creates new international organizations to which some degree of state sovereignty is surrendered. These tendencies are the ones that receive the most attention in this paper.

The level of economic globalization in the EU is higher than anywhere else in the world. Measured by the proportion of direct international investment to the gross domestic revenue, the countries most dependent on the global economy in 1995 were Sweden (37.5 per cent), Belgium (25.5 per cent), Ireland (16.3 per cent) and the Netherlands (15.5 per cent). Indeed, it is most convenient to conceptualize globalization as a trend mostly connected with economic and financial issues, where nation-centricity and controllability are

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gradually losing their importance. However, globalization also includes political, cultural, and environmental aspects.

Economic, political, and cultural globalization can be seen as individual phenomena, as the latter two can only partially be derived from the material aspects of society. But it is difficult to define precisely the particular effects globalization has on politics. Does it have a deterritorializing (or reterritorializing) effect on the institutional dynamics behind the political order, or will it drive political units towards protectionist isolation? And what are the implications for individual political loyalties? Is globalization going to result in growing divergence or convergence? The most useful starting point for the analysis is the traditional cornerstone of the European political system: the nation-state.

The Implications of Globalization on the European Nation-state

During the period of dominance of the nation-state in European politics, political loyalty has come to mean interaction between the state and the individual citizen. Simply put, the relationship between the citizen and the state can be described as an exchange in which the citizen offers the state her/his loyalty and, in return, receives both physical and psychological safety. The physical safety mainly takes the concrete form in the sovereignty of the state, the claim of areal, legal, and economic integrity. Thus, the state protects its citizens, keeps an eye on the fruition of national interests, and produces prosperity. A much more complex process is providing the citizen with a sense of psychological safety. It is based on the collective experiences of the individual’s culture, and realized by the state through its quasi-monopoly of information to produce national narratives from which the individual is able to form a national identity for her/himself. In this way, the state turns itself into an object of legitimate loyalty. The nation-state is, on a very basic level, exclusive. Emphasizing ‘otherness’ in relation to outsiders is the most important fuel of nationalism, and territorial uniformity and integrity play a very important part in maintaining a psychological image of this ‘otherness.’

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4 Ibid., 12.
The set of principles created by the system of nation-states, especially the idea of national sovereignty, has produced a number of national units that claim strong political, cultural, and economic independence in relation to the surrounding world. However, the globalization process is breaking these units as it generates horizontal, cross-national connections between individuals and collectives that support similar kinds of values and interests. Sovereignty is a constructive principle of the modern interstate system. However, as the world enters an age of interdependence, old notions of territoriality and independence lose some of their meaning. National boundaries are becoming increasingly less relevant, as money, ideas, images, and social problems move freely across national borders.

“[I]n conjunction with heightened levels of capital and information mobility, changes in the international financial system, and associated reconfigurations of cultures and identities, the national state is becoming necessarily superseded by local, regional, and transnational forms of governance”, and there is an “apparent incapacity of national states to manage societies in the same manner as they did before the 1970s”. Globalization corrodes the very basis of the state system by blurring the borders between states and profoundly calling into question the legitimacy of their actions and the general relevance of national governance. Deterritorialization and the clouding of political authority relationships along with the general weakening of political power in relation to economics expose political loyalties to changes that can be surprisingly large in scale and fundamental in nature.

But what is the role of the individual amidst all this? To begin, the fundamental change in political loyalties can be illustrated with a simplified figure, the centre of which is the individual as a political actor. A distinction can be made between a traditional and a globalized view on the formation of individual political loyalties:

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5 Väyrynen, Globalisaatio, 140.
Figure 1: The shift from a traditional to a globalized political framework.

The figure attempts to illustrate the nature of the pressure for change caused by the globalization process, which affects the political loyalties of individuals. The left side of the figure describes the traditional legitimation of political authority, built on national sovereignty, where the nation-state has the monopoly on political loyalty. The right side presents a situation that arises when globalization, with its different dimensions, erodes the basis for the authority of the state and forces the individual to reconsider her/his relationship with different political actors.

