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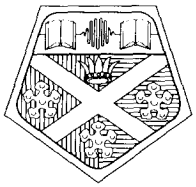

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

GREEN BLUES:

The Rise and Decline of the British Green Party

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GREEN BLUES

The Rise and Decline of the British Green Party

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Introduction[1]

For most of its existence spanning twenty years, the British Green Party[2] has been singularly ineffectual electorally, never attracting more than 1-2% of the vote. But for a few brief months in 1989-1990, that changed dramatically, with the Party receiving 14.9% of the vote in the 1989 European Elections. By 1992, however, the Party's poll standing had been reduced to its earlier position. It did poorly in the General Election of April 1992, polling only an average of 1.3% in the constituencies it contested (0.5% of the national vote), confirming its return to the political wilderness that it had occupied before 1989. Much the same story is told in terms of Green Party membership. Starting at about the same time as the upturn in the opinion polls, membership numbers started to climb reaching a peak of 18,500 in July 1990. Since then, the number of members has declined steadily. By the summer of 1993, membership had fallen back to the level of 1985, just below 5,000.

The Green Party's sudden emergence to prominence followed by its speedy decline conjures up the image of a 'flash party'. This term was first introduced into the literature by Philip E. Converse and George Dupeux (1962) in their analysis of post-war French politics. They argued that such parties 'represent spasms of political excitement in unusually hard times on the part of citizens whose year-in, year-out involvement in political affairs is abnormally weak' (Converse and Dupeux 1962, p. 2). Flash parties were usually right-wing parties set up by charismatic leaders who exploited emerging new political issues and were supported by lower class voters with low educational achievements, low general political interest and low attachment to established parties.

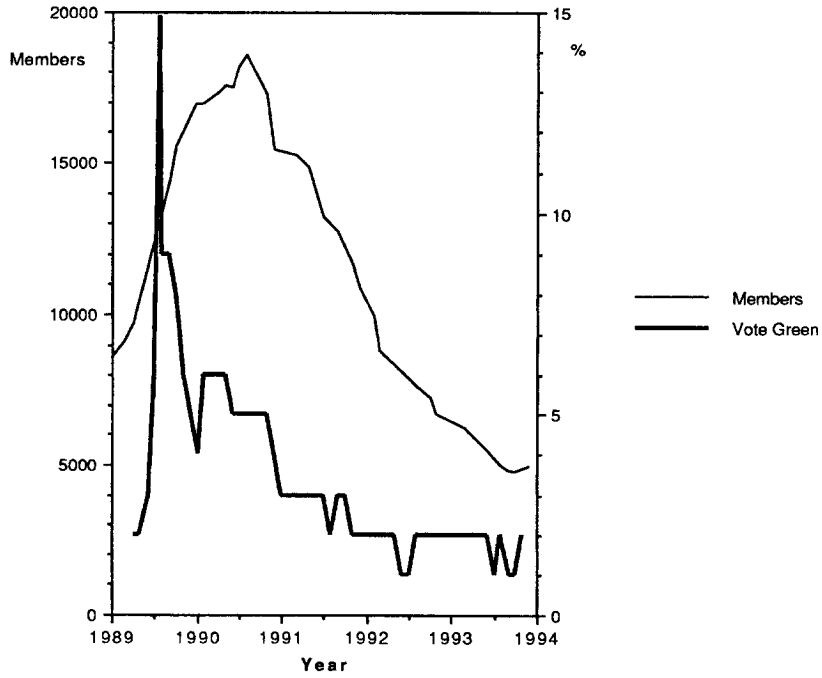
Converse and Dupeux were writing at a time when stable attachments to political parties were still considered the norm and the basis of desirable political stability. Flash parties could arguably be seen as aberrations, as temporary disturbances of those alienated from the political system - mainly voters with low levels of education who were susceptible to the simple populist messages of flash party leaders. Flash parties could be expected to appear in immature political systems where stable attachments to political parties are just developing. In their comprehensive international survey of party types, Rose and Mackie (1988, p. 538) found that 87% of flash parties occurred before 1945. By the early 1960s, however, with the re-establishment of more stable and durable party systems, arguably able to form stronger attachments and absorb any new issues and concerns that might arise, one might have expected the flash party phenomenon to have disappeared.

[1] The support of the Economic and Social Research Council is gratefully acknowledged. The work was funded by ESRC award number R000 23 2404. We would also like to thank all Green Party members who have made this research possible by their co-operation in returning our questionnaires. A special 'thank you' also goes to Green Party staff, and here in particular to John Bishop, who have helped us enormously over the years in making this project a success, and to Penny Kemp, Jean Lambert and Chris Rose for commenting on previous drafts of this paper. Naturally, we alone are responsible for any remaining errors.

[2] We will use the term "British Green Party" or similar expressions throughout the paper for reasons of simplicity. In fact, there are two separate green parties operating in the UK: the Green Party of England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and the Scottish Green Party. All references to election results, membership development and opinion poll standings refer to both parties; all data on party members reported in the paper only refers to members of the Green Party of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This expectation proved hardly correct for most Western democracies in the 1960s and beyond: there were still numerous cases of new, small parties emerging into the political limelight to enjoy a brief period of political success before disappearing again. Furthermore, the 1980s saw the emergence of both 'new right' and 'green' parties which in many countries proved enduring, thus hardly constituting phenomena which could justifiably be tagged with the 'flash party' label.

Figure 1: Poll Standing and Membership Development of the British Green Party, 1988-1993[a]



a) Sources: For membership figures, Green Party office, London; for poll standing, Gallup Political Index 1988-1993. Green Party support was not listed separately by Gallup before March 1989. The 14.9% mark for June 1989 refers to the European Election result. Membership figures include the Scottish Green Party. For figures since 1992, reliable figures are only available for England and UK membership figures were calculated assuming a stable share of Welsh and Scottish members. Membership figures do not include members only affiliated to local parties that are not reported to the National Office.

Another point of contrast comes in the internal structure of green parties which are totally

different from the hierarchically structured flash party dominated by the charismatic power of one leader. Also they differ in terms of their development, since they usually went through some years of political mobilisation, building up their vote only slowly, but then maintaining a level of support over many years that gave them a fairly stable role in established party systems. In other words, green parties are seen as more or less permanent new actors that are here to stay (cf. Franklin and Rüdig 1992a). Like green parties in other countries, the British Green Party has shown itself able to endure over the long haul. The Party managed 16 years on the fringes of politics without the reinforcement of electoral success; and, even after its recent disappointments, there is no sign that the Party is in any serious danger of complete collapse.

The differences between populist 'flash parties' of the 1950s and green parties of the 1980s are fairly striking. The latter were mainly supported by highly educated, professional middle-class people with post-materialist values (cf. Lowe and Rüdig 1986). The only common element between these two parts of the literature is their emphasis on the lack of party identification of 'flash party' and green party voters. Converse and Dupeux emphasize strongly the lack of enduring party identification in France which they see as a major facilitating factor in the rise of flash parties. For the greens, theorists have equally stressed the importance of a decline of identification with the major parties of the young and highly educated 'new politics' adherents (cf. Inglehart 1990).

The 'flash party' phenomenon of the British Greens involves both its electoral support and its membership (see Figure 1). Understanding the dual nature of the phenomenon is itself an important step on the way to understanding the nature of the 'flash party' experience: it is not only a manifestation of voting preference, it also affects those who have linked themselves to green politics in a somewhat more elaborate way by joining the Green Party. Hence, in order to understand these developments, we have to analyse the behaviour of both voters and party members.

Before 1989, Britain appeared to be safely classifiable as belonging to those countries in which a green party could not be expected to play an important role for the foreseeable future (Rüdig and Lowe 1986). In 1993, that assessment would probably be made again. But what happened in between? How can we explain that 'spasm of political excitement' which let it appear as if the hour of the British Greens had finally arrived? And why did this period turn out to be so brief, returning the Greens to their pre-1989 standing within a mere three years?

In what follows, we will first formulate a number of specific hypotheses about the factors which could account for the sudden rise and fall of the Greens. We then proceed to a description of the rather complex data with which we intend to confront these hypotheses. The empirical part of the paper has three main sections. First, we focus on the political context of the Green Party's development from 1989 to 1993. Second, we analyse data on voting behaviour and green party attachment. Third, we discuss some key results of our panel study of Green Party members, concentrating in particular on the processes of joining and leaving the Greens.

Research Questions

Although green parties in general may seem to differ from flash parties as originally conceived, and although there are crucial differences between the British Green Party experience and that of other superficially similar phenomena in other countries, the question remains whether the British Green Party shared some features with generic flash parties during its flash party phase. Was the fact that the development of the British Green Party at the end of the 1980s appeared more akin to that of 'flash parties' of the 1950s than other green parties of the 1980s reflected in the structure of its electorate? Perhaps the flash party phase of the British Green Party can be accounted for by the appeal of a simple message to uneducated people. This hypothesis does not appear likely to be confirmed, but it should be addressed.

Looking beyond the flash party literature, some other theoretical writings may be more helpful in suggesting avenues to be pursued. Rosenstone *et al.* (1984) suggested that third parties in the United States have generally been linked to the failure of established parties to address salient issues. Pinard (1975) in his 'dominant party thesis' argued that the rise of third parties might be linked to the failure or inability of the main opposition party to challenge the government.

Linked with this assessment is a prediction about a cycle of influence of such parties, and the assessment of their function. Major parties fail to respond adequately to some new issue, leading to the electoral success of a minor or 'third' party, drawing the attention of the major parties to the importance of this particular issue. Consequently, the major parties move to address the issue, change the political agenda and remove the basis of support for the minor party. Typically, the major function of minor parties is thus seen as providing a vehicle of protest and for introducing new issues to the political agenda (Cf. Rosenstone *et al.* 1984; Fisher 1974).

A series of hypotheses about our case could be derived from this: can we identify a failure of established parties to respond to a particular issue as the precipitating factor for the rise of the Greens? Did voters for this new party show strong concern for this issue but otherwise display little indication of identifying more closely with the party? And is the reason for the decline of the Greens to be sought in the ability of established parties to take on board the new issue?

Any observer of the events of the late 1980s will identify 'the environment' as the key issue on which the Greens' political capital depended. A number of specific questions arise from this: Is there evidence to suggest that the rise of the Greens is indeed linked to environmental concern and the lack of trust in the environmental policies of the established parties (or, more specifically following Pinard, of the established opposition parties), or is the support for the Greens in 1989 the result of a more diffuse and general anti-Government protest vote? If we can establish a link to 'the environment', is the decline of the Greens due to the decline of the level of concern about the environment or the success of the other parties to reclaim the

public's trust in their environmental policies?

To portray the rise and fall of the Greens as a simple response to a 'one-issue' stimulus may appear to go against the grain of much of the recent writing on green politics. Many authors have argued that green parties are not simply single issue parties but represent a more fundamental political divide, defined either in terms of 'post-materialism' (Inglehart 1990) or ecologism (Rüdig 1989). A number of further hypotheses arise from this literature. Is the rise and fall of the Greens the manifestation of more fundamental political change? Is the cycle of Green Party fortunes indicative of broader changes in political values? Is the rise and decline of Green Party membership associated with a fluctuation in the attractiveness of the fundamentals of green political philosophy? Or, alternatively, are these events the manifestations of more short-term, cyclical fluctuations?

There are a number of established theories of cycles which may be useful here. With reference to Down's (1972) concept of an issue-attention cycle, we may expect that a period of high issue attention is following by a down-swing. Importantly, 'the environment' consists of a complex structure of individual environmental issues, with new environmental issues sparking off new issue-attention cycles. Looking at the multi-dimensional structure of the development of environmental issues and its effects on green politics may thus be a fruitful enterprise.

Second, economic cycles are widely recognised to have an influence on political agendas and the electoral fortunes of government and opposition parties. In the voluminous academic literature in this area, there is, however, a broad debate about the existence of a 'political business cycle' (Nordhaus 1975) and the relative importance of objective and subjective economic indicators for changes in party popularity (see, for example, Sanders *et al.* 1987; Clarke and Whiteley 1990; Marsh *et al.* 1992). Practically all the rigorous analysis in this field has focussed on major parties rather than small or 'flash' parties (but see Clarke and Zuk 1989; Leithner 1993). Flash parties of right-wing provenance are usually expected to arise at times of economic crisis. In the case of the environment, however, it could be expected that the salience of environmental problems rises during economic boom periods and falls during recessions, assuming that economic well-being ranks higher in the 'hierarchy of needs' (Maslow 1954) of most people than environmental protection.[3]

Thirdly, we finally have to consider the political cycle dominated by the sequence of elections. Government parties are expected to do badly in mid-term elections. The 1989 European Elections could be classified as a mid-term election in the British context. More importantly, European Elections are generally seen as second-order elections (Reif 1984) with limited impact and importance. Small parties could be expected to do much better in

[3] It would be interesting to explore whether a change in the salience of environmental protection within an economic cycle is related to a change in the actual or perceived personal economic circumstances or the perceived probability of such change occurring; or whether changes in the salience of the environment are a reflection of changing social preferences applying to society as a whole rather than to personal economic conditions. An analysis of this question will have to be left for further work, but see Rohrschneider (1988) for an analysis of individual-level data at one time point which suggests that environmental attitudes are more related to broader societal rather than personal considerations.

second-order than in first-order elections.

By combining these three cyclical contexts, we can provide a very rich picture of the circumstances surrounding the rise and decline of the British Green Party. One feature of this picture is that the links between the environmental and economic cycles on the one hand and the political cycles on the other go in different directions. Governments usually are expected to manage the economic cycles in such a way as to ensure that boom periods coincide with first-order elections, taking the possibility of economic protest votes in mid-term in their stride. If, however, the salience of environmental issues becomes an important feature of voting and is increased in economic boom periods, then the potential for green voting would be increased for first-order elections. In the British case, however, the government failed to ensure the conventional matching of economic and political cycles. As a consequence, we could hypothesize that the potential for green protest was indeed highest in the mid-term second-order elections, and lowest at the subsequent first-order election. We will look at these events a little closer in the following section on political context.

Most studies of minor party development draw on evidence of voting behaviour (e.g. Pinard 1975; Rosenstone *et al.* 1984; Müller-Rommel and Pridham 1991; Müller-Rommel 1993). With few exceptions (e.g. Canfield 1984; Poguntke 1989, 1993; Kitschelt 1989; Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Curtice *et al.* 1993), studies of activists and members of minor or 'third' parties have not been carried out. As we have seen, the membership development of the Greens mirrored their electoral and poll fortunes quite closely. And here, the usual hypotheses about voting for 'third' parties may not necessarily be very helpful. One would expect that becoming a member of a political party involves a rather greater cost and, therefore, leads to a greater commitment than the registering of a 'protest vote' for such a party in a 'second-order' election. Voters may exercise their votes in the full expectation that they are voting for a party that may not have much of a future, simply to send a signal to the government or the established parties generally. But one would expect individuals joining such a party to have a rather different motivational structure.

This raises some fascinating questions both about the decision of so many individuals to join the Greens during and after the run-up to the European Elections, and also about the decision of so many party members to leave the Party again after a rather brief period. The fact that, in this case, membership and poll standing is so closely correlated suggests that the rise of new parties is not associated with a reproduction of the stable party attachment of members that characterised the established parties in previous years. In Britain and many other European countries, party membership in general is declining (Katz and Mair 1992), and the rise of volatility in voting (Franklin *et al.* 1992) seems to be matched by a similar volatility of party attachments of political activists. Furthermore, Kitschelt (1990) argues that left-libertarian parties, such as the German Greens, have a particular problem in generating a stable membership base. This is mainly because most activists are ideologically opposed to formal organisations and thus become quickly alienated by party life, and because these parties cannot offer members substantial material and social incentives to remain. While Kitschelt points to a relatively high turn-over of members in the German Greens, we have to note that the German Greens have generally maintained a relatively stable total number of members

and have never experienced the extreme fluctuations we find in Britain.

How do we explain fluctuations in membership? One body of theory which ties in well with themes of major party failure and rise of social movements is the theory of political opportunity structures. It suggests that political activists channel their forms of activities to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them by the political system (cf. Eisinger 1973; Tarrow 1983; McAdam 1982; cf. also Rüdig 1990, pp. 38-49). The 1989 European Elections provided an obvious opportunity for green mobilisation, and therefore we may expect that members of other parties and other environmental groups would have been tempted to join the Greens to take advantage of that opportunity. But as as the 1989 success is replaced by 'minor party failure', we could expect that members refocus their attention on major parties or other social movement organisations. Two versions of this development are possible: the down-turn of Greens is simply a function of the political cycle, of the political opportunities to be presented, and members move to other forms of action according to the perceived opportunities as they present themselves; or there is a general down-turn of environmental activities with an objective reduction of mobilisation potentials. In order to test these theories, we can look at the in- and out-flows of members from and to other parties and environmental organisations.

Finally, a very influential body of theorising on membership of organisations from which we may expect some ideas is rational choice theory. The main focus of rational choice theory has been the process of membership recruitment. People are seen to join organisations on the basis of some type of cost/benefit calculus. Most of the work in this area has been inspired by Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965) in which he argues that organisations pursuing public goods have to provide their members with selective incentives, i.e. incentives in the form of benefits which accrue to members only. It is difficult to see where the British Greens would fit into this picture. Some observers may well see the Greens as an example of what Olson terms 'the occasional band of committed people who continue to work through their organisations for admittedly lost causes' (Olson 1965, p. 161) Obviously, the question is who 'admits' to causes being lost. A cause that may be obviously lost to some may not be so obviously lost to others. While Olson suggests to look at 'psychology and perhaps social psychology' for a theory of such 'nonrational or irrational behavior', he considers that the behaviour of utopian mass movements may be amenable to his theory as even a minute share of an infinite benefit, namely the realisation of the utopia, may outweigh any cost of group membership.[4] Such a reasoning may well apply to

[4] Olson (1965, pp. 160-161) writes in a footnote on mass movements: 'Mass movements are often utopian in character. Even large groups that work for a utopia could have a reason for acting as a group, even in terms of the theory offered here. Utopias are heavens on earth, in the eyes of their advocates; in other words, they are expected to bring benefits that are incalculably large or probably infinite. If the benefit that would come from establishing a utopia is infinite, it could be rational even for the member of a large group to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of the group goal (the utopia). A minute share of an infinite benefit or a miniscule increase in the probability of such a benefit, could exceed an individual's share of the cost of the group endeavour. An incalculably large or infinite benefit could as it were make a "privileged group" out of a rather large group. Religious groups might also be analysed in this way.' If the 'infinite' nature of any expected benefit enters the cost/benefit calculations in such a way, one would expect everybody to be members of utopian movements. Obviously, benefits are only 'incalculably large' for those who believe in the 'utopia',

'millenarian' movements in which 'members' are 'saved' through their involvement. While the Greens may be conceived in terms of pursuing a utopia with their vision of a 'green society', there is no element of members being saved from any eco-catastrophes.

Rational choice models of political behaviour can, however, encompass a wider range of motivations. The work of James Q. Wilson has been particularly fruitful here. In their classical article, Clarke and Wilson (1961) propose three incentives for joining organisations: material, solidary, and purposive. Material incentives consist of tangible benefits which accrue to group members exclusive of others; solidary incentives arise from the social association with other members; and purposive incentives consist of intangible benefits of membership related to the purpose of the organisation, such as the satisfaction of contributing to the group or serving a good cause. Later, Wilson (1973, pp. 33-34) introduced a further distinction between 'specific' and 'collective solidary incentives'. The first are incentives that 'can be given to, or withheld from , specific individuals', such as the social status associated with a particular office or honour; the latter are incentives arising from social association that cannot be limited to certain members.

