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Leaving the Minors: The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand and the 2011 General Election

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The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand has emerged as a successful environmentally-focused party with a solid base. The 2011 General Election represented a high-point for the party, distancing it from the other minor parties. This article explores examples of factors affecting the success of Green parties, and examines the strategy of the New Zealand Green Party prior to the 2011 election. The findings indicate that the party has developed stable support through the development of a consistent policy base and pragmatic approach to its role in Parliament. This has allowed the Greens to establish a position following the 2011 election as the third party in New Zealand politics.

Introduction

Environmental issues have become increasingly important in recent years, as the impacts of human development on the natural environment are becoming apparent. Since first emerging in the 1970s environmental parties have come to occupy a visible and growing position within the political system (Bolleyer, 2010; Camcastle, 2007; Carter, 2008; Miragliotta, 2012; Spoon, 2009), although in some this has been more difficult (Agarin 2009; Pedhazur and Yishai, 2001). However, where Green parties have established a presence they have struggled to gain and maintain significant shares of the vote in elections (Blühdorn, 2009; Sundström, 2011). Reasons for this limited impact range from appropriation of environmental issues by mainstream political parties through to a continued political focus on

economic performance (see Carter, 2006). These challenges have meant that where environmentally focused parties have emerged they have remained minor parties, unable to break into the mainstream as established medium-sized parties.

The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand has recently consolidated its position as a stable third party in New Zealand politics. This position was reinforced in the November 2011 General Election where the party won over ten percent of the vote and 14 seats (from a total of 121), which was equal to the combined total of the other minor parties represented in Parliament. Significantly for the Green Party, the 2011 election also saw a majority vote in a referendum supporting the retention of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system, which had benefited the party. In achieving this level of relative success the Green Party has been aided by factors specific to the social and political context of New Zealand (see Bale and Bergman, 2006; Carroll et al, 2009). Bearing the importance of context in mind, this paper argues that there are aspects of the performance of the New Zealand Green Party that may point to lessons for environmentally focused political parties elsewhere.

This article considers the rise of the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, framed around an analysis of its performance in the 2011 General Election. The aims of the article are: (1) identify the reasons for the increasingly strong performance of the New Zealand Green Party, and (2) signal lessons that can be applied to Green parties more generally. To understand the Green party, the article draws on semi-structured interviews conducted between May and July 2012 with a Green MP, former MP, party member, and political journalist, as well as correspondence with a specialist in New Zealand politics. The article is divided into three sections. The first section examines the character of environmental parties, identifying features and practices common to this party type. The second section provides a brief history of the

Green Party in New Zealand, tracing how it has developed from its roots in the 1970s Values Party up to the 2008 election. Finally, the third section examines the 2011 General Election campaign and outcome, providing an insight into how the Green Party has secured its position as the third party in the New Zealand political system. This section will also outline potential challenges to the continued performance of the New Zealand Green Party.

Understanding Green Parties

Concern over environmental change entered the international political agenda in the 1970s. This decade saw the first multinational meeting to discuss environmental issues (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment) in 1972 and the release of the Limits to Growth report in 1974, both of which raised awareness over human impact on the natural environment (Bernstein 2001). As a result, environmental issues began to influence national political agendas, with the formation of a number of environmentally focused political parties (the Values Party in New Zealand being the first at the national level in 1972). Despite limited progress and impact initially, Green parties have come to occupy positions within government with increasing frequency. Surveying Green parties in Europe over the 1990-2005 period, Rihoux and Rüdig (2006: S5-7) found that they had entered governing coalitions in 14 countries.¹ These developments point to the need to consider Green parties as a distinct and increasingly important form of political party.