The figure greatly simplifies the complex process of political loyalty formation, but here it serves the purpose of graphically analyzing the distinct characteristics of the ongoing change. The following sections take a detailed look at what the changing of political loyalties of individuals at a core level is about.

**The Traditional Political Framework**

In the traditional conception of political loyalties, the individual as a political actor is distinctly a citizen; she/he is characterized by national responsibilities such as voting and (for, at least, male citizens) the readiness to defend the national integrity and legal order by putting his own life at stake, if need be. From the point of view of individual
loyalties, citizenship should not be understood solely as a legal concept, because the nationality of an individual is much more than a mere label. It is often a significant part of the social, political, and cultural identities of an individual.

In an era dominated by nation-states, the importance of citizenship as a marker of political loyalty has been extremely pronounced. The dominant discourse of that age (and partly of the present day) has been nationalism, and this is precisely why the individual is described particularly as a citizen in the traditional framework; the individual does not have to question her/his loyalty as the nature of authority relationships is very clear and unidimensional. From this standpoint, political power is strongly personified in national leaders. In this kind of situation, authority can be easily defined, as well as the legitimate channel of influence, namely the ballot box. Political discourses are dominated by narratives that draw a picture of the state as an economic, cultural, and political community in which the citizens are the ones who, in principle, ultimately dictate the policies. This traditional view still prevails strongly in political discourse. It is striking that while the very basis for national parliamentary democracy is being eroded by the globalization process, nation-states are still often being manifested as self-contained, sovereign units.

A brief reference to Max Weber’s classic definition of state serves to illustrate the traditional conception of the inter-state system: “a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory.” The individual is expected to function inside the state structure, following the established forms of representative democracy. As has been noted, globalization exposes these traditional ways to violent pressures for change. Economic globalization questions the ability of states to exercise effective government, and globalized communication does away with the last remains of national information monopolies. And when legal citizenship does not provide individuals with clear answers to the multidimensional problems brought to the agenda by globalized communication, individuals turn to different solutions.

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Loyalties in the Age of Globalization

Theses on the ‘death of the nation-state’ are widely known. However, it is problematic to talk about the disintegration of the loyalty relationship between the individual and the state when an alternative political authority to replace the state has not been found – at least not yet. Despite this, we can specify numerous trends that suggest that the unambiguous loyalty-hegemony of the state is under threat and parts of it have actually already vanished. Tell-tale signs of this can be found by inspecting the growth and disintegration of the European civil society, the spread of NGOs and political movements, the emergence of supranational authorities, as well as the crisis of political legitimacy based on democracy.

Whereas the individual in the framework dominated by nationalistic discourses is a *citizen*, in the globalized framework she/he is, to use Niklas Luhmann’s conception discussed further by Zygmunt Bauman, *displaced*. The individual “cannot be fully subsumed under any of the numerous subsystems which only in their combination constitute the fullness of his life process … that makes him an individual.”

Hence, there appears to exist a kind of disorder of authority in the globalized framework: the nation-state faces numerous competitors in the race for the political loyalty of individuals. These potential objects of loyalty are both institutional and abstract in nature. On the one hand, the role of European states is clouded by the EU; on the other hand, a plethora of political movements and trends claim to be more legitimate and more politically and practically relevant to the individual than the state. With the *de facto* weakening of the power and authority of the nation-state caused by the globalization of political and social problems, the leaning of loyalty on wider value bases instead of mere political entities becomes possible. As a consequence, loyalty relationships are unclear and fluctuating; indeed, the individual in the eye of all this change can truly be called *displaced*.

The shift in loyalties touches mainly those who are politically active, as opposed to those who do not use their vote or otherwise

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participate in political life. In the traditional framework, the level of the individual’s political activity did not have the same kind of importance as it did in the globalized one. National democracy, using its institutional authority, encourages citizens to use traditional, established forms of political action, but in a globalizing Europe, the individual has to make a great effort to obtain the feeling of truly affecting political processes. The feeling of interactivity is of great importance when forming and maintaining political loyalty relationships. The relationship between the citizen and the state is losing credibility in the globalizing world, as the state is increasingly unable to provide for the citizen is asking for. As a result, the illusion of collective participation is also fading.