While rational choice theorists have tended to concentrate on the initial process of joining rather than later decisions to remain or leave, we could hypothesize that these later decisions are essentially subject to a similar cost-benefit calculus. A decision to leave would then typically be associated with a change in costs or benefits. The effect of the relative dependence on material, solidary or purposive motivations on the stability of organisation membership has been the subject of some speculation. While there is a consensus that the supply of material, selective incentives would constiute a model of exchange making for the greatest stability, the relative value of a reliance on purposive or solidary incentives is less clear.

In the case of the Greens, the only cost of membership is the payment of the subscription. In the absence of massive increases in subscription rates, we would expect that very few members fail to rejoin mainly because they cannot afford to pay the subscription, particularly as the Party also has a specially reduced subscription for the unwaged. A changed perception of the benefit is probably far more crucial.

Expectations of tangible material benefits are unlikely to play much of a role for British Greens. Unlike membership of major parties,[5] Green Party membership is unlikely to have career benefits, to the contrary. Unlike in Germany, the prospects of attaining any public office and the benefits that may bring are negligible. And while some may be motivated by attaining 'specific solidary benefits', such an office within the Party, this is unlikely to provide a major basis for retention decisions for the large majority of members.[6]

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and it is not clear how the generation of such a belief is related to cost/benefit calculations of the kind discussed by Olson.

[5] In their survey of Labour Party members, Seyd and Whiteley (1992) explore the role of material benefits for party activism and conclude that 'selective incentives associated with investing in a career in politics' are important predictors (Seyd and Whitely 1992, p. 117).

[6] The question of the costs and benefits of activism and their possible impacts on the retention of activists is a very important question which requires a detailed analysis going beyond the confines of this paper.

The only other service which selectively accrues to Green Party members and could theoretically be interpreted as a 'material' benefit is the national party newspaper and local party newsletters which members receive.[7] As a substantial part of these publications is concerned with party activity itself,[8] it is highly doubtful whether the automatic receipt of the publication through membership plays any role in material cost/benefit calculations of membership. Far more important is the role of party publications for the communication of the party's 'purpose' to its members. Purposive organisations rely crucially on regular communication processes imparting not only their 'purpose' but also a sense of the organisations's effectiveness in achieving its purpose (Clarke and Wilson 1961) to its members. Apart from direct participation in the organisation's activity, in which, in the case of the Greens and probably most other parties (cf. Rüdig *et al.* 1991, p. 40; Seyd and Whiteley 1992, p. 89), only a minority partake on a frequent basis, mailings are the only direct contact between the Party and its members. While establishment parties can rely on the mainstream media, such as TV and newspapers, to report on the party's activity, the Green Party was progressively ignored after the peak of coverage in 1989. The party newspaper was virtually the only information source about party activity for passive members. The evaluation of that source could thus be expected to be an important variable for the prediction of membership renewal.

While purposive incentives are likely to be far more important than material incentives in the process of joining the Green Party (cf. also Kitschelt 1990; McCulloch 1990), purposive organisations are generally seen to be rather unstable and transient. Salisbury's characterisation of the problems faced by what he, following Blau (1964), calls 'expressive' organisations seems to fit the Green Party experience very well:

> '...it is likely that expressive groups are especially vulnerable to slight changes in circumstances, including many over which the group has no control. ... More broadly, for most people the act of joining an expressive group ....is a marginal act. ... Consequently, ...a slight change in the member's resources or social pressures may lead to his failure to renew his membership.' (Salisbury 1969, p. 19).

Given this intrinsic instability, and the absence of any material incentives to offer to members, purposive organisations have only two options: to reproduce the perception of purposive benefits which accounted for most members joining, in a perpetual process, or to try to mobilize solidary incentives.

Therefore, we have excluded here any debate of variables pertaining exclusively or mainly to activists, such as changes in the perception of personal efficacy. This will be dealt with in future papers.

[7] Until the end of 1991, each member received the Green Party newspaper *ECONEWS*. This was briefly replaced in 1992 by a more glossy publication,*The REAL World*, which in turn was replaced by *Green World*. The first issue of this new party newspaper appeared in February 1993. All references to the 'national party newspaper' in this paper refer exclusively to ECONEWS.

[8] The share of internal party information and the allegedly 'inward' orientation of ECONEWS was the subject of controversial debate within the Party. The first Executive after the constitutional changes of 1991 decided on a different format for the new periodical *The REAL World* with a more 'outward' orientation.

For the reproduction of purposive incentives, the reality of political accomplishment is secondary to the creation of a 'sense of accomplishment', even if it is merely 'spurious' (Clarke and Wilson 1961, p. 148). If the perception arises that an organisation is not 'going anywhere', that it is, indeed, a liability to the cause it wishes to serve, then this will also have a major effect on purposive motivations to remain a member. No benefit is to be derived from being part of something which is failing to serve its purpose. Importantly, purposive benefits do not necessitate any immediate political breakthrough, and therefore, they could be expected to be of particular importance to an organisation such as the Greens. While the perception of the long-term future of the Greens is important here, purposive motivations to renew membership could be particularly threatened if the perception arose that the Party is not doing as well as it could for internal reasons. We could thus expect that the evaluation of the Party's internal workings could be of major importance.

Turning to solidary incentives, it has been argued that major parties achieved some of the stability of their membership base in the past by providing their members with the opportunity to socialize, such as local clubs and youth organisations with a social orientation (cf. Barry 1970; Ware 1990). With the break-up of the old *milieus* as a result of economic and social change, the major parties find it increasingly difficult to sustain the mobilisation of collective solidary incentives. Ware (1992) argues that the provision of solidary incentives through the running of social clubs and similar institutions could be a particulary cost-effective way for parties to maintain a base of members and potential activists, provided the party can afford the high initial capital costs. Small parties such as the Greens do not have the resources to start any institutionalized form of providing such incentives.

Another form of increasing the importance of social incentives are at the disposal of green parties. As already Salisbury (1969, p. 20) noted, the use of 'direct action protests' is likely to mobilize solidary benefits which may contribute to membership stability.[9] Some activists within the Greens have continually argued for a higher involvement of the Green Party in direct actions, although not for reasons of membership retention. In any case, such a strategy is unlikely to reach passive members who are even unwilling to go to a local party meeting.

Also in the absence of green social clubs and green direct actions, we may hypothesize that solidary incentives play some role for sustaining green groups. It may well be possible that those joining within a given social circle, or those who are socialized into a social circle through party activity, become chiefly motivated by solidary incentives to maintain their membership. We will see to what extent, if any, those who are engaged in social interaction with other members are more likely to remain a member.

In considering the case of the British Greens, we have to pay attention to the very specific conditons under which it is operating. Unlike, say, US interest groups which have been the main empirical basis on which rational choice theories have been developed, the political context in which the Green Party is operating is very fluid and incalculable. Because of its standing at the margins of politics, it cannot offer its members any stable reward in exchange for continued membership. Indeed, it may appear surprising that the Party was able to attract

[9] Direct action protests have been found to attract participants mainly through solidary incentives, particularly in anti-nuclear non-violent direct actions; see Opp 1986.

a sizeable number of members in the first place. Here, the notion of 'experiential search' as developed by Lawrence S. Rothenberg in his analysis of the members of US public interest group *Common Cause* becomes attractive. Rothenberg (1992) argues that members joining *Common Cause* do not have sufficient information to make an informed cost-benefit calculation about membership. They join as part of a learning process, and as members learn more about their organisation, they update their perception of benefits and make decisions about leaving or remaining in the organisation accordingly. As a consequence, members finding out that the organisation is 'not for them' will leave fairly quickly, and the length of membership in the organisation itself is an important predictor of decisions to remain in the organisation.

There are, of course, also other reasons why we would expect long-standing members to have a higher probability of renewing their membership than more recent recruits. Long-standing members have had a far higher chance of developing ties to the party, to being 'socialized' into the party in terms of its programme, its social networks, its routines. A lot, however, may depend on how members are actually 'tied in'. Active members are more likely to have developed such ties than those whose only direct contact with the Party is the receipt of Party mailings. And it is the passive members who may also be more vulnerable to developing negative perceptions of the party's effectiveness in a down-swing period when media attention to party matters is either negative or non-existent.

These ideas suggest that an organisation like the Greens has to cope with an inherent drain of new members, with particular difficulties in retaining passive members. The task for us is to assess to what extent the decline of the Greens is thus simply a pre-programmed result of its rise, and what contribution, if any, internal and external developments made to that decline.

Data

What are the sources on which our analysis is based? First, we observed the political context and its changes from 1989 to 1993 very closely, attending all Green Party conferences, monitoring media coverage and the general political development of these years. It is vital for the understanding of the Green Party's fortunes between 1989 and 1993 to understand the political context in which the Party operated. In addition, we draw on political opinion surveys carried out during that time by Gallup, MORI[10] and the British Social Attitudes[11] survey, to trace the main trends of public opinion in relation to Green Party support.

[10] We are grateful to Professor Robert W. Worcester of MORI for making the results of recent MORI surveys available to us. Obviously, we alone are responsible for our interpretation of the results of these surveys.

[11] British Social Attitudes (BSA) surveys have been conducted since 1983. The datasets are deposited with the ESRC Data Archive, Deposit No. 33168, by Social Community and Planning Research. For further information on British Social Attitude surveys, see Brook *et al.* 1992. Those who collected the data and carried out the original analyses obviously bear no responsibility for our further analysis and our interpretation of it. We gratefully acknowledge the help of Ann Mair, Social Statistics Laboratory, University of Strathclyde, who provided valuable advice on BSA and other survey data.

Second, for our analysis of voting behaviour we rely on data collected by the European Community's Eurobarometre surveys and the 1989 European Election Study. These data not only provide information about actual green voters in the 1989 European Elections but also contain a wealth of information about the future intentions of 1989 voters, of all colours.[12]

Third, for our analysis of party members, we draw on a panel study of Green Party members conducted in 1990, 1991 and 1992. In the first wave, a random sample of members of the Green Party was mailed a detailed questionnaire in November 1990. About 8,600 questionnaires were mailed, 4,357 usable questionnaires were returned, a net response rate of 51% (cf. Rüdig *et al.* 1991 for further details).[13] For the second wave, about 4,000 respondents to the first wave were contacted again.[14] A second questionnaire was mailed to this group in November 1991. A total of 2,651 usable questionnaires were received, a response rate of 66%. Finally, in the third wave all those who had returned a questionnaire in the first wave who were members at the time of the second wave were again contacted. This time the response rate was also 66% per cent, with a total of 1958 questionnaires returned.[15] Furthermore, a special study of lapsed members was carried out in early 1993 in

[12] The dataset of the Eurobarometre study 31a was obtained from the ESRC Data Archive (Deposit No. 2915) via the Steinmetz Archive in the Netherlands (Reif 1993). The European Elections Study 1989 (EES'89) is a joint effort of Western European social scientists to take advantage of the elections for the European Parliament (EP) held simultaneously in all European Community (EC) countries in June 1989, in order to engage in cross-nationally comparative electoral research. The study was designed and organized by a core group of researchers consisting of Roland Cayrol (University of Paris), Cees van der Eijk (University of Amsterdam), Mark Franklin (formerly at the University of Strathclyde, now at the University of Houston), Manfred Kuechler (Hunter College, City University of New York), Renato Mannheimer (University of Genova) and Hermann Schmitt (University of Mannheim) who co-ordinated the efforts of this group. The study consisted of three independent cross-sectional surveys that were conducted in each member country of the EC before and immediately after the EP elections. The questionnaires, which were administered in the language of each country, constituted one part of the European Omnibus Surveys which also contained the regular Eurobarometer (EB) surveys of the Commission of the EC. The relevant EB surveys were number 30 (Fall 1988), 31 (Spring 1989) and 31A (summer 1989, immediately after the European elections). Each of these waves involved interviews with some 12,500 respondents divided into independent national samples of about 1000 respondents each. In the present paper we focus upon data collected by means of the third (post-election) wave of interviews. Funding to support the first two waves was obtained from a consortium made up of European mass media and other institutions; funding for the third wave, which is the major data source employed in the present paper, was provided largely by a grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council. The Steinmetz version of the dataset used for our analysis contains additional variables which we did not have available for our previous studies of green voting behaviour (e.g. Franklin and Rüdig 1992a) using the EES '89 dataset. Those who collected the data and carried out the original analyses obviously bear no responsibility for our further analysis and our interpretation of it.

[13] Added to this first wave sample were the respondents of a pilot study (N=251) carried out several months before the main study. The pilot study oversampled long-standing members of the Party, and the datasets used for our purpose were weighted to take account of this.

[14] Not contacted again at this stage were those respondents who had already left the Party. The rest of the difference to the first wave sample is made up by first wave respondents who could not be identified for second wave mailing purposes, in most cases because the respondent had removed the relevant information from the first wave questionnaire before returning it.

[15] Given the unwillingness of Green Party members in other European countries to participate in this type of survey which some see as 'un-green' (cf. Poguntke 1990; Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990), the response rates

which all first wave respondents who had left the Party before November 1991 were contacted again. This survey achieved a response rate of 40% - not as high a rate of response as would have been wished, but still a good response from individuals who are by definition unlikely to respond.

Finally, our research design enables us to make use of a unique series of time-structured data which we derived in part from our panel study and in part from monthly opinion and economic data. Each member of our panel was asked for the month and year in which they joined the Green Party. Those who had left or pronounced themselves certain to leave were also asked for the month and year of their decision to leave. This allowed us to create a data-set which contains information about the numbers joining and leaving the Party on a monthly basis merged with economic and opinion poll data for those same months. Data on the actual number of members of the Green Party was also added. In this merged file we thus have the number of individuals joining the Party and the number leaving as well the standing of the parties and economic indicators in that month during the duration of our study (November 1990 to November 1992).

It is not customary to conduct both time-series and individual level analyses in the same investigation, but in the present study it is appropriate to do so. This is because a critical feature of the flash party phase in British Green Party history was its timing. The fact that voters and members waxed and waned in so spectacular a fashion within such a short period of time is the main reason why we are investing so much effort in studying the phenomenon. If we were to ignore the time dimension we might be led to ignore the very factors that made the phenomenon politically interesting in the first place. Why then not simply perform the entire analysis with time series data? The reason is that such data tells us nothing about the motivations of individuals. Only a dual approach that involves both variation over time and variation between individuals can illucidate the research questions that we have posed.

The Political Context

How did the sudden emergence of the Green Party in 1989 into the centre of the political scene come about? In what way did it then decline into political obscurity? Before we start our analysis of green voters and members, let us look at the political context within which these changes occurred.

Voters started to turn in large numbers to the Greens in early 1989: the Greens did quite well in the local elections of May that year, polling an average of 8.6% in the seats they contested. In national opinion polls, the Greens had first registered in mid-1988 (Adonis 1989, p. 266).

achieved are quite satisfactory. In addition, we have to take account of the fact that the drop-out of members was already well-under way in late 1990. Disillusioned members leaving the Party were more unlikely to respond to a mailed questionnaire of this nature. Considering that the drop-out rate of existing members reached 40% in early 1991 and passed 50% at the time of the second wave, we are fortunate to have a substantial number of former members of the Green Party in our sample but the sharp down-swing of Party fortunes starting in late 1990 obviously has had an adverse effect on response rates. A full study of response bias will appear in Rüdig *et al.* (forthcoming).

Gallup polls show a rating for the Greens[16] first in March 1989, with 2%. Their rating shot up steadily in coming months, reaching a maximum of 9% in the months immediately after the European Elections, July and August 1989 (Gallup Political Index). This popularity of the Greens with the voter was matched by a substantial increase in their membership which started to materialise well before the European Elections in early 1989. This 'up-phase' in the Greens' fortunes ended pretty quickly in voting terms as they starting slipping in the polls right after the European Elections. In terms of members, their numbers kept rising well into 1990.

From about the end of 1990, the fortunes of the Green Party started to decline in every respect. Their opinion poll rating took a decisive turn downwards and their members started to leave in numbers that were not matched by new members joining. The first half of 1991 saw big losses on both fronts, and by 1992 the Party had returned more or less to where it had started in 1988 both in terms of its poll standing and its membership figures. What was happening?

In achieving their unprecedented success in the elections to the European Parliament in June 1989, in which they polled 14.9%, the Greens benefitted from a number of facilitating factors.[17] From the mid-1990 onwards, however, the political context changed and the climate became increasingly hostile to the Greens. In the following sections, we will look at a number of factors in turn, starting with their relevance for the up-swing and then moving on to the down-swing phase.

SALIENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The environment reached unprecedented levels of political salience in Britain in 1988 and 1989 in the run up to the European Elections, having climbed to the top of the political agenda perhaps for the very first time by 1988. It is important to note that it was not one single issue but a sequence of issues which provided an unrelenting stream of public attention and reached a 'critical mass' that made it more difficult to direct environmental questions to the sidelines. The British reaction to the Chernobyl accident in 1986 had been muted by international standards, but a number of related issues, particularly nuclear waste questions and the environmental hazards of the Sellafield complex, continued to attract public attention. The conflict about sites of low level nuclear waste disposal was defused by abandoning all sites shortly before the 1987 General Election (see Rüdig 1990, p. 193), but Sellafield and the future of nuclear power continued to remain in the public domain. The new government's plan to privatize the electricity supply industry including its nuclear component added a new dimension to that debate. Although environmental considerations played a relatively minor role in the political debate about electricity privatisation (cf. Rüdig and Kraemer 1990), it kept nuclear issues relatively high on the agenda.

More important for the development of the environmental debate was another privatisation

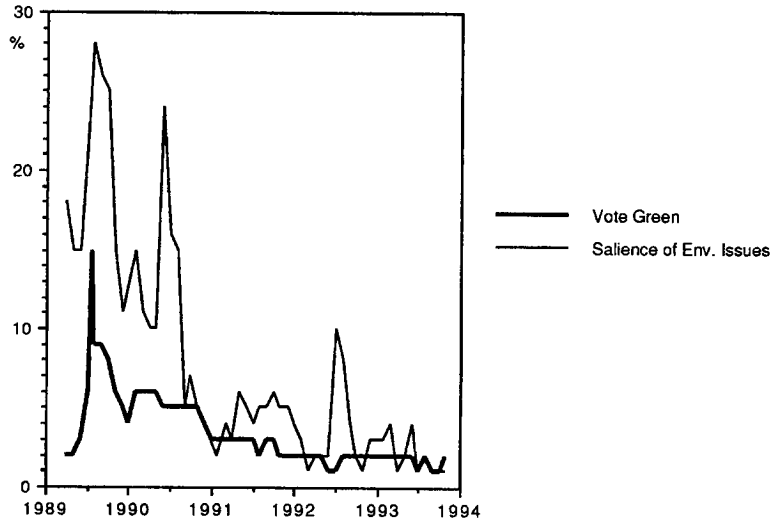
[16] Gallup asked: 'If there were a General Election tomorrow, which party would you support?'

[17] For other descriptions of the context of the 1989 Green Party success, cf. Burke 1989; Frankland 1990; Rootes 1991a,b,c; Pattie *et al.* 1991.

project, that of the water industry. First targeted for privatisation in the mid-1980s, the new government was determined to carry out the privatisation of the regional water authorities in England and Wales despite the widespread unpopularity of this proposal. Water, previously a complete non-issue, suddenly became a major environmental issue, involving the government in some public relations difficulties (cf. Richardson *et al.* 1992). Amongst other environmental issues attracting public attention was the dying of the seals in the North Sea, and the odyssey of the ship Karen B laden with toxic waste and which alerted the public to the general problems of toxic waste and its international movement. Food safety suddenly became a major issue, involving the resignation of a high-profile minister. Particularly in the South of England, the post-1987 economic boom saw increasing pressures on green belts and the countryside generally.

Of all environmental issues, perhaps the most important was the so-called 'greenhouse effect'. It was important partly because it raised the prospect of environmental catastrophe on a global scale, and thus seemed to reinforce the validity of ecological arguments which had last been prominent in the early 1970s: 'saving the planet' and similar slogans thus achieved some salience and catapulted the standing of environmental issues from (seemingly) purely local concerns to the national and international level.

Figure 2: The Salience of the Environment and the Standing of the Greens



Source: Gallup Political Index, 1989-1993

However, perhaps the main reason why the 'greenhouse effect' was so important for the politicisation of the environment in 1988-89 can be found elsewhere. In an extraordinary development, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in a speech in September 1988 seemed to embrace the environment as a major theme of her third term, and it was the 'greenhouse effect' which was the centre piece of that new initiative. In her famous speech to the Royal Society and in some later addresses, Mrs. Thatcher appeared to have been turned into an environmentalist overnight, using expressions and slogans which were straight out of the repertoire of green semantics. Whatever Mrs. Thatcher's motivation in making this extraordinary move,[18] the first important effect of her new interest was to ensure that the environment really did rise to the top of the agenda (cf. Flynn and Lowe 1992). Our own time series of public opinion on the environment based on Gallup shows a sharp rise in environmental concern[19] starting almost immediately after Mrs. Thatcher's speech, and rising to a tremendous peak in 1989, as shown in Figure 2. The rise in environmental concern and rise in the attraction of the Greens thus went hand in hand.

This tremendous rise of public concern over the environment was associated with steep rises in a number of environmental activities. The perhaps most dramatic development was the emergence of 'green consumerism' as a major force. MORI polls show that the share of the population who 'selected one product over another because of its environmentally friendly packaging, formulation or advertising' more than doubled within a few months, from 19% in September 1988 to 47% in July 1989 (see Figure 3). According to MORI, another form of environmental activism rising sharply at that time was donations to environmental causes. However, as Figure 3 shows, the number of people becoming more strongly involved in environmental politics remained relatively limited. Only a small minority, between 4% and 6%, became actively involved in environmental campaigning. Membership of environmental groups also rose, but not as sharply as other activities. Environmental pressure groups reported a very rapid rise in membership during the late 1980s, with the more radical groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth increasing their membership particularly sharply (McCormick 1991, p. 152).

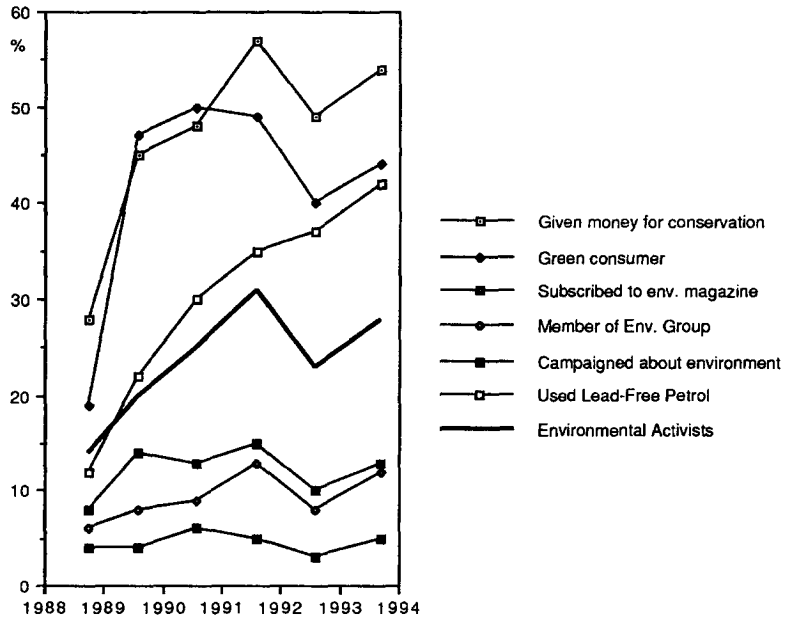
To provide a single indicator of environmental activism, all those active on at least five (of a total of 10 specified environmental activities) counts were classified as 'environmental activists'. As Figure 3 shows, the peak of environmental activism according to MORI data

[18] The 1988 speech invited wide-ranging speculation about the reason for this quite startling about-turn (Cf. McCormick 1991, ch. 3; Ward and Samways 1992) In her memoirs, Lady Thatcher reminisces on this episode under the heading 'Science and the Environment', the only major passage dealing with environmental policy (Thatcher 1993, pp. 638-641). The speech was quite clearly a deliberate attempt to influence political discourse about the environment with the specific aim to counteract the 'green socialism' promoted by the Left (p. 639) and the environmental lobby's attempt to use 'global warming to attack capitalism, growth and industry' (p. 640). Following the speech which 'was the fruit of much thought and a great deal of work', Lady Thatcher writes she 'sought to employ the authority I had gained in the whole environmental debate ... to ensure a sense of proportion' (p. 640).

[19] Gallup asked respondents 'What would you say is the most urgent problem facing the country at the present time? And what would you say is the next most urgent problem?' This is clearly a 'hard' measure of environmental concern as respondents are asked to make a choice between different problems. The measure for environmental concern plotted in Figure 2 involves the share of respondents who name 'the environment' as either the first or second most important problem facing the country.

occurred in 1991. By July 1992, activity levels are down across the board, with the single exception of using lead free petrol. The timing of the down-turn thus seems to lag behind the change in the public salience of environmental issues by about a year. However, this lag could be accounted for by the question wording, asking about activities 'in the last year or two', as well as a certain inertia inherent in some of the activities themselves. By 1993, however, environmental activities picked up again.

Figure 3: Green Activism, 1988-1993[a]



a) The exact question wording was: "Which, if any, of the following things have you done in the last year or two? ....- Given money to or raised money for wildlife/conservation or Third World charities; - Selected one product over another because of its environmentally friendly packaging, formulation or advertising (green consumers); - Subscribed to a magazine concerned with wildlife/conservation/natural resources or the Third World; - Been a member of an environmental group/charity (even if you joined more than two years ago); - Campaigned about an environmental issue. Average N for each wave = approx. 2000.
Source: MORI Polls; Worcester 1993a,b.

The down-turn of Green Party fortunes after 1990 was accompanied by a sharp reduction in the salience of environmental issues and a concomitant decline in environmental activities generally. After reaching another peak in mid-1990, the salience of the environment, as measured by Gallup, declined markedly. At the time of the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992,

the environment briefly was seen as an important issue again, but this was clearly a transient phenomenon. This decline in the public appeal of environmental issues applied to all types of environmental activities across the board, but the relative down-turn appears to have been particularly sharp in the more political activities, such as belonging to an environmental group or campaigning on the environment. MORI data suggest that, by 1992, there had been a reduction of 38% and 50%, respectively, in comparison with the peak of activity in the years before. While this does not quite match the size of the collapse of the Green Party's membership base which contracted by 62% in the corresponding time period (July 1990 to July 1992), it demonstrates quite clearly that the Party's problems were not an isolated case in the environmental field. The Party's unexpected success in June 1989 had highlighted the depth of environmental concern in the country, its rapid decline gave an indication of a more widespread down-turn in environmental activities generally.

If we look closer at the up- and down-swing in the salience of environmental issues, we can identify a number of features specific to the nature of environmental concern which injected their own dynamic into the cycle. First, in comparison with other West European countries, environmental concern as expressed in Britain in the late 1980s lacked depth. All over Europe, it is not acceptable any more either to politicians or most of the public to deny the importance of the environment. Consequently, measures of environmental concern which do not involve a cost element[20] show heightened and relatively stable levels of concern throughout Europe. It is only when the measurement of environmental concern involves a cost element, for example an assessment of the importance of the environment in comparison with other political problems, such as unemployment, that pronounced differences emerge. An analysis of comparative Eurobarometre data on the development of environmental concern in the 1980s clearly shows that British concern was more shallow than in the richer continental European countries (cf. Rüdig 1993).

Secondly, Britain in 1989 stood out in Europe in the level of concern expressed about the greenhouse effect. While Britain was only 8th of the 12 EC countries in terms of the 'hard' measurement of environmental concern, it came first with the level of concern expressed about the greenhouse effect. Clearly, the way in which the greenhouse issue was politicized in Britain, mainly through the already mentioned Thatcher speech, had a major impact on this. An analysis of those expressing concern about the greenhouse effect in Britain shows that it forms quite a separate dimension of environmental concern (Rüdig 1993). That was also, incidentally, how Mrs. Thatcher perceived the issue, as something 'quite separate' (Thatcher 1993, p. 639) from other environmental issues. Furthermore, Mrs. Thatcher particularly stressed the contribution of nuclear power to the solution of the global warming problem. Importantly, we find that many of those expressing concern about the greenhouse effect in 1989 also were pro-nuclear and not particularly concerned about other 'quite separate' environmental issues. This suggests that the rise of the environment as a political issue in Britain did not follow the 'new politics' path of left-wing politicisation of environmental issues which were more common in the rest of Europe.

[20] For example, one of the trend questions used in Eurobarometre surveys asks respondents to classify whether political issues are 'very important' or 'Not very important'.

Given the importance of the greenhouse issue for the 1989 green boom, we would expect an issue-attention cycle effect to play a role. We have some evidence for this in the form of post-1989 opinion polls on the greenhouse effect. Data from the Spring 1992 Eurobarometre survey (Bennie and Rüdig 1993) and the Gallup World Survey of Environmental Concern, carried out in 1992 (Dunlap *et al.* 1993), both show that by that time British concern over the greenhouse effect had declined in line with expectations of a sub-average level of environmental concern in Britain. As we saw in Figure 2, the Rio Summit of 1992 only led to a short-lived and, by comparison with 1989, quite minor revival of the salience of environmental issues. Furthermore, as predicted by Downs (1972), the political debate about the greenhouse effect progressed rapidly to a stage where a realization of the cost of resolving the problem went hand in hand with a greater attention being paid to the uncertainties involved in the scientific case for global warming (cf. Ray 1992; Wildavsky 1992; Balling 1992; Bailey 1993). At the political level, an anti-environmental backlash also reached Britain in the early 1990s, stimulated by the strong anti-environmental tendencies which had always been dominant in the US political right (cf. McHallam 1991).

Apart from the progression of global warming through the issue-attention cycle, other issues which had played an important role in the up-swing, such as electricity and water privatisation, had been dealt with and were off the agenda. The future of the nuclear industry was to be reviewed in 1994, no decisions on new nuclear capacity were to be made before then. There were no substantially new environmental issues to reinvigorate the debate.

The media exposure of the environment issue had reached saturation point by 1990, people generally seemed increasingly bored with anything 'green' or environmental: '...many people felt that "yes it's serious, but haven't we heard it all before?"' (Rose 1993, p. 292). The salience of environmental issues started to deteriorate very quickly. Analysis of the coverage of environmental issues by major British newspapers shows that coverage peaked in 1989 and was in decline in the early 1990s (Hansen 1993). The environment played practically no role in the 1992 election campaign. As was already shown in Figure 2, the percentage of Gallup respondents placing the environment first or second among important problems had dropped from its peak of 30% in July 1989 to a mere 5% two years later and continued to fall. Also, the rapidly changing international situation with the end of the cold war meant that nuclear weapons issues were largely off the agenda, so that the Greens could not benefit much from Labour's move away from unilateralism.

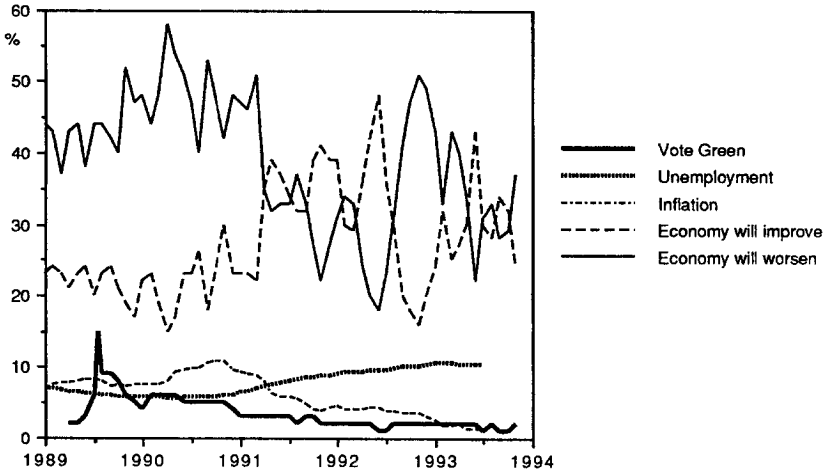
THE ECONOMIC CYCLE

Environmental concern and support for green organizations can be expected to be influenced by the ups and downs of economic activity. In their analysis of the historical development of British environmental groups, Lowe and Goyder found that 'periods of sudden growth' of environmental groups occurred 'towards the end of periods of sustained economic expansion. ... We would suggest that environmental groups arose at these times as more and more people turned to count the mounting external costs of unbridled economic growth and sought to reassert non-material values' (Lowe and Goyder 1983, p. 25).

The recent surge of environmental activity seems to fit this theory rather well as it did occur

at the end of a major growth period. It is less clear, however, to what extent the actual experience of the environmental costs of this growth period or the feeling of economic security, combined with a sense of 'being able to afford' stronger environmental measures, is responsible for these cyclical movements. While considerable attention has been paid on the influence of economic variables on environmental concern and action at the individual level (cf. Lowe and Rüdig 1986), no systematic attention has so far been paid to the influence of changing economic indicators and expectations over time.

Figure 4: Economic Expectations, Unemployment, Inflation and the Standing of the Greens



Sources: Gallup Political Index, 1989-1993; Economic Trends, 1989-1993

In Figure 4, we plotted the main objective and subjective economic indicators pertaining to the period under investigation, together with the standing of the Greens. Unemployment had been falling steadily for some time by 1989, but inflation had been rising sharply. These conditions could be seen as typical for the final section of an economic boom period, and the incidence of a rise in environmental concern and associated actions at that time fits Lowe and Goyder's theory quite well. As the economy moved into recession, unemployment started rising again in 1991, while inflation started to came down as the economy moved further into recession. Objective economic indicators thus changed in such a way as to create less favourable conditions for the Greens in the early 1990s.

Interestingly, subjective expectations of economic futures[21] have very little relation to

[21] Gallup asked: How do you think the general economic situation in this country will develop over the next 12 months? (Will improve, will worsen, will stay the same).

environmental concern and the attraction of the Greens. In fact, 1989 was a time when those fearing a worsening of the economic situation were considerably more numerous than those who expected further improvement. The gap had closed by 1991 and gave way to heavy fluctuations, as claims and counter-claims about the end of the recession seemed to create major uncertainty about the future of the economy. Expectations of improving economic conditions may thus have been an important factor in the government's successful election campaign but they certainly were not associated with any greater salience awarded to environmental issues.

These results show that the interrelationship between economic expectations, objective economic indicators and environmental concern is rather complicated. The salience of environmental concern appears to rise only on the basis of actual experience of economic growth and well-being, whereas rising expectations about an economic up-turn are not necessarily associated with a higher salience for environmental issues.

One could speculate about the impact of a revitalisation of the economy on environmental conern. With unemployment falling again, and economic growth rates showing an upward trend in 1993, can we expect a revival of environmental concern? It is true that MORI data show a clear upward environmental trend in 1993, but such a movement has not so far manifested itself in the public agenda. The Gallup data on the importance of the environment as a political issue indicate that throughout 1993, only 1-2% saw the environment as one of the top two political issues. However, the Green Party's fall in membership figures finally appears to have bottomed out by the end of 1993, with a small rise in membership between September and November 1993. If we continue to follow Lowe and Goyder's (1983) notion of major rises in environmental activity coinciding with the final part of economic boom periods, we would not expect a major environmental boom to follow straight after a recession when the economic pains of that time still are fairly dominant in people's minds. What we could expect, perhaps, is an end to the rapid decline and a gentle stabilisation of environmental activity.

PARTY RESPONSIVENESS

In 1988 and 1989, all established parties were scrambling to obtain a green profile. This was not always very convincing as the two main parties in particular had largely ignored the environment for some time. It was certainly not very easy for the Conservatives who had previously been rather unreceptive to environmental initiatives under Mrs. Thatcher. At the level of European Community politics, the Conservatives' rejection of environmental arguments and programmes had already led Britain to be labelled 'The dirty man of Europe' (cf. Rose 1990).

All established parties faced specific problems in adapting to the new structure of the political agenda. First, the Conservatives had to combine their environmental record in government with the new environmental enthusiasm of their leader. In that sense, the 1988 Thatcher speech could be seen as an 'own goal': it raised an issue on which the Tories were vulnerable, it sensitized a Conservative electorate to environmental concerns which had

previously been ignored, and it exposed a government record on the environment which was difficult to reconcile with the high moral tone of the Prime Minister's speeches.

For Labour, the rise of the environment as a political issue created other problems. Labour had adopted fairly radical environmental policies during the early to mid-1980s, although it had never made the environment a major issue of national political campaigning. Many radical environmental and peace campaigners who otherwise might have been attracted to the Greens had made it their main strategy to lobby for the adoption of anti-nuclear positions in the trade union and labour movement, and their efforts had had some success. Labour had not only committed itself to a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament but, after Chernobyl in 1986, also to a non-nuclear energy policy involving the eventual closure of all nuclear power stations.

The bitter experience of the 1983 and 1987 election defeats made radical anti-nuclear positions increasingly vulnerable, however. The chief political aim of the Labour leadership after 1987 was to turn the Labour Party into a party which would again attract the 'middle-of-the-road' voter. Attaining respectability in this context invariably meant weakening some of its more radical policy stances, and unilateral nuclear disarmament was a policy which was quickly watered down. When the environment appeared on the agenda in 1988, the whole thrust of Labour policy development was thus against taking on board any further 'radical' policy initiatives. Furterhmore, Labour had to balance the interests of all its constituencies, including those that thought of radical environmental policies as threatening jobs. As Carter (1991) points out, there was no political will in the Labour leadership to give the environment greater prominence after the adoption of its 1986 programme. Labour supporters sensitive to radical ecological and anti-nuclear positions were thus less able than in previous years to see their policies reflected in the posture of the Labour Party.

Of all the established parties, the Liberal Party had always shown the greatest sympathy for environmental concerns. Its 1979 manifesto came very close to pure green positions on many issues. It was the first established British party to turn against nuclear energy (cf. Mez and Rüdig 1979), and it had a major wing whose main policy positions were very close to the Greens. The rise of environmental issues after 1987 came, however, at a rather difficult time for the Liberals. Their alliance with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) had now failed twice, in 1983 and 1987, to produce the desired political breakthrough. Immediately after the 1987 election, the project of a merger between the two parties started to be discussed in a very controversial fashion. Some among the SDP and Liberals passionately opposed the merger, and both parties entered a period of extreme turmoil. The immediate impact on them was devastating. Their poll rating nose-dived, their predicament became the subject of political jokes, and few voters took the new party seriously. Moreover, the merger discussions were not good news for the 'green' wing of the Liberals. The SDP was known to have very different ideas on civil and military nuclear policy issues, for example, and it was feared that the compromises necessary to make the merger work would mean that the Liberals' green edge would have to go or be substantially blunted.

When the European Elections came along, all established parties thus had their weak spots, particularly in terms of their ability to respond to an environmentally concerned electorate.

Following the Greens' 1989 success, all the major parties made special efforts to sharpen up their environmental policies. The government published a White Paper, *Our Common Inheritance*, in September 1990, to be followed within a month by the publication of 'weighty policy statements' by Labour and the Liberal Democrats (Flynn and Lowe 1992, p. 34). It is an interesting question to analyse to what extent the events of 1989-1990 had a lasting political effect. Undoubtedly, the importance of the 'environment' as an issue was enhanced, and the position of those arguing for a more pro-environmental stance within the major parties, and within government, was strengthened, at least temporarily. Nevertheless, the response of the government and the major political parties has continued to be disappointing from the point of view of many environmentalists (Cf. Robinson 1992; O'Riordan 1992; Flynn and Lowe 1992; Ward and Samways 1992).