Loyalty to Europe? Hardly!

According to Manuel Castells, systems of nations are “functionally powerless and institutionally bureaucratized.”\(^{10}\) Recent examples of the inefficiency of supranational structures are the political impotence of the United Nations in the conflicts of Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and Somalia and the failure of the International Monetary Fund to predict or prevent the economic collapse in Indonesia.

But could the European Union possibly be an exception to this rule: a community with both the political ability and the will to act as a legitimate supranational authority that would offer the individual a significant object of political loyalty? The European integration process with its (neo)functionalist bias is an interesting parallel project of globalization. It is unique in the history of politics as an experiment in integrating the economics and political systems of established sovereign actors into a single institutionalized framework. The integration process is very important politically as it, to a large extent, weakens the authority of nation-states and thus jeopardizes their ability to legitimize loyalty relationships with their citizens. It is quite another matter altogether whether the EU can offer a credible alternative for new political loyalties.

The EU is an example of a community built following the guidelines of a liberal legitimation model. Another model of

legitimation, communitarian, is typical of nation-states. Liberal legitimation is achieved by following the principles of a constitutional state: the state must protect the rights of the citizens. The liberal model has as a starting point an autonomic and rational individual, whereas the communitarian model maintains that the individual is a member of some social community, and her/his moral obligations cannot be reduced to an autonomic choice.11

In order to develop a deeper socio-political community, the EU should obtain the legitimation that currently still belongs, for the most part, to the nation-state. However, liberal legitimation brings some problems. The fact that an individual is seen as detached from her/his social relationships may lead to ‘alienation’ and the loss of identity. Even if the EU succeeded in creating a Europe-wide constitutional state system, people are not ready to support and defend a society that is not based on anything other than certain legal arrangements.

Thus, the liberal legitimation that the EU is founded on would not itself be sufficient to move the loyalties of citizens from nation-states to the Union, because the EU only offers a formal relationship between people and the administrative institution.12 But what kind of transformation should the EU experience in order to become a meaningful political community? The only viable alternative may be a deep social change that would necessitate leaving behind the kind of safety achieved by the use and display of weapons, the state-centric model of organization, and the economic principles based on continuous growth. This new paradigm would include redefinition of local democracy, sustainable growth in harmony with nature, decentralized government, and emphasis on the civil society instead of state-centricism.13

In fact, as more and more European countries move towards defence systems based on contract armies, national antagonisms related with defence politics diminish. This eases the transition into a common European defence system, which can be considered one of the many

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12 Ibid., 65-68.
essential preconditions for the formation of a community around the EU that would be the primary object of loyalty for its members. But conscription is still a reality in most European countries, and this is why some thought should be given to the question of whether pro patria mori is a force behind the political loyalties of the individual in contemporary Europe. After all, being prepared to die and kill for one’s country is the most extreme manifestation of national loyalty.

To be prepared to defend one’s country in a violent manner can be based on different motives: for example, the ultimate object of loyalty can be the legal order of the state, or it can be the territorial integrity of the nation. Interestingly, these are both features that are losing their significance due to the globalization process. It can be stated that though the readiness to sacrifice one’s life for one’s country had, at least on a symbolic level, great importance in the golden age of the nation-state, loyalty is now based on different factors: the governmental loyalty relationships of the present are legitimized with democratic procedures; the ethos of democracy remains extremely strong in contemporary Europe. However, due to globalization and some endogenous processes, even democracy does not have the same meaning as it once did.

The Unattainability of Democracy

Simultaneous with the growth of the individual’s ability and potential to perceive her/his aspirations and interests as a political actor, her/his actual possibility of achieving goals related to them via the democratic system seem to be diminishing gradually. There is a blatant contrast between the increasing political awareness of the civil society and the deterioration of the legitimacy of democratic structures.