Whatever the real changes, the important question for us is the perception of these changes by the electorate. In Table 1, responses are given to a question that asked respondents which party's view on the environment comes closest to their own view for the years 1986 to 1991. The results show quite clearly that the rise of the Greens was associated with a remarkable increase in the share of the population that endorsed their environmental policies: up from 6% in 1987 to 25% in 1990.

Table 1: Endorsement of Party Environmental Policies. 1986-1991[a]

Question: Which political party's views on the environment would you say come closest to your own views?

Year	Cons	Lab	All/Lib. Dems[b]	Green	Don't know
1986	13	14	9	4	54
1987	16	12	10	6	53
1990	15	16	4	25	33
1991	15	16	12	17	32

a) Cell entries are percentages. Percentages do not add up to 100% as the shares for other answers (None, Other parties) and those refusing to answer are not displayed. N (weighted) for each wave = 1548 (1986), 1375 (1987), 1345 (1990), 1422 (1991).

b) For 1985, 1986 and 1990, the figures given represent the sum of scores given to all centre parties.

Source: Brook *et al.* 1992, p. S-13; British Social Attitude Surveys 1990, 1991.

For the two major parties, the level of support for their environmental policies hardly changed at all. Clearly, their attempts to claim the environmental high ground in 1990 failed to attract any further support for their environmental policies. Instead, the Greens appear to gain most support between 1987 and 1990 from the previous 'Don't Knows'. The only movement in 1991 is between the Greens and the Liberal Democrats. Despite the down-turn

in green fortunes in 1991, the Greens still received a higher level of support for their environmental policies than any other party. With their general political standing increasing, it is the Liberal Democrats that improved their position more markedly between 1990 and 1991.

But overall, these figures are disappointing for the Liberal Democrats. The Liberals were clearly recognised by environmentalists as the most pro-environmental major party in the 1980s. Dalton's 1985 study of environmental organisations, for example, showed that, unlike in most of the rest of Europe, environmentalists in Britain evaluated the Liberals' environmental record as better than Labour's (cf. Dalton 1992; Rohrschneider 1990). But in the late 1980s, the population appears to display little appreciation of that stance, and even in 1991, the Liberal Democrats were still trailing all other parties in terms of their perceived environmental credibility.

These data clearly do not support the thesis that the decline of the Greens was mainly a response to the established parties' success in reclaiming public credibility on the environment. Equally, there is no evidence here that the green rise was mainly due to established political parties losing their credibility in the environmental field. Instead, the data demonstrate that, prior to the green wave of 1989, half of the electorate did not know which party was closest to their own view of environmental policy. The rise of the environment as a major issue, and increased media coverage of the Greens following their 1989 success, appears to have mobilised greater numbers of those who previously did not approve of any of the established parties' environmental policies to declare their support for the Greens. With the decline in the salience of the environment, and a subsequent decline in the public presence of the Greens, we could thus expect that the figures would slowly reverse their pre-1990 standings, with a new increase in the 'Don't Know' group of environmental party-political agnostics.

Further analysis of the relationship between the endorsement of particular parties' environmental policy and party preference in a General Election[22] confirms this. A virtually identical pattern can be established for the major parties for all years: 85%-90% of those endorsing Conservative and Labour environmental policies are supporters of that party. As we would expect, strong partisans support the policies of 'their' party. For the Liberal Democrats, only around 45%-50% of those endorsing their environmental policies are Liberal Democrat supporters, with the rest coming from supporters of other parties. In 1990, 28% were Labour and 19% Conservative surpporters; in 1991, 31% were Conservative and only 15% Labour supporters. This gives some indication that, unlike the Conservatives and Labour, the Liberal Democrats do attract support for their environmental policies across party-political lines. Support for green environmental policies also comes from all political quarters: in 1990, 31% of those endorsing Green Party environmental policies were Conservative voters, 40% Labour, but only 9% Liberal Democrats and the SDP. The figures for 1991 were quite similar: 27% Conservatives, 38% Labour and 11% Liberal. However, these percentage differences mainly reflect the poll standing of the parties at the time rather

[22]The question is: 'If there were a general election tomorrow, which party party do you think you would be most likely to support?'

than the respective share of environmentally inclined supporters of major parties. They also provide an indication that a certain share of voters of all major parties is prepared to endorse the Green Party's environmental policy.

If we look at how many of those voting for established parties support 'their' party's environmental policies and how many Green Party environmental policy, there is a remarkable stability. In all four years, roughly about one third of Labour and Conservative voters support 'their' party's environmental policies, the figure for the centre parties is usually closer to the 25% mark. In 1986 and 1987, around 50% of voters of established parties (irrespective of party) said they did not know which party's environmental policy they endorsed. For 1990 and 1991, the figure had gone down to around 30%. The main beneficiaries were the Greens, but the move to the Greens was fairly evenly spread and not limited to supporters of one of the major parties. In 1990 (1991), 22%(13%)of Conservative, 26%(18%) of Labour and 29%(17%) of Liberal Democrat supporters endorsed Green Party environmental policies. The drop in support for the policies of the Greens from 1990 to 1991 mainly benefitted the Liberal Democrats.

Thus, it appears that the rise and fall of the endorsement of Green Party environmental policy is mainly a reflection of fluctuations in general environmental concern. Over all four surveys, there was very little fluctuation in the declared electoral support for the Green Party,[23] and the endorsement of the Green Party's policies on the environment appears to have practically no effect on intended voting choice.[24]

In our effort to ascertain where support for the Greens has come from in the past and is likely to come from in the future, we also looked at support for the Green Party's policies in relation to the degree of attachment to the established parties. The British Social Attitudes surveys employ a series of questions to measure the degree of party identification. Respondents are first asked whether they think of themselves as a supporter of a political party, and those answering in the affirmative are classified as 'partisans'. Those who do not classify themselves as 'supporters' are asked whether they are closer to one party than another, and those who are qualify as 'sympathisers'. Those who are neither partisans or symphatisers but are prepared to state a probable voting preference for the next General Election[25] are classified as 'residual party identifiers'.

In Table 2, we show the percentage indicating that the Green Party's views on the environment were closest to their own by degree of party identification per party, . First, it is noticeable that the differences between the different degrees of party identification in the willingness to support the Greens' environmental policies are not that great, and neither are the differences between the three established parties. Even strong partisans of all three parties are supporting the Greens' rather than their own party's environmental policies. There are

[23] Separate figures for the Green Party are available for 1989 (0.9%) 1990 (2.7%) and 1991 (2.0%). All percentage figures exclude those respondents who did not state a party preference.

[24] These BSA surveys do not contain any similar question on the endorsement of party policies on other political issues.

[25] See Footnote 22 for the question wording.

some more subtle differences, though, which are worth highlighting. Among Conservatives, it is those least attached to the party who are most attracted to the Greens while among Labour supporters, this is virtually the other way round. The Greens are obviously no great competitors for wavering Labour supporters, but they are (or at least were in 1990 and 1991) for wavering Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.[26]

Table 2: Support for Green Party's views on the Environment and Party Identification 1986-1991

Party	Degree of Partisanship	Year 1986	1987	1990	1991	(Average N)
Cons	Partisan	2	5	22	10	(320)
	Sympathiser	1	3	20	19	(133)
	Residual id.	3	0	32	19	(43)
Labour	Partisan	7	9	27	19	(281)
	Sympathiser	5	9	28	23	(146)
	Residual id.	0	4	20	7	(77)
Alliance/	Partisan	10	10	28	14	(62)
Lib Dems	Sympathiser	7	6	36	16	(76)
	Residual id.	3	4	30	23	(59)
Average (Total population)		4	6	25	17	(1423)

Source: British Social Attitude surveys.

Again, we find that a very broad section of the population is moved by the new environmental issues. This new politicisation of the environment cuts across all established political cleavages. In origin and effect, it seems to have been largely blind to party politics, and consequently,the green wave of 1989 looks unlikely to have left a major mark on the pattern of party allegiance and voting choice in the 1990s.

THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

European Elections are commonly seen as 'second-order elections' (Reif 1984): no government is elected, and the impact of the election on the electorate is judged to be minimal. For this type of election, turn-out can be expected to be lower than for 'first order' elections, such as national parliamentary elections, and voters are thought to be more willing to vote for smaller parties, for example to register a 'protest' in order to send a message to the party they would normally have supported. Arguably, elections to the European Parliament

[26] Not shown are the percentages for Green party supporters because of the very small numbers (1990 and 1991: 27 cases). Amongst all categories of supporters, the endorsement of Green Party environmental policy was 100% in 1991 and slightly less in 1990. The support for green environmental policies of those who could not be linked to any of the parties was below average.

have a particularly low standing in Britain, partly because of very low levels of British appreciation for European institutions. Turn-out in Britain was the lowest of all European Community countries, at 36.6% (Mackie 1990).

In this context, the chances for some 'experimental' voting in the European Elections were particularly great in Britain. As we saw, there were good reasons for environmentally minded Conservative, Labour and Liberal supporters not to vote for 'their' party this time and 'protest' against the failure of the main parties to take the environment seriously. They could do so in the European Elections without fear that their vote would get 'their' parties into any serious difficulty. Furthermore, potential supporters of the Greens would have been encouraged by results in national opinion polls published in the national press shortly before the elections, giving the Party five per cent of the vote.[27] Above all, because there are only 78 Euro-constituencies in Great Britain (plus one constituency electing three MEPs in Northern Ireland), rather than the more than 650 that are contested in a General Election, it is much easier for a small party to field candidates in every constituency, thus raising its public profile and giving every potential supporter the opportunity to be counted.

Apart from those voting green for essentially environmental reasons, we also have to consider the possibility of centre-right voters wishing to register a protest vote against the government while not going so far as to vote Labour. In that context, the poor performance of the Liberal Democrats becomes particularly significant as they would have been the 'natural' beneficiaries of Tory protest votes. With both previous Conservative and Alliance voters unattracted by an out-of-sorts new Social and Liberal Democratic Party, the Greens offered themselves as an ideal option. As we will show below, substantial green support in 1989 came from previous Conservative and Liberal/SDP voters. The Greens also did particularly well in traditional Tory constituencies in the South of England in which the Liberal/SDP Alliance had come second in the General Election in 1987 (Adonis 1989; Frankland 1990; Rootes 1991a,b,c). Furthermore, considering future voting choices, Greens and Liberal Democrats occupy essentially the same electoral 'space' with sympathisers of both parties more likely to vote Green or Liberal Democrat, respectively, rather than Labour or Conservative (cf. Rüdig and Franklin 1992). The strength of the Liberal Democrat vote is thus likely to be of particular importance for the Greens. As Figure 5 shows, the Greens appear to have benefitted from a trough in Liberal Democrat support in 1989, but rising support for that party made life rather more difficult for the Greens.

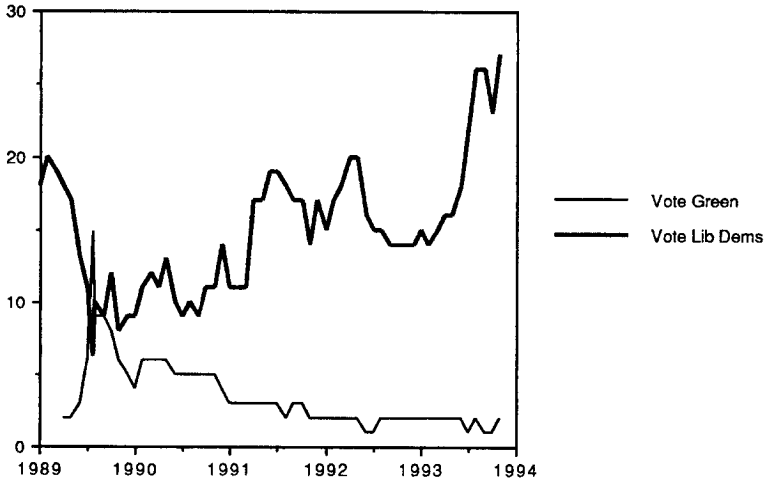
The political context of the General Election which finally was called for April 1992 was markedly different from that in 1989. The first-order nature of this election had a major impact on the motivation structure of both previously disaffected supporters of the major parties as well as for those not close to any party.

By 1992, the Liberal Democrats appeared to have reconstituted themselves as the undisputed third force in British politics. Opponents of the merger had been sidelined and seemed

[27] This may have provided a particular incentive for green supporters to go out and vote. Five per cent of the national vote roughly translates into 15 per cent in the actual European poll, in which only about a third of the electorate bothered to vote; but see below.

destined for political oblivion. The new merged Party seemed well on the way to recapturing lost ground. Furthermore, with both major parties failing to open a decisive lead in the opinion polls before April 1992, there was real hope that the Liberal Democrats could hold the balance of power in the next parliament. With the prospect of wielding real power apparently in sight, Liberal Democrat supporters and sympathizers were well motivated to vote for 'their' party this time.

Figure 5: Poll standing of Liberal Democrats and Greens, 1989-1993



Source: Gallup Political Index, 1989-1993; European Election Result, June 1989.

For Conservative and Labour, the approaching General Election signalled the return to traditional two-party adversary politics. For the first time since 1979, Labour really seemed to have a realistic chance of winning, and for a time the Conservative government looked doomed to loose its majority. For the supporters of these parties, there was thus sufficient motivation to vote for them rather than turn to any other party. For those unattached to any of the main parties, the closeness of the election outcome provided a major incentive to decide between one of the two main parties. The traditional third party squeeze was thus back in operation, particularly as this was now a 'first order' election where experiments are shunned and turn-out is much higher. The re-emergence of the Liberal Democrats as the 'third party' made this even worse for the Greens whose political starting point was thus not very promising.

THE GREENS' OWN CONTRIBUTION

The salience of environmental issues, the predicaments of the established parties, and the specific character of European Elections in Britain all created a major opportunity for the Green Party in 1989. But in order to take advantage of this opportunity, the Greens had to make their own contribution. They had to be 'electable' which, in the context of a 'minor' election judged to be of limited importance, essentially meant that they had to make themselves 'visible' enough; and they had to be seen as 'serious' enough to be considered a proper vehicle for any protest messages - if, indeed, 'protest' is the correct term to characterize the voters' motivation.

By 1989, the Green Party had come a long way from its rather inauspicious beginning as 'People' in the early 1970s. It had overcome some major image problems of the 1970s and had managed to establish itself as the most important minor party in British politics in 1979 with a respectable electoral performance and a major increase in members (Rüdig and Lowe 1986). Since then, the Party had managed to be taken seriously at least in environmental circles and had built up a core of activists which guaranteed a minimum national profile throughout the 1980s.

The campaign the Party was able to mount in 1989 was 'respectable' in several ways. It achieved good national visibility with a high-profile national election broadcast, produced at cost price by a team of well-regarded professionals, including the well-known fashion photographer David Bailey. In terms of its resources, the Party managed to field candidates in all constituencies across the entire country (including Northern Ireland), the first time it had achieved this in its history. This was of crucial importance for establishing credibility: it made news and demonstrated that the Party was an 'up-and-coming' force which was established at national level.

Without the facilitating factors outside its control, namely the structure of the national political agenda and the particular problems of all established parties, combined with the particular nature of the European Elections in Britain, the Green Party probably would not have done terribly well. But, being presented with a good opportunity, the Party had attained enough visibility and credibility to be seriously considered by many voters for the very first time. As the membership figures show, Party membership started to pick up steeply well before the election actually took place, so we can deduce that many people also started thinking about joining the Party who had previously not done so.

By the time of the General Election of 1992, however, the enthusiasm of 1989 had long cooled off. Since its 1989 success, the Party had spent some time enmeshed in a deep constitutional debate about its internal structure, and financial problems had started to materialize. A major internal reform programme, called 'Green 2000', had been heatedly discussed and finally adopted in September 1991. The new structure sought to streamline the internal organisation of the Party, introducing an executive council and two principal speakers to give it a more coherent image and a stronger decision centre at national level (cf. Evans 1991, 1993). But the debate over this new structure gave a negative slant to much of what little media coverage, now limited essentially to conference time, the Party could

command. At the same time, the Party found itself having to tighten its belt substantially. In the heyday of its 1989 success it had expanded its range of activities substantially, employing more staff to run its campaigning and starting many other initiatives, financed by fees from the booming membership; but when new members failed to join in sufficient numbers and renewal rates started to drop, the financial basis for this activity was removed.

Beset by a lack of resources and a fair degree of internal strife, the Party seemed ill-prepared for the election in April 1992; and it mustered candidates in only 253 constituencies. This was up considerably from 133 in 1987, but the failure to field candidates all over the country - a daunting financial task when deposits of £500 per candidate had to be raised - created an electoral situation that compared unfavourably with the European Elections. For the media, the novelty interest of the Green Party was also largely gone, to be replaced by novelty interest in other new parties, including 'maverick' parties such as the well-funded 'Natural Law Party'. The Greens effectively made no impact at all on the election campaign. Their result of 1.3% in the constituencies they contested was slightly down on the 1.4% they had polled in 1987.[28]

EXPLAINING CHANGES IN GREEN PARTY SUPPORT

This account of changing Green Party fortunes seems to provide initial support for a number of the hypotheses outlined earlier. There was indeed in 1989 unprecedented interest in a new political concern which was not adequately represented by existing parties. The up- and down-swing of the Greens was clearly in line with a general change in environmental attitudes and behaviour. The determining impact of the economic cycle on the changes does not, however, appear to be as strong as previously thought. Attitude and action appear to respond more clearly to the issue-attention cycles relating to key individual issues. The role of the political cycle is also clearly of major importance. The suggestion that it is lack of party responsiveness which gave rise to the up-swing of the Greens and subsequent responsiveness which explains the down-swing was not supported by the evidence examined. More crucial, however, is the suggestion that it is the weakness of an opposition party which sparks of the rise of new parties. In this case, the Greens were given an opportunity to become Britain's third party by the near self-destruction of the Liberal Democrats. Its revival and its prospects of holding the balance of power in a new parliament changed the political opportunity structure of the Greens profoundly.

In order to evaluate the relative importance of these various explanations, we conducted a multi-variate analysis of the determinants of the changes in the Greens' standing in the polls from 1989 to 1993, using a dataset with monthly figures on economic indicators, the parties' standing, and environmental concern. Table 3 shows that three variables, the level of unemployment, environmental concern, and the standing of the Liberal Democrats explain 75% of the variance. As predicted, the standing of the Conservatives and Labour does not correlate strongly (at bivariate level) with the standing of the Greens. This provides further support for the relevance of the independent variables we have discussed.[29]

[28] We are grateful to the Green Party's national election agent, Chris Rose, for supplying all data on the Green Party's electoral record.

Table 3: Determinants of Green Party's standing, 1989-1993

IN EQUATION			
VARIABLE	BETA	SIGF	LABEL
ENVCON	.39000	.000	Salience of the Environment
NPTYLIB	-.33632	.001	LibDem poll standing
UNEMP	-.30404	.010	Unemployment rate
(CONSTANT)		.000	

Variance explained: r^2=.75, r^2 adjusted=.73; N=49

The type of analysis whose results are displayed in Table 3, however, has severe limitations. Times series analysis, besides sometimes (though not in this case) yielding problems of over-identification, also has the deficiency of explaining only when changes occur rather than to whom those changes occurred. If we want to understand effects on individuals we have to employ individual level data.

In the next section of this paper we will investigate the concomitants of Green Party voting in the 1989 European Elections, and use the European Election Study questions about future vote intentions as a basis for informed speculation about what happened in the General Election of 1992 to those who voted Green in 1989. After that we will turn to a more elaborate investigation of party membership.