The actual relevance of parliamentary elections with regard to other channels of political influence can be questioned. The proliferation of non-governmental organizations during the last couple of decades presents a potential power in the mobilization of political forces separate from the government. This undermines the legitimacy of legalist democracy based on vague ideals of national sovereignty.

NGOs have existed for a long time, but “the size, diversity, and international influence of civil society organizations have grown
dramatically during the past five decades.”

The number of international NGOs has multiplied since the 1960s, although it has to be kept in mind that the growing numbers do not necessarily directly imply growing influence. In any case, it is clear that NGOs are now treading the same terrain with the nation-states. Political loyalties can no longer be integrated into a harmonious whole by traditional political citizenship because various kinds of differentiated political groups offer individuals instant experiences of influence and participation, and they respond to citizens’ immediate needs and ambitions better than the conventional democratic structures. Many pieces of work, including the Report of the Commission on Global Governance, suggest that democracy as we know it may have become out-dated:

Many people expect more from democracy. Two minutes in a voting booth every few years does not satisfy their desire for participation. … The widening signs of alienation from the political process call for the reform of governance within societies, for decentralization, for new forms of participation, and for the wider involvement of people than traditional democratic systems have allowed.

“There are … powerful expressions of growing political alienation worldwide, as people observe the state’s incapacity to solve their problems”.

The fact that the political system of the nation-state is gradually losing its significance as the primary object of political loyalty is partially confirmed by the decline in turnout percentages in national parliamentary elections in the EU. In Finland, the turnout has been falling continuously for the last 20 years: from 81.2 per cent in 1979 to 68.7 per cent in 1999. In the United Kingdom, the turnout in 1997 dipped from 75.4 per cent in 1992 to 69.4 per cent, after having stayed over 70 per cent through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Some decreasing turnout percentages can also be detected in, for instance, Germany,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{14} Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighborhood, 32.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 37.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{17} Statistics Finland’s election result service,}<\text{http://www.stat.fi/tk/he/vaalit/vaalit99/index_en.html}>.\]
France, Ireland, and The Netherlands.\textsuperscript{18} There are exceptions: for example, in Spain there are no signs of voting passivity.

Of course, a simple causal relationship cannot be established between the decreasing turnout percentages and the deterioration of parliamentary democracy, but the statistics do offer some hints of present European trends. Other interesting tendencies can be discerned in European politics that cannot always be studied statistically.

For example, the character of European politics is becoming increasingly administrative. There is a distinctive feature in national political discourses in Europe: something that might be called ‘politics without alternatives,’ which is one of the most visible tendencies in national politics caused by the globalization process. National strategies are more and more often explained by political inevitability; governments imply that they merely respond to global signals and there is very little room for alternative policies. Examples of this are the national strategies concerned with unemployment: when faced with high unemployment rates, governments are powerless and incapable of taking any drastic measures in order to improve the situation. It is widely admitted that there is not much the governments can do but to govern effectively and wait for the global tide to change. The problem is that no matter how cunning a national strategy is, in the end it is not enough to act in a national context for the problems are often global in nature. So, what is left for the governments to do is to try to soften the implications of globalization without any hope of really influencing the process itself.

One of the key questions brought to the agenda by globalization is: do national strategies really matter in a world in which politics seems to become increasingly subservient to the dictates of the global agents of the finance world? In such a situation, the individual reaction is understandable: why should anyone be bothered to behave as an active and voting citizen when the most burning problems seem to lie beyond the reach of democratically elected bodies?

At present, markets dominate politics, because political units are underdeveloped and hopelessly old-fashioned with regard to the

\textsuperscript{18} The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, \textit{Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1998 – A Global Report on Political Participation}, \texttt{<http://www.idea.int/turnout/>}.  

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globalizing world. Politics are territorialized and stagnant, whereas markets are deterritorialized and able to adapt to changing situations. In the global arena, politics is the loser.

Does this mean the end of national parliamentary democracy as we know it? There are individual signs of this kind of an outcome, but it is too early to declare the state dead. Despite the fact that public sectors in Europe are being reduced and some of the functions of the state are being shifted to the background, the state still has some significance. But can democracy be saved? Major institutional reforms will have to take place if parliamentary democracy is going to be spared from turning into mere theatre.

The development of information technology is often seen as having the potential to create more legitimate democratic structures – in order to counterbalance the social and political divergence created by the globalization of the very same technologies. However, political passivity and lack of time place obstacles in the way of successful participatory politics. Furthermore, efficient and stable governance requires protection from ‘Gallup democracy’. This is why it is unlikely that democracy can be saved by direct participation alone. Rather, if the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy is seen as worth being revitalized, it would be crucial to increase radically and equalize citizens’ access to information. As globalization dims the role and meaning of national democracy, developing local democracy would be one solution to the problem of increasing citizen influence. But the smaller the administrative entities get, the harder it is to find enough administrative competence, particular expertise, and political activity in order to build efficient and functioning democratic structures.

As has been seen, the revitalization of effective democracy is often regarded as the most important solution to the legitimation crisis of politics in general. However, democracy alone is not an answer to everything. The significance of democratic control in nation-states must not be exaggerated, and the idealization of the capacities of voting democracy has to be avoided.

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19 Väyrynen, *Globalisaatio*, 145.
Changes in the Civil Society: from Sacrifice to Responsibility?

It is worth giving some more thought to the significance of NGOs in the formation of individual political loyalties, for they seem to play a major part in the shift from politics of sacrifice to politics of responsibility. As has been seen, some NGOs are incredibly quick and efficient in mobilizing people for demonstrations and protests. For instance, the civil uproar caused by the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 reflected the growing difficulty of controlling reactions in a civil society. In the United Kingdom, opinion was perhaps the most polarized of all. The British government made great efforts in order to justify the inevitability of the campaign in which it was taking part, and the most popular tabloid papers in the UK supported the war efforts virtually without adopting a critical perspective. Despite all this, British civil society responded with criticism and protest, both from the grassroots level and in academia. Without commenting further on the success of the politics of the British government, it can be noted that this heterogenization of individual attitudes was characteristic of the shift that is taking place in European civil societies. National attitudes can no longer be moulded into a single opinion. The Yugoslavia conflict was not the first example of a situation like this, but it made a particularly strong impact on European political discourses. One especially interesting view of the whole conflict was the mantra reflecting uncertainty and fear, almost like a cry for the world that was no more, that continuously surfaced in British debates and letters to the editor in newspapers: We are one nation, one people, and we must have one will. In situations of crisis, the individual is called for sacrifices, and those who intentionally choose to step away from the front do a disservice to the nation-state and its political authority.

Such discussions most often seem to take place in societies in which the triumphs and/or traumas of past wars are an integral part of the national discourse and identity. In the UK, for example, the experiences of World War II practically constitute the ideological backbone of the ‘national consciousness’, and in such a situation, it is not surprising that the shift from a traditional political framework to a globalized one is painful.

A question of a very basic nature has been posed: “In moving to a post-sovereign politics, might one not shift the focus of political loyalty
and identity from *sacrifice* to *responsibility*? The above discussion on the Yugoslav conflict partially revolved around a very similar thought. In addition to the uproar of civil society being a protest against a ‘dictatorial’ and legalistic authority, it was a manifestation of a kind of universal pacifist discourse. As data communications crosses every geographical and cultural border, it becomes increasingly difficult to shield citizens from the horrors of war. Being aware of the immediate human consequences of violent political decisions confronts the individual with difficult choices. In European societies, especially those with a strong legalistic tradition, the insistence of national political uniformity has remained on discourse level as if somehow built-in, even though the transition to a post-sovereign situation has been going on for a long time in everyday politics. The stagnant opinion and value climate is sure to cause disturbances in societies as different crisis situations and political irritants force individuals to rethink their loyalties and polarize the differences between discursive groups.