The Green Voter

Our exposé of the specific circumstances of the 1989 European Elections would already suggest a number of characteristics of those who voted Green in 1989. First, we have strongly implied that green voting is somehow related to environmental concern. Green voters would thus be characterized by seeing the environment as an important political issue. This is not quite as self-evident as it may appear. If, for example, the vote for the Greens is a pure 'protest' vote against the government or the 'establishment' generally, then we would not necessarily expect that protest voters would be particularly concerned about the environment. Alternatively, some political scientists have classified green parties as 'new politics' or 'left-libertarian' parties. Following such theories (cf. Inglehart 1977, 1990; Kitschelt 1988), one would expect green voting to be more associated with a preference for post- materialist values and a concern for 'New Left' issues which may or may not include the environment.

[29] For obvious reasons, the standing of the Greens is not independent of the standing of all other parties together. A regression in which the poll data for Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats together are used as independent variables to explain the Green Party's standing would probably achieve a high level of variance explained but any inference of causal effects would obviously be completely spurious. However, we feel justified in including the standing of the Liberal Democrats in the time series analysis because we are dealing with two small parties, and any resulting bias is thus not likely to be great.

We also suggested in the previous section that one particular environmental issue, namely the greenhouse effect, had a special function for the rise of British environmentalism in the late 1980s. Concern about global warming, we suggested, mobilized people who were not necessarily those displaying a generally high concern about the environment. We would thus expect to find some relationship between concern about the greenhouse effect and green voting, even if we control for general environmental concern. An issue of crucial importance to continental green parties is nuclear power. Greens are fundamentally opposed to nuclear power. We would thus also expect that anti-nuclear sentiments are a predictor of green voting choice.

Second, if we are right about the difficulties that all three major parties found in coping with the environment as a major political issue, we could expect that previous voters for all these parties would move to support the greens in equal numbers. Again, such an hypothesis is counteracted by the notion of greens as 'left-libertarians' which would suggest that it is mainly supporters of Labour and, perhaps, the Liberals who would consider voting green.

Lastly, we have theories of 'flash parties' on the one hand and theories of green politics on the other making different predictions about other characteristics of green voting: flash party theory would expect these voters to have a low education level and no attachment to any party. Various theories of green politics (cf. Lowe and Rüdig 1986) would all predict green voters to be young and highly educated. The only common ground consists of the prediction that these voters have no strong attachment to any party.

WHY THEY VOTED GREEN IN 1989

What do we find? Table 4 gives the bivariate correlations between green voting and a number of variables, as well as the results of multivariate analyses of the effects of these characteristics on decisions to vote Green or not.[30]

[30] The dependent variable used is a dichotomy between green voters (N=108) and non-green voters (N=515). Respondents who did not vote in the European elections were excluded. The dataset is weighted by the appropriate weight variable for UK respondents.

Given that our dependent variable is a dichotomy (voted Green or not), strictly speaking what we are predicting is the probability of a Green vote by a respondent with given characteristics. In such circumstances, a Logit or Probit analysis would be more appropriate from a strictly statistical viewpoint, and we did in fact perform a logistic regression analysis of the same data. However, the coefficients deriving from such an analysis are not as readily interpretable as OLS regression coefficients, and since they showed the same pattern of effects as the regression coefficients, we preferred to report the latter.

The independent variables are as follows: Age in years (not collapsed); Education as age when left full time education, collapsed into five categories; Postmaterialism is a dichotomy, post-materialists vs. others; 'Reason for voting: warning to government' is also a dichotomy with those having voted for national reasons to give the government a warning set against all others; party attachment has four categories (very close, fairly close, merely a sympathizer, close to no party); environmental concern is a dichotomy, those giving the environment as the first or second most important problem set against the rest; nuclear power is a three category variable (it is worthwhile, no particular interest, unacceptable risk involved); attitude to the greenhouse effect is also measured with three categories (Cannot discuss or not very serious, quite serious,

The main socio-demographic correlates of green voting are youth and education. Youth turns out to be marginally more important. It has to be noted that there is no bivariate relation at all if we relate green voting to the population as a whole rather than to those voting in the 1989 European Election. While of those taking part in the election, younger people were more likely to vote green, younger people in general were far less likely than older people to vote at all.[31] In that sense, the Green Party did not specifically manage to motivate young people to come out and vote for it.

Post-materialist values are only very weakly correlated with green voting. There are lots of non-postmaterialists voting green, and lots of postmaterialists not voting green (cf. Franklin and Rüdig 1992b for a more extensive analysis of this point). There is no statistically significant relationship between left-wing political orientation and green voting (co-efficients not shown). Green voters see themselves and the Party slightly more to the left than others, but not by much.[32]

Turning to environmental issues, there are strong bivariate correlations between green voting and general environmental concern as well as concern about the greenhouse effect. The correlation with anti-nuclear views is very small, however.[33] About 53% of green voters thought of the environment as one of the top three political issues, as opposed to only 30% of the electorate as a whole. Clearly, this confirms our thesis that the rise of the environmental issue in Britain in 1988 and 1989 was a major contributory factor in the rise of green voting.

Once we control for environmental concern, anti-nuclear positions and post-materialism does not add anything to the variance explained,[34] but concern about the greenhouse effect does. These results provide strong confirmation of our assessment of the role of the greenhouse issue for the politicisation of the environment in the late 1980s.

One other factor which is also commonly seen to be associated with green voting is a low level of party identification. According to one theory (Inglehart 1990) it is highly educated voters with post-materialist value orientations who have lost any firm attachment to political

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very serious).

[31] In fact, there is a negative correlation ($r=-.242$, $p\leq 0.001$) between age and participation in the European elections.

[32] Voters saw the Party as more to the left than themselves, but this did not apparently discourage them from voting for it. This suggests that, contrary to the views of some commentators who argued that green voters did not know what they were voting for, many voters were aware that the Party was more 'radical' and left-of-centre than themselves but voted for it anyway.

[33] This result confirms previous analyses which showed that anti-nuclear attitudes form a very specific attitude dimension in Britain which is no necessarily associated with general environmental concern but tends to correlate strongly with voting Labour; see Heath *et al.* 1991; Norris 1992; Pattie *et al.* 1991; Whitherspoon and Martin 1992.

[34] Whether we should control for environmental concern when studying the effects of postmaterialism depends on where you think this variable falls in causal sequence. For an extensive analysis of this question that supports the procedure we use here, see Franklin and Rüdig (1992b).

parties that provide the key support group for green parties and new social movements. At least in Britain, this does not appear to have been a major factor in 1989. Green voters are only marginally less attached to political parties than the electorate at large.

Table 4: Characteristics of Green Voters 1989[a)]

Variable	Pearson's r	Regression Coefficient (BETA)
Youth	.177***	.115**
Years in full-time education	.158***	.063n.s.
Postmaterialism	.071*	.004n.s.
Importance of Environmental Protection	.216***	.156***
Concern about Greenhouse Effect	.202***	.151***
Concern about Nuclear Power	.080*	.065n.s.
Party identification (Are you close to any political party?)	-.070*	.082*
Reason for voting choice: Warning to government	.192***	.205***
Variance explained		r^2=.15 r^2 adjusted =.13

a) Standardized regression coefficient. Level of statistical significance: *** p≤0.001; ** p≤0.01, * p≤0.05; n.s. not significant at p≤0.05 level.

More interesting, however, is the response to the question why voters voted the way they did. The main difference between green voters and other voters is that about 16% of green voters as opposed to 4% of non-green voters voted to give a 'warning' to the government - a clear indication of a 'protest vote' motivation for green voting. In terms of the total share of 'protest voters' thus identified, it does not look a very substantial group, and it adds to the evidence that a substantial part of the 'green vote' was not purely negative.[35] But if we enter a 'protest vote' variable into the regression equation, which contrasts those voting to give a 'warning' to government with all other responses taken together, we find that it does add to the variance explained, and the effect turns out to be one of the strongest of any in Table 4.

The result of the regression analysis clearly falsifies the traditional hypotheses about 'flash

[35] The NOP/Independent survey asked green voters whether their vote had been 'mainly a vote in favour of them' or 'mainly a vote against the other parties'. 74% declared they voted positively in favour of the Greens, 16% said they voted 'against the other parties' (Kellner 1989).

party' supporters. Youth, high levels of environmental concern, a particular concern about global warming, and a desire to give a warning to the government emerge as the most important predictors of 1989 green voting. The 1989 British green voters also fails to conform to the patters of continental, in particular German, green voting associated more strongly with a left-wing, post-materialist, anti-nuclear electorate. None of these variables figures in our regression model of green voting in Britain.

The 1989 green vote was clearly very broadly based. This becomes particularly clear if we look at the previous voting behaviour of green voters.

Table 5: Previous Voting Behaviour of 1989 Green Voters

Party Supported in 1987 General Election	1989 Green Voters %	All 1989 Voters %
Conservative	24.7	38.8
Labour	18.5	32.7
Alliance	27.1	14.8
Green Party	7.4	1.2
Others	2.5	2.1
Abstention, Don't Know	19.7	10.4

The specific context of the 1989 European Elections would lead us to expect that environmentally inclined supporters of all three main parties would have reasons not to support 'their' party this time. As Table 5 shows, the Green Party was supported by previous supporters of all three parties. Previous Alliance voters are most prominent, followed by previous Conservative voters, while Labour voters were of least importance.[36] As analysed in greater detail elsewhere (Rüdig and Franklin 1992), the strong support coming from former Conservative and centre party voters is highly unusual in European comparison. Given the particular circumstances of the Tories' relationship to environmental politics, this is not entirely surprising. What remains to be seen, however, is which of these 1989 Green Party voters were most likely to desert the Party during the ensuing down-turn in party fortunes.

WHY THEY DID NOT VOTE GREEN IN 1992

What happened to 1989 Green Party voters in 1992? We have to be careful not to overstate the change from 1989 to 1992: the 1989 result was achieved with a very low turnout with every voter in the country having a chance to vote green. In 1992, a much higher turnout and the lack of opportunities to vote green in substantially more than half of all constituencies

[36] This results from the Eurobarometre 31a compare well with surveys done by other survey organisations in Britain at roughly the same time. The NOP Poll commissioned by *The Independent* to analyse the 1987 voting behaviour of 1989 green voters produced the following figures: Conservative 29%, Labour 20%, Alliance 27%, Green 6%, Other 3%, Refused/Don't Know 1%, Did not vote 15% (Kellner 1989) Kellner argues that because many 1987 Alliance voters now 'remembered' voting Labour, the share of previous Alliance voters amongst Greens was probably even higher than the survey results suggested.

would have meant a far lower share of the vote even if all 1989 green voters had remained faithful to their European Election choice. But if we consider that of the 2,292,696 Million voters who voted green in the 1989 European Elections, perhaps only around 40% had the chance to vote green again, the 1992 result (170,008 votes) means that perhaps 'only' 4 out of 5 previous green voters turned to other parties in the 1992 General Election.[37]

Which previously Green voters gave their support to other parties in 1992? We have to wait for the results of further surveys of voters to see whether they contain any conclusive evidence as to the characteristics of those 1989 green voters who did and did not remain faithful to the Greens.[38] But with our election data of 1989, we already have some clues as to the nature of that electorate which allow us to anticipate its likely future behaviour.

The picture presenting itself in 1989 was that green voters were not very strongly committed to the Green Party. Of those voting green in 1989, only 42% said that they would vote for the Green Party again at the next General Election. Just 28.4% of 1989 green voters stated that they felt 'close' to the Green Party. This is a markedly lower than in other European countries. 86% of 1989 green voters in Luxemburg, 76% in Belgium, 73% in Germany, 63% in France and 60% in Italy said they would vote green again at the next general election. In the same countries, some 53% on average said that they felt 'close' to the Greens (Franklin and Rüdig 1992a). Those who voted green in 1989, felt close to the Greens, and also intended to vote green at future national elections only make up 1.9% of the total sample in Britain, the country with the lowest level of party identification in the EC. This compares with 10.7% for the Conservatives and 10.1% for Labour (but only 1.6% for the Liberal Democrats). In terms of their future electoral fortunes, the Greens thus appear very far from building a stable electoral base in Britain.

The Green Party may be encouraged by the fact that there were respondents who did not vote green in 1989 but who said that they felt close to the Greens (2.4% of the population) or said they would vote green in the future (4.8%). Of the first group, only 13% voted for another party (Labour or Liberal Democrats) at the European Elections, the rest abstained.[39] The latter group consists virtually entirely of two thirds not feeling close to any party and one third feeling close to the Greens; furthermore, 91% of this group did not actually vote in the European Elections and 43% had not voted in the 1987 elections either. Obviously, the

[37] This also assumes that the 1992 green vote does not contain any 'new' green voters.

[38] We are not presently aware of any post-General Election surveys which asked people about their vote in the 1989 European Election. The 1992 British Election Study did not ask such a question.

[39] The existence of this group of green supporters who did not vote in the European Elections appears to contradict our hypothesis that green supporters were particularly motivated to come out and vote because of the promising opinion poll standing. We have to be careful, however, to what extent the identification with the Greens really preceded the election itself. Apart from that, we also have to consider that green supporters may not have been prepared for the opportunity. Non-voters were asked about the reasons why they did not vote. While most non-voters close to the Greens did not provide any answer to that question, of those who did the most important reason was that they were not on the electoral register (17.4%), a rather higher figure than for the rest of the population (7.6%).

Greens did appeal to a portion of the electorate that was politically 'uncommitted' at that time. Given the previous high abstention rates of the individuals concerned, however, it cannot be expected that these groups will form a reliable future basis of green electoral support.

In the 1989 election study, respondents were asked about their future voting intention in a general election. While this is a poor substitute for a 1992 survey of 1989 green voters, a regression analysis of this variable basically confirms the volatility of the support. We can only explain about 7% of the variance with roughly the same variables which were reasonably good predictors of green voting in 1989 (see Table 6). Interestingly, the intention to vote green again in the future does not appear to depend at all on previous political allegiance,[40] a result which incidentally matches that of the 1989 post-election survey of NOP (NOP Review, No.76, July 1989, p. 23).

More reliable results are obtained once we look at the potential for green voting in the future. The 1989 study also asked a question about the probability of voting green in future national elections, asking respondents to rate that probability between 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely). The average probability score for the Greens is 4.2, and 11.2% gave the Greens a rating of 9 or 10. About a third, 32.6%, gave the Greens the lowest score of 1, expressing an unwillingness to consider a green vote in the future. But two thirds of the population do not completely reject the Greens and can imagine to vote green at some future date, even if, for the great majority of them, it does not appear particularly likely in the nearer future.[41]

Trying to explain the potential attraction to the Greens, a regression analysis reveals that all the variables expected to explain green voting, with the exception of education, make an independent contribution (Table 6). Interestingly, post-materialism now appears as a strong predictor. This suggests that, while post-materialists are particularly attracted to the Greens in Britain as they are elsewhere, they have not been voting for them and are not anticipating voting for them in a specific election to any major extent, unlike those whose main concern is focussed on environmental issues, whether they are post-materialists or not.

As we have seen, questions about the anticipated future voting behaviour of 1989 respondents in specific elections does not allow us to draw any conclusions about the exact place in which Greens find themselves in the realm of party competiton. Questions about the

[40]However, our sample of green voters is so small that there is little point in making detailed comparisons of the intended future political behaviour of different groups of green voters.

[41] Other attempts to quantify the potential for green support in Britain have also found that a reasonably large share of the population can image voting green at some time in the future. In the Eurobarometre survey No. 21 (March-April 1984), the following question was asked: 'Please tell me each time if it is possible or impossible for you to vote one day for a party which will correspond to this description: 'Ecologist'. In Britain, 31% thought it 'possible' to vote for an 'ecologist' party in the future (Inglehart and Rabier 1986, p. 466).

An NOP Poll right after the 1989 European elections (N=649) asked how likely it was 'that you will vote for the Greens at the next General Elections?'. 11% said they were certain to vote green, 25% very likely, 36% fairly likely, 13% fairly unlikely, 5% very unlikely, 2% certain not do, 9% Don't Know. (NOP Report No. 76, July 1989, p. 23).

'potential' vote prove to be more illuminatory. As analysed in greater detail elsewhere (Rüdig and Franklin 1992), Greens were most attractive to potential centre party voters, while potential Labour and Conservative voters were only mildly attracted (Labour) or very unlikely to look at the Greens in a national elections (Conservatives).

Table 6: Determinants of Future and Potential Green Voting (1989)

Variable	Vote Green in next general election	Potential to vote Green in future
Youth	.093**	.136***
Years in full-time education	.040n.s.	.040n.s.
Postmaterialism	.042n.s.	.179***
Importance of Environmental Protection	.116***	.177***
Concern about Greenhouse Effect	.104**	.134***
Concern about Nuclear Power	.082*	.106***.
Party identification (Are you close to any political party?)	-.064*	-.080**
Variance explained	r^2=.07 r^2 adjusted =.07	r^2=.16 r^2 adjusted =.16

a) Entries are standardized regression coefficients (BETA).
Level of statistical significance: *** p≤0.001; ** p≤0.01, * p≤0.05;
n.s. not significant at p≤0.05 level.

An essentially equivalent picture is drawn if we analyse a question on the 'feelings' of individuals towards political parties which the British Social Attitude survey has been asking for some years. The Green Party was only once included in the list of parties, in 1990. In response to the question 'How do you feel about the Green Party?', 7% indicated they felt either 'very strongly' or 'strongly' in favour, 30% felt in favour, and 38% felt neither in favour or against. With 10% unable or unwilling to give a rating, only 13% gave the Greens a negative evaluation (11% against, 2% strongly against, 2% very strongly against; N=1353; Jowell *et al.* 1991, p. 268). Clearly, the Greens cannot count on a very strong positive commitment, but a substantial number of voters, between 30% and 40%, are positively inclined towards the Greens, and most of the rest prefer to give a non-commital answer rather than give them a negative rating.

Table 7: Factor Analysis of 'Feelings' about Political Parties (1990)[a)]

Question: How do you feel about .....(party)?

ROTATED LOADINGS[b)]

	FAC 1	FAC 2
LABOUR	.913	
CONSERVATIVES	-.908	
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS		.801
GREENS		.781
Eigenvalues	1.823	1.118
Variance Explained (Cumulative)	45.58%	73.54%

a) Extraction: Principal Components; Rotation: Varimax, Kaiser Normalization
b) Only loadings ≥.3 are displayed.

If we correlate the feelings for the Greens with those for other parties,[42] the results confirm those obtained by the European Elections study. Positive feelings for the Greens correlate fairly strongly with similar feelings for the Liberal Democrats ($r=.264$, $p\leq0.001$), while Labour supporters are less positively inclined ($r=.133$, $p\leq0.001$) and a positive feeling for the Conservatives is negatively correlated with a high appreciation of the Greens ($r=-.179$, $p\leq0.001$).[43]

An even clearer picture emerges if we conduct a factor analysis of 'feelings' towards the political parties.[44] The factor analysis (Table 7) reveals two very clearly defined dimensions: feelings towards Labour and the Conservatives are diametretically opposed and form one dimension, while Liberal Democrats' and Greens' 'feelings' both load strongly on the second factor. This provides further support for our thesis that the Greens are mainly competing with the Liberal Democrats, and that the increased popularity of that party since 1989 has

[42] Those who 'did not know' or 'could not say' how to rate a party were placed in the neutral category in between the positive and negative evaluations.

[43] Positive feelings towards the Greens also correlate positively with voting for the Scottish National Party ($r=330$, $p\leq0.001$) and Plaid Cymu ($r=.335$, $p\leq0.01$). The correlations between potential green voting and the votential vote for other parties in the European election study were as follows: Labour .097 ($p\leq0.001$); Conservative -.208 ($p\leq0.001$); Liberal Democrats .219 ($p\leq0.001$).(Rüdig and Franklin 1992, p. 51).

[44] Because of the small size of the Scottish and Welsh sub-samples, we excluded the nationalist parties from the further analysis.

been detrimental for the Greens' attempt to survive politically.

The evidence on green voting from the 1989 data thus points towards a fairly volatile situation in Britain. The Greens have quite a number of potential voters; these voters may turn to the Greens in certain circumstances, but then turn away again. The Greens thus are highly dependent on the particular context of each election; they have not built up any sizeable core support. Extreme movements up and down, such as the 'flash party' phase between 1989 and 1992, are thus only to be expected.[45]

The Green Party member

One of the more remarkable features of the up and down movement of green fortunes has been the fairly rapid rise and decline of Green Party membership between 1988 and 1993 (see Figure 1). The Party made a net gain of more than 10,000 members between 1988 and 1990, and made a net loss of more than 13,000 between 1990 and 1993. This rapid movement of people into and out of the Party within a fairly short time-span calls for explanation. In this section, we first concentrate on those new members joining the Party in its boom year of 1989, and then concentrate on those members who left the Party again after 1990. What was responsible for the rapid increase in membership, and how can we explain the steep decline which followed?

JOINING THE GREENS

One way of approaching an explanation of the process of joining a political party is to look at the profile of the membership. What is its socio-economic background, what is the previous political experience of new members, what attitude do members have on certain political issues? Apart from comparing members with the population at large, in this case, we are also interested in comparisons between new members and old members, and between 1989 new members and 1989 green voters.

How do green voters of 1989 compare with the 1989 membership intake of the Green Party? Were the new members as representative of the population at large as green voters? If so, the Party would have considerably widened its membership base, with important implications for future membership potential. In fact this did not happen. Our results are summarized in Table 8. They show quite clearly that the characteristics of Party members match far more closely the picture of green supporters which some theories suggest. Green Party members are distinguished by relative youth, a very high education level, and a preference for post-materialist values. They are mostly professionals, with manual occupations hardly represented, and they place themselves clearly left of centre on the left- right scale. In terms of their previous voting behaviour since 1970, most have voted Labour before (51.4%), fairly closely followed by Liberal or SDP/Liberal Alliance (43.4%). Previous Conservative voters (17.9%) form a rather small minority.

[45] For a very similar assessment of the electoral fortunes of the Liberal Party, see Clarke and Zuk 1989.

Table 8: Characteristics of New Green Party Members 1989 and Green Voters 1989

Variable		1989 New Green Party Members (N=1349)	1989 Green Voters (N=81)	Population (N=957)
Age	18-24	11.7	11.1	13.1
	25-34	33.7	27.2	20.0
	35-44	27.3	24.7	19.4
	45-59	15.8	17.3	18.9
	60 and older	11.6	19.8	28.5
Education (Age left full-time education)	less than 15	10.6	24.7	38.8
	16-17	14.8	32.1	35.8
	18-20	14.5	19.8	11.4
	21 or more	60.1	23.5	14.0-
Occupation	Manual	7.2	22.2	25.3
	White Collar/ Professional	60.0	42.0	27.3
	Retired	7.7	12.3	21.0
	Housewife	7.4	9.9	18.0
	Student	10.4	6.2	4.2
	Unemployed	7.2	3.7	3.3
Left-Right Orientation (Mean Score) 1 Left- 10 Right)	Personal	4.2	5.3	5.7
	Green Party	4.1	4.6	4.4.
Postmaterialism				
	Postmateralist	62.3	32.1	23.5
	Mixed	37.7	53.1	56.7
	Materialist	3.4	14.8	19.6

The profile of the new members of the Green Party is thus different from that of its 1989 voters in certain major respects. Its 1989 vote came from a fairly broad section of the population; its members are drawn from a far more narrowly defined group of people. The Greens were clearly not able to attract members from any sector which has not so far been associated with green politics - say manual workers. In effect, the Green Party captured the same type of people it had always attracted (see Rüdig *et al.* 1991). However, the particular circumstances of 1989/90 upsurge of environmental interest meant that it was able to mobilise

a greater share of its membership potential.

If we compare the background of 1989 new members with those of more long-standing members, we find that, remarkably, the new members who joined the Party during the 'Up-Phase' in 1989 are virtually indistinguishable from the 'old' members of the Party in terms of their socio-demographic background and political socialization. To all intents and purposes, we can therefore take the characteristics of the 1989 intake to be identical to the Green Party membership as a whole.

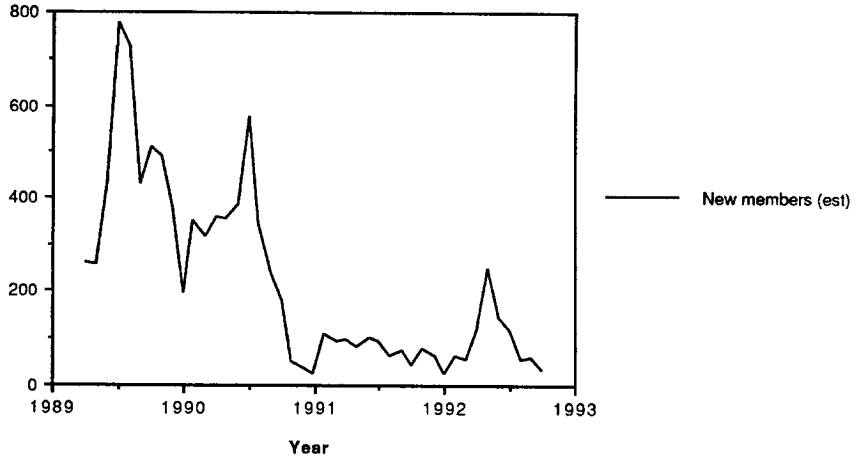
The similarity of the background of new and old members of the Greens Party does not only extend to socio-demographic characteristics but also to the environmental views and political experience of members. Not suprisingly, Green Party members display very pro-environmental views. For example, while only 4% of the general population strongly agree that 'For the sake of the environment, car users should pay higher taxes' (Whitherspoon and Martin 1992, p. 9), 75% of Green Party members do so.[46] There is no significant difference in the strength of environmental views between members joining before 1989 and those joining later.

Previous membership of other political parties, involvement in social movement activities, and membership of various environmental and peace groups all are at broadly the same level amongst new and old members. The majority, about 70%, had not been a member of another political party; of those who had been a member of another party, about half had been a member of the Labour Party and about 35% of the Liberal Party, the Social Democratic Party or the Liberal Democrats. As for social movements, old members generally report higher activity levels in the peace movement and membership of organisations such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace or the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The implications are that the 1989 upsurge in membership did not predominantly rely on activists of other political parties, or peace or environmental activists disaffected with other political parties. While some voters for these other parties were willing to switch their vote to the Greens, we could not find a major realignment of the behaviour of environmental and peace activists in terms of their party orientation. The Party attracted former Labour and Liberal members and social movement activists, although it is difficult to point to any major Labour or Liberal Party figure, or peace or environmental movement activist, who newly identified him/herself with the Green Party. In any case, the bulk of the new membership could not be characterized as such.

These findings clearly suggest that the membership rise of the Greens was not the result of a major shift in the focus of political activists towards the Greens from environmental groups or other parties. The Party simply mobilised a higher share of those it previously had attracted.

[46] The relevant British Social Attitude survey took place in the spring of 1991; the figure for Green Party members relates to a survey conducted in November 1992.

Figure 6: Members Joining per Month, 1989-1992[a)]



a) Estimates based on membership survey results.

While these comparisons between different groups gives us some strong pointers, we cannot easily address the question of why people join the Green Party on the basis of individual-level data. Our dataset does not give us variances between joiners and non-joiners.[47] To go beyond the analysis presented so far, we have to look to our time-series dataset where our dependent variable is the number of members who joined in each month between the March 1989[48] and November 1992.[49] Here our focus necessarily changes from 'why them?'

[47] As the total number of Green Party members is so small, we cannot use surveys pertaining to the general population, for example the British Election study, to contrast Green Party members and non-members, and to compare Green Party members and voters. For a study of Labour Party members comparing members and voters using this technique, see Seyd and Whiteley 1992, pp. 68-73.

[48] We chose March 1989 as the first data point for the following reasons: First, Gallup started monitoring both the salience of the environment and green voting in March 1989. Second, as we conducted our first wave in November 1989 with a sample representative of the membership in June of 1989, our sample will still include those who joined in March 1989 because the three-months grace period given to lapsed subscriptions. The only exception are members who resigned from the Party before their subscription run out. However, we know that only a very small percentage of members resign, and given the small number of members leaving the Party during 1989, this is not likely to lead to any significant bias.

[49] This dataset includes data on the timing of the joining decision by new members joining the Party after our first wave. These data were gathered with two special surveys of new members conducted at the time of the second and third waves of the study. The data was weighted to account for differences in sampling and

(why are these people members and not those?) to 'when then?' (why did so many people join at this point in time and not at some other?).

Using these data, we plotted the estimated total number of members joining the Green Party in each month during this period (see Figure 6). As expected, the graph shows the main peaks in 1989 and 1990. Another, though far smaller peak, occured at the time of the General Elections in April 1992. These peaks are not surprising. First, they move in line with the fluctuations of environmental concern and the economic cycle. In addition, the timing of major national elections, the 1989 European Elections and the 1992 General Election, also has an important impact. This is hardly surprising as the Party mobilizes most of its resources to communicate with the electorate at election time, and the cycle of membership in the past has strongly reflected this (see Rüdig and Lowe 1986). There are no peaks, however, at the time of the main Green Party conferences usually held in September, and other events, such as the Rio Summit, also fail to have any noticeable effect on the number joining the Party.

We investigated the impact of these variables with a regression analysis using our time-series dataset. What we find is that the timing of the two elections are the only event related variables which make a difference. Otherwise, two of the variables that explain much of the fluctuations of Green Party support, namely environmental concern and economic changes, are the main predictors. Together, these four variables[50] explain 88% of the variance in the numbers of those joining the Green Party from month to month, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Joining the Greens: The Economy, Environmental Concern and Election Timing

IN EQUATION			
VARIABLE	BETA	SIGF	LABEL
ENVCON	.58140	.000	ENVIRONMENT 1ST OR 2ND MOST IMPORTANT
UNEMP	-.32865	.000	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
EUEL	.31747	.000	EUROPEAN ELECTIONS JUNE 1989
GENEL	.24330	.000	GENERAL ELECTION APRIL 1992
(CONSTANT)		.000	

Variance explained: r^2=.88; r^2 adjusted=.86; N=42

The surge in green membership responded to much the same factors as the surge in green voting. But while green voters of 1989 came from an unsually wide political background, the profile of the new membership was little different from that of the old. What implications does this have for future membership development? In the past, the average length of time

response rates.

[50] As members are not just likely to join in the month of the election but also during the campaign, and, particularly in case of the 1989 elections, after the election has taken place, we coded the month of the election as 2, the previous and subsequent month 1, and all other months 0.

that a member remained in the Party was about 2 years; the Party always had a fairly high turnover of members (cf. Rüdig *et al.* 1991). Especially in an electoral context that rapidly came to resemble the one that existed before 1989, it was only to be expected that the average duration of membership would remain the same. But because the context for green politics quickly changed for the worse, the Party found it increasingly difficult to make up for the lost members by attracting new ones.

LEAVING THE GREENS

Between the end of 1990 and the middle of 1992, the Green Party lost virtually half of its membership. If we take into account the influx of some new members joining in that period (and new members never did stop joining), the drop-out rate of those who joined the Party in 1989 could have been expected to be well in excess of 50%. This is confirmed by the results of our survey. Of all members surveyed in November 1990, 30% had joined in 1989. Already during 1990, about 10% of those had left the Party. By November 1991, 40% of 1989 members who responded to our second questionnaire had ceased to be members or were about to leave the Party. And by November 1992, almost 50% had left the Party. Assuming that ex-members had less incentive to respond to our second and third questionnaires, we can expect the actual drop-out rate to have been even higher.

The question of why people leave the Party can be answered in three different ways. We can ask directly why they were leaving, we can see what sort of people the leavers were, and we can inquire as to why they left at that particular point in time rather than at some other. We will focus on each of these types of explanation in turn.

Why are they leaving?

We asked respondents why they had left or were thinking about leaving the Party. Following a detailed analysis of an open question on reasons for leaving, respondents were confronted with essentially the same battery of reasons in the second and third wave. There was very little change in the relative importance of reasons from one year to the next, and for the analysis presented here we have combined the responses from both waves (see Table 10).

The single most important reason which emerged was 'demoralisation' about the Party's ineffectiveness: for 33%, that was decisive; as many as 76% of leavers say that was at least 'important'. Clearly, the lack of political achievement in the early 1990s has left many members deeply disappointed. The second most important reason was a 'lack of proper leadership', considered to be at least an important reason to leave by 74%. For 29% it was the decisive reason. The third most popular reason for leaving was the feeling that 'my money is more effectively spent in support of pressure groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth'. 65% gave this as a reason which was at least important; 28% considered it 'decisive'. Fourth and fifth place is taken by people who failed to resubscribe for personal reasons or for a lack of money (Decisive 13% and 16% respectively). Relatively marginal are reasons which relate to allegations of undemocratic structures and centralisation: about 5-6% consider this type of reason to have been decisive. The charge of being inundanted with green mailings turns out to be more important. Only very small minorities declared they left because they had became disenchanted with Green Party policy (Decisive:

3%) or because the Party had turned out to be more radical than they had thought when they joined (Decisive: 5%).

Table 10: Reasons for Leaving the Green Party

Question: Here are a number of reasons why a person could decide to leave the Green Party. How important were these reasons in your particular case?

		Decisive	Very important but not decisive	Important	Not very important	Played no role whatsoever
(a)	I have come to disagree with the Party's fundamental aims	2.7	7.1	13.1	21.4	61.6
(b)	I still agree with the Party's aims but am demoralised by the Party's ineffectiveness within the present political system	32.5	18.9	24.4	14.8	9.3
(c)	The Party lacks proper leadership	28.7	21.0	24.2	13.8	12.3
(d)	The Party has become dominated by a few individuals and ordinary members have no part to play	6.4	11.1	18.7	29.9	34.0
(e)	The Party is more radical and left-wing than I thought it was when I joined	4.7	5.0	9.1	15.0	66.2
(f)	I feel that my money is more effectively spent in support of pressure groups such as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth	27.7	16.3	20.6	11.4	23.9
(g)	My Local Party is run by a small clique of people who have known each other for a long time and who do not make new members very welcome	6.0	5.6	8.5	19.5	60.3
(h)	A change in personal circumstances and/or job duties leave me with no spare time for any political activity	13.1	11.4	17.3	12.9	45.2
(i)	A shortage of money means that I cannot support all the causes I would like, and my subscription will have to wait	15.9	7.8	13.5	14.4	48.4
(j)	The new organisational reforms will turn the Party into a conventional, centralised political organisation. There is no place for me any more in such a Party	4.7	3.7	6.0	20.4	65.2
(k)	I simply forgot to renew my subscription	1.4	2.7	3.3	5.9	86.7
(l)	I would like to support the party passively by paying my subscription but I am tired of receiving frequent requests from my Local Party to take part in local activities	1.7	5.4	9.6	17.4	66.0
(m)	I receive an excessive amount of Party mailings serving no practical environmental purpose	4.6	10.2	15.1	17.0	53.2

N=794.

We conducted a factor analysis of the reasons why people said they were leaving to identify underlying dimensions. The results are presented in Table 11. The first important result is that all three most popular reasons, demoralisation, lack of leadership and greater effectiveness of supporting environmental groups, load on the same factor. Members who are demoralised are very likely to deplore the absence of a more traditional internal structure. But there are also those who leave because they regard the Party's practise as too traditional,

as too centralised with power concentrated in the hands of a few. The presence of such conflicting demands can make the stabilisation of the membership base a difficult enterprise.

The Green Party is competing with other environmental groups and charities for financial resources. While there are some who consider that they cannot afford the membership subscription because of their personal situation, the fact that the perception of money being better spent on supporting environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth loads on the same factor as 'shortage of money' suggests that an evaluation of the effectiveness of spending money on rival 'green' organisations does play a role in some cases. The fourth factor involves minor criticisms of not being allowed to remain passive or receiving too much mail, a minorty concern as we know from Table 10. The complete disenchantment with Green Party policies, forming a fifth dimension together with the perception of the Party being 'too radical, also involves only a minority of around 10% of leavers.

Table 11: Factor Analysis of Reasons for Leaving[a)]

ROTATED LOADINGS[b)]

	FAC 1	FAC 2	FAC 3	FAC 4	FAC 5
Demoralisation	.768				
No leadership	.758				
Env Groups more effective	.512		.344		
Few dominate		.794			
Too centralised		.755			
Local cliques		.630			
No money			.829		
No time			.748		
Want to be passive				.790	
Too many mailings				.769	
Forgot to renew				.436	
Disaffected with aims					.770
Too Radical					.770
Eigenvalues	2.076	1.873	1.483	1.291	1.070
Variance Explained (Cumulative)	15.97	30.38	41.79	51.72	59.95

a) Extraction: Principal Components; Rotation: Varimax, Kaiser Normalization

b) Only loadings ≥.3 are displayed.

One has to ask whether it would have been in the power of the Party to counteract these reasons effectively. The first factor is clearly the most important one in terms of the total numbers involved. The second, implying a criticism of an apparent lackof grass-roots democracy in the Party, clearly mobilised far fewer people. Significantly, both relate to the question of the internal structure of the Party which has been the topic of continuous debate. As we have argued elsewhere (Rüdig *et al.* 1991), a policy of moving towards a more hierarchical structure would have alienated many activists. The Party faced the difficult task of satisfying contradictory demands made by groups of members, and its inability to satisfy either camp completely appears to have contributed to a steady drain of members. Also as far as the other reasons are concerned, it is far from obvious what the Party could have done about them. A reduction of its membership subscription may have prevented the loss of some

members, but at the price of a possibly major loss of income from members. As regards those who do not want to be disturbed by mailings and requests for activism, the Party Office has been receptive to requests to block any new mailings being sent out. The actions of local parties are beyond the bounds of any attempt at a 'central' management of the membership. Furthermore, as more members leave and income dwindles, any Party is tempted to increase the number of mail-shots asking for further financial support. For those who claim a total disenchantment with the Party as reason to leave, given as a very important or decisive reasons by about 10% of leavers, any marginal adjustment the Party could make would be ineffective in any case.

Whatever the exact reason identified by individuals (and we have to consider the influence of ex post rationalisations in this context), the Party has to accept a certain turnover as inevitable. Given that, in Salisbury (1969)'s words, the act of joining the Green Party may be considered a 'marginal' act by many members, any 'slight change of circumstances' could lead to a failure to renew. With the slender ties most Green Party members develop with their Party, and the low cost of not renewing the membership,[51] we have to expect that a significant part of the process of leaving such an organisation occurs in a random way.

The perceived ineffectiveness of the Party, however, does not fall into this category. This raises some fascinating questions: first, what exactly were members' perception of political effectiveness, and what did they expect to happen? Second, why have efforts to reform the Party from within not made more impact on the retention of members? The key initiative dominating party affairs in these years was 'Green 2000', the attempt to reform the internal party structure to give the national party a higher profile and allow it to campaign more effectively, supported by leading national party figures such as Jonathan Porritt, Sara Parkin and Jean Lambert. It was heavily opposed by the 'decentralist' camp, but after much debate, the Green 2000 proposals were finally adopted in September 1991, and a new, 'streamlined' party structure was in place by early 1992. Despite this, membership continued to fall. While a full discussion of the effect or non-effect of internal party re-organisation is beyond the purposes of this paper, an analysis of the type of person leaving the Party may provide part of the answer to these questions.