The effects of globalization are often disruptive, but they can also be unifying. One indication of this is the noisy arrival of ‘new’ political movements.

**Political Movements as a Reaction to the Cold Logic of Globalization**

“What is new today is that the interdependence of nations is wider and deeper. What are also new are the role of people and the shift of focus from states to people. An aspect of this change is the growth of international civil society.” The legalist tradition proves powerless and static when it comes to responding to new kinds of ethical and value-based problems created by the globalization process. One view is such that in a globalized world, political loyalties stem from value bases and ethical principles.

It has been argued that as global markets create social instability and uncertainty, political agents need a common constructive principle. However, it is not clear what this principle should include. It could, possibly, be about the recognition of universal political and social human

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rights that would soften the negative effects of global economic competition. In general, the ethical dimensions of globalization have not been widely discussed, although economic globalization underlines the need for global ethics. There remains a huge difference between the ideology created by economic globalization and universal moral principles. The global economic and political system could not be much further from an ethical humane welfare democracy that many hold on to as an ideal. That is why it often seems highly unrealistic and irrelevant to speculate on universal ethics and high principles as possible solutions to global problems. But when studied more closely, it can be noted that the emerging European civil society is, to some extent, already characterized by an ethos that could be labelled as ‘global consciousness’.

The label itself is probably somewhat beside the point, as what is being discussed here is not so much a new level of consciousness as much as the shift of discourses from a particularistic level to a more general, even universal one. Individuals have to face global realities and evils that earlier were left outside their realm of experiences. Isolating oneself in a limited circle of zero-sum interests grows more and more difficult as globalizing political and social discourses knit the whole world into a tight ball, sending it on its way to a shared destiny. “[T]here is a worldwide culture in which people respond to global issues and think in terms which are the products of global communication both through the mass media, and in terms of personal interaction. A universal discourse has arisen with multiple interlocutors based in different regions and cultures.”

In practice, this so-called global consciousness mostly takes the concrete form of demands for environmentalism and the universal respect for human rights. Discussions on these subjects nearly always bring up two NGOs, Amnesty International and Greenpeace, whose activities are largely based on taking certain specified maladies into the open in spectacular fashion. This speaks for the fact that in today’s world, ‘global consciousness’ can only be created in a framework constructed by the media.

22 Väyrynen, Globalisaatio, 61.
23 Martin Albrow, introduction to Globalization, Knowledge and Society: Readings from International Sociology, eds. M. Albrow and E. King (London: Sage, 1990), 8; emphasis added.
From the point of view of national political mobilization and territorially restricted governance wider access to information forces governments to face serious challenges. The ‘rationalist’ school of thought would probably disagree, but when social and environmental evils are specified and made public by groups and movements using globalized information networks, it becomes increasingly difficult for an individual to refuse to feel any kind of empathy. In the traditional socio-political framework dominated by restricted media the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ principle was much easier to apply. In general, global information networks produce better-informed individuals. Popular indifference and ignorance are, at least to some extent, slowly replaced by a situation in which people are ‘forced’ to take a stand. Consequently, growing political awareness results in an increased rethinking of loyalties.

“Media images of human suffering have motivated people to express their concern and their solidarity with those in distant places by contributing to relief efforts and by demanding explanations and action from governments.”24 Political movements, especially those opposed to certain effects of globalization, may indeed be the most probable alternative with regard to the birth of new political loyalties. Globalization can be understood as a ‘liberal political project’.25 The process is in harmony with market liberalism because it both deepens and widens the field of business activities. But as global neoliberalism increases social inequality, there is a cross-national civil society emerging to resist this kind of development. Groups and movements separate from governmental structures have shown themselves capable of opposing certain ‘unwanted’ effects of globalization. For instance, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) negotiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries since 1995 was seriously criticized and challenged by a variety of environmental, trade unionist, human rights, and developmental groups and movements on the grounds that the liberalizing effects of the agreement would shift power from citizens to multinational businesses. The negotiation process was interrupted as a result of the opposition.

24 Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighborhood, 31.
25 Väyrynen, Globalisaatio, 138.
The Case of the Green Movement

Many observers seem to approach the environmental movement through the ‘utopian’ views that the movement maintains, and that is why the concrete effects of the green phenomenon on a society are often left unnoticed. In this section, I would like to place emphasis on the practical significance of the green political movement. It is popular to label the movement as marginal or even irrational. However, the classic liberal view on individuals as rational, self-seeking political actors is not sufficient; one cannot detach an individual from her/his social environment and value bases. Obviously, the green movement has not grown out of altruism either. Instead, there are different motives for action – some selfish and some not: concern about global warming, anti-capitalism, redistributive demands, ethical arguments (animal rights, anti-consumptionism), critiques of globalization, and so on. The movement was partially born as a counter-reaction to globalization, and its basic principles take as a starting point the well being of the whole planet instead of narrow, particular interests. Whereas in the 1980s, according to Artur Meier, the contradiction between the world peace movement and the multinational military-industrial complex was the central social conflict on the global level, in the 1990s the adversaries in the most significant global social conflict were multinational corporations and the environmental movement.

The ecological movements born during the last two decades are manifestations of trends of thought based on a combination of pragmatic thinking and ethical values. From the point of view of the experience of collective participation that acts as the basis of loyalty relationships, particularly the green movement is a factor that could unite people not only on the level of a faceless institutionalized framework, but also on a practical one. Thinking green requires corresponding actions on the level of everyday life; this is why the ecological ideology can touch people deeply when we consider the matter from the perspective of individual experience. As with ideologies dependent on morality and ethics, the ecological ideology is also pronounced in its globality.

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The striving for effectiveness and pragmatism are emphasized in the practical activity of the environmental movement. This issue-oriented attitude “has given environmentalism an edge over traditional politics: people feel that they can make a difference right now and here, without mediation or delay. There is no distinction between means and goals.”27

As it was noted earlier, in the globalized political framework it is the individual experience of instant political influence that becomes important. The environmentalist movement provides precisely these experiences, and this is why it offers a serious challenge to traditional political loyalty relationships.

The solution suggested by the ecological movement to the problematic environmental and social side effects of uncontrolled globalized market forces is most often the development of local and participatory democracy. The ideological roots of the movement are partially close to the theories of anarchism, and attempts to renew radically the dominant institutionalized administrative structures are characteristic of it. Despite the visibility of the extra-parliamentary activities of the green movement, its relevance in party politics is also considerable. “When it comes to changes in the heavier structures, the State formation itself, it goes without saying that this can only be done by using central political machinery, possibly through parliaments and political parties” as “individual capacity is almost nil”.28 Attempting to control and contain the globalization process is one of the most important themes in the program of the organized party-political wing of the environmental movement. In a pamphlet of the Green Group in the European Parliament, globalization is named as a threat to both protection of the environment and the whole concept of the welfare society. As a result of globalization – according to the Greens – power has escaped democratically elected political bodies and found a new home in the hands of the market forces, and the Greens are opposed to this kind of development.29

27 Castells, The Information Age, 130.
European environmentalist parties have been the political success story of the 1990s: at the moment, environmentalist parties are in the government in Germany, France and Finland, and the Greens are the fourth largest group in the European Parliament. The emergence of the green alternative on the political map seems to have helped national democracy reclaim part of the legitimacy it once had, as the ‘dynamic ethicality’ represented by environmentalist parties partially fills the value vacuum brought along by the post-sovereign era.

The green movement has, to some extent, been assimilated into the established power structures, and at the same time, its stances have also become more moderate. Hence, especially in relation to the forming of the political loyalties of the young generation, it is more relevant to inspect what is taking place around the radical manifestations of the environmentalist movement. Radical European environmentalism has not been a marginal social phenomenon for some years now; discussions on, for instance, animal rights have moved into the public arena. What is characteristic of the situation, however, is the charged polarization between the radical reaction and the conservative one. In some societies, a dialogue between the authorities and the environmental activists has been established, but the movement still partially operates outside the institutionalized society. In the globalized political framework, the inclusion into society of movements questioning the established power and economic structures is very difficult, because their scope of action and principles are not in any way tied to administrative or geographic entities.