Who is leaving?

What factors are likely to be relevant in the explanation of leaving? There are a number of theories on which we can draw for an explanation of leaving. From a rational choice perspective, we may conceive of leaving as the result of a cost-benefit calculus. As we have already argued, it is mainly purposive and solidary incentives that we could expect to play a role. Beyond these factors, we can test a number of other hypotheses about the rival attractions of other environmental groups, the effects of learning/socialization, and the importance of 'new politics' variables such as post-materialism. Before we go on to discuss these variables in detail, we have to deal with some important methodological considerations.

[51] The way membership subscriptions are collected involves different 'costs' of non-renewing for individuals. In the days when membership subscriptions were collected personally, a decision not to renew involved a social interaction process which is gone in the days of renewal by cheque or credit card.

In dealing with a dynamic process in a panel study, we have to be particularly careful with the placement of dependent and independent variables in time. For example, if we want to explain leaving with a variable from a time-point after a respondent has already made a decision to leave, we have to be aware of the influence that decision may have on his answer to particular questions. We could expect that responses could be coloured by both ex post rationalisations as well as efforts to reduce post-decision dissonances. For this reason, we have made the most conservative assumptions about possible influences of the dependent variable, leaving, on certain independent variables which offer themselves for an explanation of leaving. In the analysis presented in this paper, we only use variables which stem from waves preceding the actual 'leaving' of the Party, in the form of resignation or lapsed subscription.[52] The only exceptions are two variables which measure actual political behaviour and which are thus far less susceptible to any possible bias than, say, perceptions of the Green Party.

Even if we only use independent variables which precede the dependent variable in time, we also have to consider that 'leaving' is a process which is not necessarily influenced by one particular event at one time point, but through a sequence of events. Indeed, we find that the measurement of probability of leaving in one wave is a fairly good predictor of actual leaving in subsequent waves. Therefore, to be absolutely certain that even variables stemming from one or two waves back are not 'contaminated' by a prior propensity to leave, we control for any such effect by entering the stated probability of leaving in the previous wave in the regression equation. For example, we include the probability of leaving in 1990 and 1991 as a test variable to ascertain which variables can account for any increase in the propensity to leave that might have developed among those who had not already left between November 1990 and November 1991.

While such a design was chosen mainly on methodological grounds, there are also theoretical considerations which lead us to consider this to be a sensible move. We have already seen that the self-reported reasons for leaving do not change significantly over time. If, as we expect, the timing of the decision to leave is largely a random phenomenon, influenced not chiefly by political developments but the mechanics of returning renewal slips (see below)[53], then what we have to look for are factors which increase or decrease the propensity of an individual to leave or stay, and these are likely to be present at the time of joining or, at least, a considerable time before formal transfer from membership to ex-membership.

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[52] We are aware that such a decision has its costs. In dealing with a dynamic process such as leaving over a three year period, it is unavoidable that the timing of the waves is such that change in individuals perceptions and actions occurred in between waves. This could mean that the variables of the prior wave, by definition, are not useful as predictors because they may precede the decision to leave. However, in the present paper, we set out to develop a model of 'leaving' which does allow us to test major theories without the development of elaborate procedures and possibly questionable assumptions to separate genuine change effects from change effects contaminated by post-decision considerations.

[53] We would expect this to be different for party activists but here we are concerned with the membership as a whole.

In this paper, we concentrate on 'leaving' in the third wave as this will best allow us not to relax any of the conservative assumptions we have made and to employ the full range of independent variables at our disposal. The sample used thus only includes first wave respondents who responded to third wave surveys. The chosen sample is representative of Green Party members in mid-1990 but excludes those who left the Party before November 1991.[54] As our main dependent variable, we chose to contrast those who left the Party between November 1991 and November 1992 with those who remained in the Party. In addition, we can add the self-reported probability of renewing the membership subscription as stated in November 1992[55], giving us a four category ordinal level variable: 'left' (0); 'will definitely or probably leave' (1); 'will probably renew' (2); and 'will definitely renew' (3). [56]

What independent variables would we expect to be good predictors of leaving? At the basis of any rational choice model of human behaviour is the idea of a calculus of costs and benefits. Membership in the Greens is not a particularly costly affair. Ordinary membership rates in 1989 were £15 for waged and £6 for unwaged members per annum. During the period of our investigation, the membership rates were only once increased, to £19 and £8 respectively. The rise took effect in May 1991.[57] It would be surprising if this had any major effect, expecially as those on low incomes can join and re-subscribe at a reduced rate. If we look at income levels, then we find that those annual incomes below £5,000 are slightly more likely to drop out. The income variable used in our analysis has thus been coded as a dichotomy where those with annual incomes below £5,000 are set against the rest.

While the cost of membership is too low to play a major role, there are also no material benefits which are likely to motivate members to remain in the Party. Indeed, what sets the Greens apart from any established parties is their total inability to confer any tangible benefits in any form on their members. As part of a battery of questions on benefits and perceived political efficacy[58] we asked whether respondents thought Green Party membership was

[54] Cf. Rüdig *et al.* 1991 for details of first wave sampling and an analysis of response bias. The number of leavers responding to further surveys is less than we would expect from the actual drop-out rates reported by the Party, but a number of preliminary analyses indicate that their is no significant bias in our sample of leavers. A full analysis of panel attrition will be given in Rüdig *et al.* (forthcoming).

[55] We asked the following question in November 1992: 'Are you currently a paid-up member of the Green Party and, if your are, do you intend to renew your membership subscription with the Green Party when it next becomes due? Respose categories: 'I have left the Party', 'I am currently a member but I will definitely not renew my subscription', 'I am currently a member but I will probably not renew my subscription', 'I am still a member and will probably renew my subscription' and 'I am still a member and will definitely renew my subscription'. For our dependent variables, the second and third response categories were collapsed into one.

[56] The frequencies are: Left 355 (22%), Definitely or Probably Leaving 183 (11%), Probably Renewing 455 (28%) and Definitely Renewing 616 (38%)

[57] We are grateful to Penny Shepherd, Green Party Executive, for tracking down this information.

[58] This question battery was constructed by adapting the questions used by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley

good for their careers. In this sample, just 4.5% agreed. Leavers are slightly more forceful in their disagreement with this statement. Any possible influence on Green Party members in these terms is thus clearly associated with a cost, rather than a benefit.

In the absence of any tangible incentives which members of the Party enjoy or could expect to enjoy through their membership, rational choice theory points to other incentives, purposive and solidary. The concept of 'purposive' incentives is rather less specific than the other two. As we are focussing just on membership, rather than on activism, the concept of enjoying belonging to a party, or being part of a purpose, is difficult to put into more concrete terms. What we can concentrate on, however, is the perception of the 'purpose' of the party, and the likelihood of the party actually fulfilling that purpose. Furthermore, we would expect that the individual's own personal sense of efficacy may make a difference.

We constructed two general 'political efficacy' variables, one measuring personal efficacy, the other one measuring the perceived efficacy of the Party to 'fulfil its purpose'. The first variable is an index constructed by combining two variables: those agreeing with the statement 'People like me can make a real influence in politics if they are prepared to get involved' and those disagreeing with the proposition that 'Voting is the only way people like me can have any say about how the government runs things' score highly on the 'personal efficacy' index.[59]

The 'party efficacy' index is constructed by combing responses to two variables. Those agreeing with the statement 'The local Green Party has really made a difference to the way in which our community has developed' and those disagreeing with the proposition that 'The Party's leadership doesn't pay a lot of attention to the views of ordinary party members' score highly on this index.[60]

In the analysis of self-reported reasons for leaving, a focus on political effectiveness emerged as the most important factor for the dropping out process. There are a number of other variables which are concerned with the evaluation of the Party's aims and performance that could be classified as directly or indirectly linked to 'purposive incentives' for membership. As the short-term electoral perspective for the Party is clearly not very promising,[61] we

in their survey of Labour and Conservative Party members to the specific conditions applicable to Green Party members; cf. Seyd and Whiteley (1992) for the wording of the Labour Party membership questionnaire. Some question formulations have been used in surveys for many years, for example in the Political Action study (cf. Barnes and Kaase *et al.* 1979, p. 573).

[59] While we generally excluded 'efficacy' variables which explicitly involve an evaluation of activism, the formulatin 'to get involved' contained in this statement was considered general enough to apply to mere membership of a political party.

[60] The inclusion of the second variable in the 'party efficacy' index is a reflection of the stated purpose of Green Party to develop non-hierarchical and participatory decision making structure both in society as a whole and within the Party. A failure to be (or to be seen to be) non-responsive to members' demands can thus be interpreted as a manifestation of a low degree of efficacy in achieving the Party's political aims.

[61] Short term expectations do not have any major influence on leaving. For example, there is no difference

could expect that it is the evaluation of the long-term efficacy of the Party which should have an effect on members' behaviour. We therefore asked members how many years, in their opinion, it would be before the first Green Member of Parliament would be elected.[62] Another variable of interest in this context is the importance of an 'instrumental' rather than an 'expressive' motivation for party membership. We asked about purposive motivations at the point of joining the party as part of a battery of statements giving different reasons for joining. Those referring to joining the party as the best way to achieve their political aims, we hypothesize, should be less likely to drop out.

The feeling of 'demoralisation' which we identified earlier as an important element of leaving appears to be relevant mainly in conjunction with a perception of a 'lack of leadership'. In other words, it appears to relate to internal failings of the Party rather than external circumstances. We asked respondents specifically whom they blamed for the decline in the Party's poll standing and presented respondents with a number of statements blaming either internal or external circumstances. Leavers tended to blame internal shortcomings, such as the absence of a Party leader, rather more than external factors, such as the recession or the electoral system, while those staying in the Party were more likely to blame external factors. We constructed an index in which those consistently blaming 'internal' factors scored highest.

In this context, we have to ask what effect the major effort to reform the internal workings of the party (Green 2000) which was aimed at alleviating these concerns about the 'lack of leadership' has had on the drop-out rate. Judging by the development of the membership figures, it is clear that any such impact could only have been very marginal.[63] The timing of the changes which only came into effect in the middle of the down-swing period, the inability to interest ordinary, passive members in the details of the reform, and their failure to change the lack of media presence of the Party, for which arguably external factors were mainly responsible, all could account for this. While a detailed examination of this issue must be reserved for a separate paper, we examined whether the evaluation of the Green 2000 proposals[64] made any difference to the leaving process.

whatsoever between leavers and stayers in their expectations for the General Election result. It is also noteworthy that those leaving the Party after April 1992 do not appear to be particularly disappointed about the actual election result.

[62] Those who believe that the Green Party will never achieve parliamentary representation were coded as '99'. 26% of leavers think that will never be a Green MP compared to 14% among those who stayed in the party.

[63] Green 2000 could be interpreted as the most significant expession of 'voice' in the face of the Green Party's decline, using Hirschman's (1970) famous terminology. As 'exit' is readily available to members, Hirschman would predict that 'voice' - to change these internal features which in the view of (some) leavers are responsibile for the Party's decline - is unlikely. What is less expected is that 'voice' having taken place, the evaluation of the effectiveness of 'voice' has such little effect on the probability of 'exit'.

[64] The wording of the question was: 'The autumn conference in Wolverhampton in September 1991 approved a motion on the reform of the Party organisation, which includes the formation of an executive committee and the election of two principal speakers representing the Party to the outside. What is your view of the likely effect of these changes on the Party's future? - The changes will be beneficial; - The changes will

Loosing faith in the purpose, rather than in the ability of the party to fulfil that purpose, would also have a detrimental effect on the evaluation of the 'purposive' incentives of being a member of the party. We constructed a battery of questions which confront members with the Party's policies on a number of issues taken from their political programmes. [65] We created an additive index based on this battery, representing a measure of adherence to party 'ideology', in which those agreeing with the Party's position score highest.

We thus have a range of variables which broadly relate to the concept of 'purposive incentives' which will allow us to test the relative importance of this type of motivation for membership retention. In addition to such purposive incentives, we argued earlier that the Party faces the problem of effectively communicating to its members its purpose and its (relative) success in achieving its purpose. In the absence of any major reporting of the Party's activity in the mainstream media, ordinary passive members have to rely on the party's own publications and mailings. Therefore, the attention given to these newsletters, and the evaluation of their contents, could be important predictors of the decision to remain or leave. Party members receive a national party publication from the national office, most members also receive a regular newsletter from the local party. We employ two variables, one for the national and one for the local publication, which measure the behaviour of members in relation to these publications on a five category scale, ranging from reading virtually the whole paper with great interest to throwing it away as soon as it arrives. Two further variables measure the evaluation of the publications, employing eight separate criteria on which respondents are invited to rate the publication on a scale of 1 to 7. (for example, interesting1 to 7 boring.). All evaluations are added up in such a way as to give those chosing positive evaluations a high score. [66]

Rational choice theory also proposes the possible influence of solidary incentives. Such motivations, which relate to the value of social interaction irrespective of the purpose of the organisation, are notoriously hard to measure. Those who may well be motivated by such incentives may not be willing to reveal it as greater legitimacy is attached to purposive incentives. We asked a number of questions which tried to focus on 'objective' measures of social contacts and social ties. We asked respondents how frequently they socialised with other members outside party meetings, whether they had joined the Party through a social process, such as through a friend or after going to a meeting, and what their friends' general attitude towards the Green Party was.[67]

What about other theories? The 'new politics' theory of green politics was not specifically

make little difference; - Some of the changes are good, some are bad; - The changes will have a bad effect; - I do not know enough about the changes to make a judgement.'

[65] To avoid any affective identification with certain policy positions, respondents were not made aware that they were commenting on official party policies rather than on a random set of political issues, although we obviously cannot avoid that better informed party activists would have spotted this.

[66] We found that no individual criteria for evaluation produces a stronger predictor of leaving than an additive variable of all evaluations.

[67] The wording of that question was taken from Parkin 1968.

developed for the explanation of micro-political questions such as the factors relevant to leaving green parties. But if claims that the attraction of the new politics framework lies in its ability to explain the totality of green politics (cf. Poguntke 1993) are to be taken seriously, we may expect some contribution. It is difficult, however, to derive a single hypothesis from 'new politics' theory about the leaving phenomenon: on the one hand, we would expect that young, highly educated post-materialists are more likely to be attracted to the Greens. On the other hand, it is this group of people that is also likely to develop less of an attachment to any party, and therefore may be more volatile in its organisational commitment. We looked at the influence of age, eduation level and post-materialist values on leaving.

Models of political behaviour employing the concept of 'opportunity' would suggest that Green Party members may be attracted by better political opportunities within other environmental organisations. We therefore looked closely at the involvement of members in new social movements, both in terms of membership, activism, and financial contributions. Making donations to peace groups and membership in Friends of the Earth were the two most useful predictor variables taken as representative of this whole range of variables.

Finally, we have to consider the possibility that the decline of the Party is essentially a result of its rise: perhaps members joined as part of a learning process, and left in greater numbers after one or two years having decided that the party was 'not for them'. Rothenberg's 'experiential search' theory of membership retention would predict that long-standing members are more likely to renew than more recent recruits. While members exposed to the party for longer have a greater chance of being socialised into its ideology and routines, this is even more likely for those who take a more active part in party life, the activists. We would thus expect that active party members are more likely to renew their membership. .

The results of our regression analysis of staying (vs. leaving) are presented in Table 12. Independent variables are listed together in six main groups: cost/material incentives, purposive incentives, other selective incentives, solidary incentives, new politics, political opportunities, and learning. To allow us to use variables from all waves and avoid a prohibitive reduction of the number of cases involved, pairwise deletion of missing data was used throughout. The first column gives the bivariate correlations (Pearson's r) between the independent and the main dependent variable (Probability of renewing/left in 1992). The next two columns represent two OLS regression models, the second employing the probability of leaving in 1990 and 1991 as test variables. The fourth column contains the co-efficients of a further regression model for the explanation of a modified dependent variable, namely the probability to renew in 1992 excluding those who already had left the Party by that time.[68]

The bivariate results confirm that most of the variables we have chosen have a statistically significant relation to leaving. The exceptions are the cost/material incentives variables, the evaluation of Green 2000, the level of educational achievement and the degree of postmaterialism which all are not related to leaving.

[68] Note that because we have coded the dependent varibale in a way to give a high probability of renewing the highest value and having left the lowest, positive co-efficients in Table 12 indicate a positive correlation with staying and negative co-efficients indicate a positive correlation with leaving.

Table 12: Regression Analysis of 'Leaving'[a)]

Independent Variables [b)]	Dependent Variables			
	Probability to Renew/ Left1991-1992 (N=1609)			Probability to Renew 1992 (Members only) (N=1254)
		Regression Models (Betas)		
	r	I	II	III
Cost/Material Incentives				
Low Income(91)	-.016ns.	-.040ns	-.017ns	.001ns
Membership good for career (91)	-.032ns	.026ns	.028ns	.001ns
Purposive Incentives				
Personal efficacy (91)	.139***	.049ns	.036ns	.024ns
Party efficacy (91)	.070**	.019ns	.035ns	.003ns
Joined because Party was most effective way to achieve aims (90)	.089***	.033ns	.002ns	.012ns
Years before MP (91)	-.117***	-.105**	.055ns	.055ns
Internal Blame Attribution (91)	-.243***	-.213***	-.155***	-.098**
Green 2000 positive effect (91)	-.037ns	-.014ns	-.053ns	-.152***
Party ideology (91)	.150***	.038ns	.007ns	.051ns
Other Selective Incentives				
National Party Newspaper (91):				
Attention	.206***	.081*	.058ns	.096*
Evaluation	.203***	.062ns	.042ns	.006ns
Local Party Newsletter (91)				
Attention	.193***	.070ns	.041ns	.087ns
Evaluation	.175***	.069ns	.043ns	.011ns
Solidary Incentives				
Socialize with party members (90)	.158***	.027ns	.035ns	.010ns
Friends think well of Party (91)	.083***	.017ns	.041ns	.026ns
Joined through personal contact (90)	.062**	.022ns	.018ns	.005ns
New Politics/Demographics				
Age (90)	.078**	.104**	.078*	.010ns
Education level (90)	.027ns	.028ns	.037ns	.053ns
Post-materialism (90)	.023ns	.011ns	.019ns	.014ns
Environmental Activity				
Give money to peace groups (92)	.108***	.074*	.042ns	.037ns
Member Friends of the Earth (92)	.060**	.052ns	.047ns	.004ns
Political Socialization				
How many years member (90)	.179***	.094**	.066*	.062ns
High level of lifetime activity in party (90)	.187***	.061ns	.017ns	.003ns
Test Variables				
Probability of leaving in 1990	-.283***	-	-.074*	-.070ns
Probability of leaving in 1991	-.518***	-	-.408***	-.279***
Variance explained r^2		.186	.351	.216
Adjusted r^2		.164	.332	.186

a) Levels of statistical significance: *p≤0.05; **p≤0.01; ***p≤0.001
b) The year behind each variable name indicated whether it orginates from the first or second wave.

Importantly, some of the correlations go in the 'wrong' direction. The most striking example is the influence of age. Older members are considerably more likely to renew their membership than younger ones. In comparison with the established parties, the Green Party has clearly the youngest age profile (see Curtice *et al.* 1993). But the commitment of its younger members appears to have been more fleeting than those of older joiners. In Bennie and Rüdig (1993), we showed that British youth attitudes and actions in the environmental sphere are dominated by 'fashion' oriented commitments, emphasizing green consumerism and financial support for environmental groups. Within the Greens, younger members are less likely to become active and are more likely to leave. It thus appears that some young people joined the Green Party as a political 'fashion statement', and they left once the Greens had gone out of fashion. The higher propensity of young members to leave also appears to confirm the 'new politics' thesis about the lower party attachment that could be expected from a 'new politics' constituency. However, education level and degree of post-materialism do not have an effect on leaving.