The political triumph of the green movement is not inevitable. Its strong ideological image is perceived as threatening, and distrust manifests itself as counterradicalism among the authorities, politicians, and even ordinary citizens. The neo-conservative reaction rising among young people can be seen as a reaction to the set of values represented by the leftist and partially anarchist green movement. A situation like this leads to a notable polarization of political loyalties at a young age.

The green movement differs from many other rising forms of group culture in that the notions unifying it include a common set of values and possibly the most important factor of all: political activity. This activity takes place largely outside parliamentary democracy, at the grass-roots level. However, this does not diminish its significance, as the
individual’s most important political choices may not be made in a voting booth anymore but, for instance, at the food department of a supermarket. In a globalizing world, the most important way an individual defines her/himself politically is not necessarily as a *voter* but as a *consumer*. Examples of the collective power of consumers are numerous boycotts that have forced massive corporations to reconsider the bases for their actions. The best-known example is probably the boycott launched in 1995 against Shell Oil for reasons related to human rights. The potential for new political movements to create new patterns of mass-consumption and production must not be underestimated. For example, vegetarianism may – in the long run – pose threats to the conventional methods of meat production (although this may seem highly unlikely when considered from the traditional ‘meatist’ point of view), and hence this nutritional/ethical trend may also have practical and potentially far-reaching economic policy dimensions.

In general, it can be stated that different socio-political movements, with a special emphasis on the green movement, are in key positions in the process of forming new political loyalties. Globalization dissolves the areal basis of traditional authorities, and loyalty relationships become more abstract than before. We move from a legal basis to an intricate situation coloured by differing conceptions and values, where the political loyalties of individuals are founded on the basis of experiences of legitimacy and practical political influence.

**Conclusions: Political Loyalties in a State of Flux**

The disconnecting of political activity from its areal basis and established structures is one of the most significant implications of globalization. The dominance of the global economy over parliamentary decision-making and the lack of efficient supranational structures result in a situation where politically active individuals are forced to reconsider their loyalties; the individual experience of legitimacy becomes more important than traditional legality based on monolithic institutional arrangements. This means growing divergence in the field of individual political loyalties.

As has been seen, questions of democracy hold a central place in the study of political loyalties. Nation-states have long been the unchallenged arenas for democratic action, but now the
detrimentalizing/reterritorializing logic of globalization poses threats to national systems. Traditionally, the state has been seen as the only legitimate areal base for political action and conflict, and the system of nation-states has been the constitutive part of the ‘politics of place.’ But when challenged by the globalization process, those concerned with the fate of democracy are forced to search for new solutions, and as a result, a step away from areal politics may take place. However, “[w]ithout the politics of place, social and political life looks messy and uncertain.”

Therefore it is unlikely that major democratizing reforms can be carried out without accepting a certain amount of uncertainty – and even chaos – as a part of the globalized society. In the globalized political framework, an open society cannot function unless there is a shift away from the ideal of total control.

The significance of individual political activity is more pronounced today than it was in the traditional political framework. As experiences of political influence cannot be achieved via the established institutional structures alone, globalization forces the individual to face a choice between passivism and radicalism with regard to each separate political question that she/he comes across. The level of the individual’s practical and emotional identification to the issue in question often defines the threshold for political action. Consequently, it is quite problematic to talk about political loyalties as if they were unidimensional or unchanging. Rather, in the globalized framework, the political loyalties of individuals are in a state of flux; with the fading of legalist democracy, there seems to be no definite point of reference that would provide individuals with an uncontested object of loyalty. Political loyalties are temporary, unclear, changing, and overlapping with each other.

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30 Low, “Representation,” 257.