The bivariate correlations also show clearly that, while substantial numbers of leavers claim that their money would be better spent supporting Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, ex-members are less, and not more, likely to belong to environmental groups and support new social movements. The expectation that Green Party members demoralised about the ineffectiveness of their party may prefer to become more active in other environmental pressure groups is thus clearly falsified by our results. The overall picture is thus clearly one in which leavers tend to be disaffected from environmental political activity altogether. Leavers are also unlikely to join other political parties,[69] so movement between political organisations turns out to be even less a feature of the downswing than we found it to be of the earlier upswing.

Apart from these two exceptions, the findings are not entirely surprising. The first regression model provides the first real clues as to the rival explanatory powers of our independent variables. Model I demonstrates quite clearly that 'blaming internal factors' is a major predictor of leaving the Party. General evaluations of personal or party efficacy make little difference, neither does party ideology or the motivation for joining. The other 'purposive' variable which makes an independent contribution is the evaluation of the Party's long term electoral performance.

Going beyond the purposive motivations, we find that the evaluations of the party's publications are not independent predictors, but the attention given to the national party newspaper is. Independent of their political views or expectations about the Party, those who tend to pay less attention to the paper are more likely to leave. Solidary incentives, on the other hand, make virtually no difference. At the bivariate level, we have quite a strong

[69] A separate analysis shows that the attraction of other parties is not a major reason for people leaving the Greens, either. Of all those who left the party between 1990 and 1992, only 10% had joined another party by the end of 1992, with Labour and the Liberal Democrats the preferred destinations. Importantly, leavers and remaining members do not differ significantly in their evaluation of the established parties, the only exception being the somewhat more negative score given by members to the Conservatives. This is one indication that it is not a new attraction of the established parties which leads most people to leave the Greens.

correlation between frequent socializing and renewing membership. However, once we control for different activity levels, the correlation virtually disappears. In other words, there are no social circles of non-activists which serve as vehicles for membership retention, and, more importantly, while activists are more likely to renew, there is no difference between the more or less active socializers with respect to membership retention. Other variables indicating social ties do not perform any better. While those joining the party through social contacts are somewhat more likely to remain than those who joined, say, in response to a newspaper advertisement, this has no independent effect once we control for other variables.

Finally, the length of years in the Party is a reasonably good predictor of leaving. Irrespective of political ideology or expectations, those who recently joined are more likely to leave than those who have been a member for a longer period, a finding confirming the usefulness of the experiential learning model in the case of the Greens. The regression also confirms the effect of age on the probability of leaving. Party activity on the other hand does not make a difference once we control for the influence of rival explanatory variables.

Model II controls for the effect of the probability to leave in previous years. There is quite a large correlation between leaving in 1992 and the probability of leaving one year back. The coefficients for the other variables can tell us something about the possible post-decision influence applying to those respondents who had already left by the time the third wave took place, for those variables which could be the subject of such influences. It also tells us something about the factors which moved those who either did or did not have a high probability of leaving in 1991 to move either closer or further away from leaving. Three variables are singled out by this process of having an independent effect on leaving decisions: internal blame attribution, age, and length of membership. As this analysis was conducted under the most conservative assumptions, this is strong evidence that blaming the Party itself, rather than external factors, is a key feature of leaving, that youth is an important factor in the dropping-out process, and that there is a 'natural' turn-over effect with people leaving the Party after one or two years, irrespective of their views on party ideology, their own political efficacy, or whom to blame for the Party's electoral failures.

Let us briefly look at Model III which provides evidence on the factors which are relevant for the inclinations to leave of those who were still paid-up members in November 1992. Here, we also control for the propensity to leave in 1991 and 1990 to isolate those variables which make an additional contribution over and beyond previous inclinations to leave. The main element of this analysis which is noteworthy is the sudden emergence of the evaluation of Green 2000 as an important predictor. For those actually leaving in 1992, the evaluation of Green 2000 obviously made no difference at all, as the bivariate correlation co-efficient demonstrates. But if we leave out those who had already left, we see the influence of the events of September 1992 which saw a number of the main protagonists of the Party leave important positions. Those who one year before evaluated Green 2000 positively now are thinking of leaving.

This is a most interesting result. Green 2000 had little effect on the drop-out rate at the time it was introduced, one way or the other. Our results now suggest that it bound a number of

people to the Party in the expectation of improvements resulting from Green 2000 which in the event (as far as they could see) failed to materialize. After Green 2000 had effectively failed, at least in terms of expectations of a quick revival of Green Party fortunes, it is Green 2000 supporters who are now considering leaving the Party.

When are they leaving?

We know already from the data on the general development of the Party membership (Figure 1) that the number of members leaving the Party started to exceed the number joining at the end of 1990 and that the following years were characterised by a continuing net-loss of members. Changes in membership levels are well predicted by the variables we already employed to explain variation in the Party's poll standing earlier. Changing economic conditions and the decline of environmental concern explain 85% of the variance on membership (see Table 13).

Table 13: Development of Green Party membership, salience of the environment, and unemployment

IN EQUATION

VARIABLE	BETA	SIGF	LABEL
UNEMP	-1.06989	.000	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
ENVCON	-.31851	.000	ENVIRONMENT 1ST OR 2ND MOST IMPORTANT
(CONSTANT)		.000	

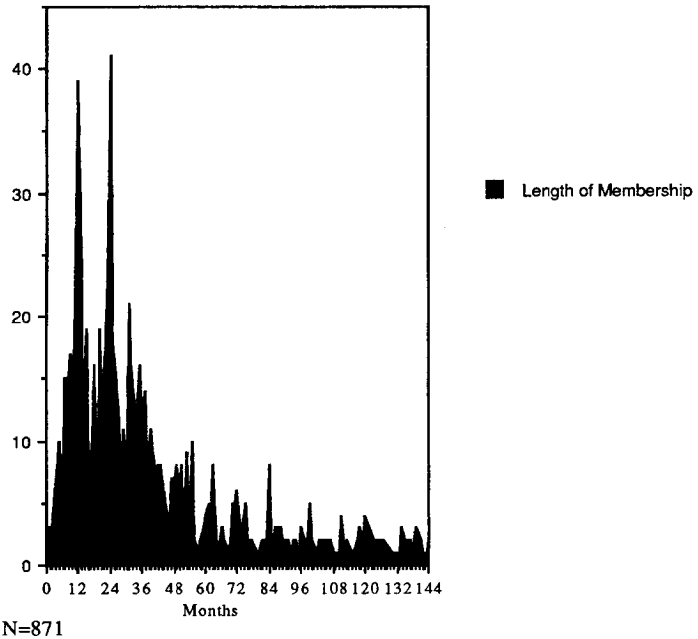
Variance explained: r^2=.86; r^2 adjusted=.85, N=44

Going beyond such a macro-level of analysis, we can make a further attempt at determining why people leave the Party when they do with individual-level data. We asked each respondent when exactly they had decided to leave the Party. Using this information, we plotted the length of membership of those who left the Party between November 1990 and November 1992 (see Figure 7). The number leaving increases to a peak at exactly 12 months after joining the Party, followed by an even higher peak at 24 months. After that the numbers leaving show a fairly smooth decline, although there are small peaks around further 12-months intervals. The annual peaks probably coincide with the receipt of membership renewal notices from the Green Party which would tend to put the question of continued membership onto an individual's personal agenda. Nevertheless, the data show clearly that the maximum number of withdrawals from the Party occur only after a relatively short period of membership. About 19% of our sample had left after just 12 months of membership or less, 42% had left after 2 years, and 60% after three. Generally, these findings are in line with experiential learning theory.

If we control for the experiential learning phenomenon, what other factors prove important in determining why the decision to leave is made at one point in time rather than another? A look

at the distribution of leavers from November 1990 to November 1992 (see Figure 8) gives few clues as to other factors determining such decisions.[70] Unlike the data in Table 9, we are dealing here with individual level data about the subjective timing of the decision to leave. Therefore, peaks and troughs are not necessarily translated into 'objective' data on the rate of membership decline, particularly as differences in the number joining also come into play.

Figure 7: Length of Party Membership of Leavers, 1990-1992



N=871

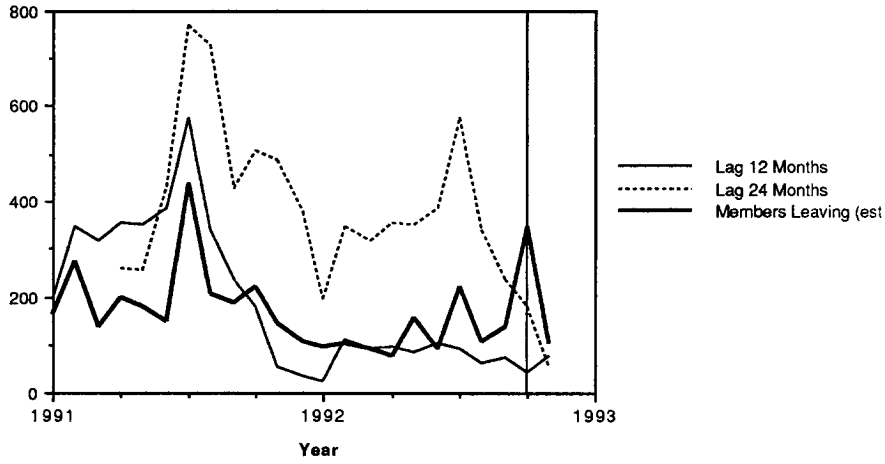
The number of members making up their minds about leaving varies quite strongly from month to month, there is no uniform rise with time. In analysing this data, we also have to remember that these data only refer to the down-swing period. Within that period, the political salience of the environment varies relatively little and makes no contribution to an explanation of timing decisions. Economic conditions tended to continue deteriorating during 1991 but showed some slight improvement in 1992. Variations in either objective or subjective economic conditions, however, also fail to explain the timing pattern of leaving. We have to turn to other variables which are more closely related to the more practical

[70] Our chief interest here was to analyse the fluctuations in the timing of leaving rather than provide an accurate estimate of exactly how many members left the Party in a particular month. The total figures plotted in Figure 8 should therefore be used only as a fairly rough estimate of the numbers involved.

elements of renewing membership subscriptions to approach an explanation.

As we saw before, members tend to make up their minds about renewing at the time they receive their membership renewal papers. Only a small minority of leavers actually resignes. In most cases, membership just lapses. Therefore, it cannot surprise that most of the peaks in the timing patterns of leaving are due to the number of people joining or renewing twelve months before.

Figure 8: Timing of Leaving Decisions, 1991-1992



In addition to the lag of numbers joining in 12-monthly intervals, we could also expect that particular key events may influence members' decision to leave. There are only few major events in this period which could have accelerated or enforced the leaving process, but most of them do not appear to have had any major influence. Neither the General Election of April 1992 or the Rio conference on global environmental change in June1992 had any perceptible effect. The acceptance of the Green 2000 motion at the September 1991 conference is associated with a little peak but this appears to be more a function of the number of members joining at the time in previous years, in particular two years before. There is no significant correlation once we control for that. Furthermore, of those who decided to leave that month (N=55), less than 10% thought Green 2000 would have a bad effect on the Party. Thus, the September 1991 peak is clearly not indicative of people leaving the Party in protest against Green 2000.

The only major peak in members leaving which is not accounted for by an equivalent peak in the joining pattern of the two previous years occurs in September 1992, the time of Sara

Parkin's resignation from the Executive of the Party. The event[71] is indicated by a horizontal line in Figure 8. This was associated with major press coverage, with a negative evaluation of the Party dominating. In our third wave survey in November 1992, members were asked specifically whether the Parkin resignation was likely to have an effect on their decision to renew. Of those who indicated that they had decided to leave the Party in Sepember 1992 (N=66), 39% said they had decided to leave in direct response to Parkin's resignation, and a further 53% said that the resignation had made their leaving more likely. Thus, there is strong evidence that the peak in September 1992 is directly associated with this particular event. This is also confirmed by our multivariate analysis. Table 14 gives the result of a regression analysis of our time-series dataset. Even if we control for the effect of the timing of renewal notices, the Parkin resignation does have an effect on the distribution of leaving decisions in time. The two lagged variables and the Parkin resignation variable together explain 66% of the variance on the timing of leaving.

Table 14: Timing of Members' Decision to Leave the Green Party

IN EQUATION			
VARIABLE	BETA	SIGF	LABEL
LAG12RE2	.38105	.042	LAG JOINED 12 MONTHS BEFORE
LAG24REA	.43486	.024	LAG JOINED 24 MONTHS BEFORE
PARKIN	.63214	.001	PARKIN RESIGNATION
(CONSTANT)		.374	

Variance explained: r^2=.66, Adjusted r^2=.60; N=24.

With the single exception of the Parkin resignation, we found that the reasons for leaving are not a major feature for the timing of leaving. Leaving in the Green Party is thus mainly a fairly gradual process, not an abrupt response to particular events.

Conclusions

The endurance of green parties, including those (like the British Greens) which apparently face overwhelming odds, suggests that they cannot be classified as intrinsic 'flash parties' - though evidently the experience of an individual green party could be described in such terms during a phase of its development: a 'flash party phase'. The experience of the British Green Party is thus different from other 'flash party' or similar phenomena which have been dealt with in the literature so far. Unlike American 'third parties', the British Greens are a more enduring force whose organisational existence is not bound to particular election campaigns

[71] In fact, there were a sequence of events in September 1992, starting with publicity about Sara Parkin's withdrawal as a candidate for a second term as Chair of the Party Executive in early September, leading to an emergency session of the Green Party Regional Council at the Party conference later in the month which was followed by Parkin's resignation from here then post as Chair of the Executive.

or candidates. Unlike other 'third' forces which suddenly emerged, such as the French 'Poujadistes' or the Canadian 'Social Credit' party (cf. Pinard 1975), the Greens did not actually manage to win a single seat in the election, but still remained on the political scene despite this. If the British Green's flash party phase cannot readily be understood in the same way as can the development of a flash party proper, how should we account for it?

The 1989 success of the British Green Party was quite clearly a reflection of rising environmental concern. All three major parties had either failed to live up to raised expectations, as in the case of the Conservatives, or had moved away from more radical positions on peace and environmental issues. The 'second-order' European Elections provided the ideal opportunity for voters disaffected with the major parties and concerned about the environment to send a message to the major parties. Given the prominence of former Alliance voters, the weakness of the newly merged successor organisation (the Liberal Democrats) provided another major opportunity for the Greens. Pinard (1975) has argued that 'third party' emergence can be a reflection of the failure or inability of the main opposition party to challenge the government - the 'dominant party' thesis. The 1989 experience of the British Green Party would seem to suggest that this should be extended to a 'two dominant parties' thesis. As the 'established' third party which otherwise might have expected to benefit most from the environmental protest vote was perceived to be ineffectual and in deep crisis, there was an opportunity for a fourth party, the Greens, to play the 'out party' role.

The success of the Greens was the most prominent and spectacular indicator of the new level of environmental concern that existed in Britain in 1989. Established parties moved to embrace environmental issues, as they had already done before the elections, though it is doubtful whether the success of the established parties' reformulation of their environmental policies played a major role in the decline of the Greens. Far more important was the declining salience of environmental issues and the change of the political agenda back to traditional economic issues with the coming of the recession. The re-emergence of the Liberal Democrats as the established 'third' party also affected the considerations of many potential green supporters. The soft green vote thus disintegrated fairly quickly. Voting green had served its purpose, and there were more immediate concerns to attend to. The small core of long-term support for the Greens held up reasonably well in the circumstances. Moreover, despite their relative decline the Greens still attract a lot of sympathy and maintain a reservoir of potential support which could be turned into actual votes when the the political context becomes more auspicious.

As to Green Party members, the most important feature of the flash party phase is perhaps the fact that the 1989/90 surge in Party membership mobilised people with exactly the same type of background as its previous membership. The Party did not break any new ground in the structure of its support.

Given the Party's fairly narrow appeal, keeping members is obviously a crucial organisational aim. Unfortunately for the Greens, the new members proved as difficult to keep as in previous years. This should not really surprise us if we consider the particular

circumstances of the Green Party. It cannot offer its members any tangible benefits, just the company of fellow party members, the fun of being part of what they would regard as an important movement, and perhaps the satisfaction of having at least tried to do something about 'saving the planet'. This in itself is not a very stable basis for operating a membership system, particularly as far as passive members are concerned. The chances of leaving an organisation are likely to be dependent on the intensity of the ties with that organisation. For the passive member, it is very easy to leave the Party since a system of annual resubscription operates: anybody failing to renew the subscription is automatically deemed to have left the Party. 'Leaving' thus does not usually involve a formal resignation or any other 'action' but simply the failure to return a renewal slip with a cheque. In these circumstances, the timing of the decision to leave in most cases was simply a function of the timing of joining.

We found that those leaving the Green Party were particularly disappointed about the lack of political effectiveness of the Party. Leavers pointed mainly to the 'internal' shortcomings of the Party to explain its lack of success. The blame attached by those leaving the Party to 'internal' rather than 'external' factors for the decline of the Party may suggest a certain political naivety about the art of the possible. Given the lack of involvement in party affairs which is characteristic of most leavers, it appears that not just the lack of electoral success but of general media attention is the most important single element producing disenchantment. The 'Greenpeace' generation of green supporters appears to expect a media-communicated demonstration of effectiveness which, in its own assessment, would have been helped by the election of a single leader. This type of green politics, however, is anathema to the 'dark greens' who form a clear minority of the Party membership but are rather more prominent among a minority whose activity level is extremely high. Amongst activists, Green 2000 opponents and sceptics reach 50% and thus form quite an important group. True, this group has not reacted to Green 2000 by leaving the Party, but it is obvious that there has been the potential here for a high level of internal strife.

For its future development, the Party faces a most difficult challenge in communicating its 'purpose' and 'success' to its passive members on a regular basis. What ordinary passive members appear to look for are Green Party speakers 'on the box', in the media, being seen to do something for green causes at national level. This is something the leadership of the Party aspires to but is currently unable to achieve. Even with an internal structure like Green 2000, it cannot guarantee media exposure at national level. Green 2000 on its own was thus unable to stem the tide of members leaving. As most Green Party leavers are passive and pay little attention to the intricacies of internal party life, that is not entirely surprising.

It is difficult to see what more the Party could have done to avoid its decline in the opinion polls, its media presence, and its membership base. The external obstacles to continued Green Party success were indeed formidable. Unlike some other countries where successes in 'second-order' elections has provided green parties with a spring-board for success in national elections, the British system does not facilitate such a smooth transition. Indeed, the British political system is littered with 'second-order' elections in the form of parliamentary by-elections as well as annual local elections. It has by now become common-place to expect opposition and minor parties to do well in by-elections, but no link between by-election and General Election performance can generally be established (cf. Norris 1990).

The British Greens do not qualify as a mere 'flash party', though they have clearly gone through a 'flash party phase' of rapid change. However, the commitment of the core of long-term activists, with an ideological motivation (cf. Bennie *et al* 1994) reinforced by integration in social networks of Party members, was hardly touched by the violent fluctuation in the Party's public appeal. Even in a country with an electoral system offering few opportunities to small parties, the British Green Party continues to exist, defying predictions of its 'transient' nature, engaged in its own routines on the margins of politics. In this way the British Greens are likely to continue their existence, in a position of political marginality for the time being. While they are unable by their own actions to change the electoral context that disadvantages them so severely, their mere survival as an entity allows them to wait for more promising opportunities in the future, opportunities which they believe will come as the ecological problematique remains unresolved.

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