The emergence of Green parties coincided with a broader shift in the core issues of politics at the national level. This shift has been facilitated by social changes in the advanced democracies, with the accommodation of 'old' political conflicts (between labour and capital) allowing new political conflicts (such as identity and

environment) to enter the agenda (van der Heijden, 1999). Although issues associated with 'old' politics remain important emerging issues of concern are increasingly shaping their interpretation. Belchior (2010: 467) argues that the shift is represented in the difference between post-material 'cultural...social and quality of life issues' and 'traditional materialist [values of]... political and economic stability and physical safety.' While Green parties have emerged from this milieu they do not form a homogenous cluster, being shaped by the context within which they operate and the opportunities afforded (Belchior, 2010).

While Green parties have achieved some level of success in gaining representation in political institutions at national and sub-national levels, this needs to be placed in context. Electoral success brings costs for Green parties and requires a more pragmatic approach to the issues that led to their founding. Gaining power requires compromise, as Burchell (2001: 132) has noted 'Green parties have clearly been forced to find a balance between their "Green" commitment to the organisational style of the "new politics" and the practicalities of operating within competitive party systems.' This point is elaborated on further by Bolleyer (2010: 604) who argues that the evolution of Green parties:

has centred around two sources of tension which are closely intertwined: first, the tensions resulting from the challenge to create a new organisation which matches members' ideological preferences and, at the same time, to create a viable organisation; second, the tensions between the organisation initially created by mainly ideological driven party founders and members and the pressure to adapt to demands imposed by running elections and by entering public office.

Managing these competing demands arguably requires greater flexibility from Green parties given their ideological roots and commitment to participation. Lidskog and Elander (2007) argue that green thought is based on participation and that this is

intended to limit the risk of domination by special interests. Drawing on this tradition, Green parties have tended to adopt structures that facilitate openness and participation, leading back to the tension between professionalization and maintenance of core ideals.

Returning to the issue of diversity amongst Green parties, it is possible to see how application of the ideals associated with green thought can be shaped by the context they operate in. Examining the German Green Party, Blühdorn (2009) notes that the ‘new politics’ that led to their emergence has been exhausted. Greater attention to (if not necessarily action on) environmental issues by major parties has required Green parties to diversify their positions, as they seek to become more attractive to a wider pool of voters. Camcastle (2007) finds that contrary to the common understanding of Green parties as left of centre, the Canadian Green Party is positioned in the centre of the political spectrum and draws significant support from the self-employed. In other contexts the presence of other security or identity issues can prevent the emergence of Green parties.² In the case of Israel Pedahzur and Yishai (2001: 200) argue that the combination of a strong and effective environmental movement with ‘the country’s security, its custom, and the search for personal identity’ have worked against the emergence of an Israeli Green Party. Therefore, Green parties are increasingly required to adopt positions that fit their specific context, making generalisation about common features difficult.

The structure of the electoral system has been an important factor in allowing Green parties to achieve representation. The adoption of a proportional representation electoral system has been found to support the emergence and representation of minor parties, as large parties are unable to dominate the political agenda and voters feel able to seek alternatives (Karp and Banducci, 2008). The peripheral character of

environmental issues in the political discourse means that electoral laws favouring minor parties play an important role in fostering Green party growth (Belchior, 2010). While such systems allow for greater representation of Green parties, Poloni-Staudinger (2008) argues that there is little difference between majoritarian and consensus democracies in the treatment of environmental issues. This would seem to indicate that while Green parties are more able to gain access under proportional representation; their minor position means that larger parties within the system will continue to determine government priorities.

While structural factors can facilitate Green party success, they do not guarantee longevity. Success can lead to problems, as prominent environmental issues and policy stances are adopted by major parties, draining or restricting the support base of Green parties (Blühdorn, 2009; Carter, 2006). Agarin (2009: 301) notes that the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) failed to sustain parties that emerged in the early 1990s.³ Reasons identified include lack of interest, personal disengagement from practices regulating the environment and an emphasis on economic development. In Switzerland, the relatively successful Green Party was prevented from passing the threshold to gain representation in the seven-member national government by the emergence of the Green Liberal Party (GLP). Founders of the GLP sought to move away from the red-green orientation of the Green Party and were successful in drawing support from across the political spectrum (Ladner, 2012). The challenge for Green parties therefore appears to be to break into the mainstream and broaden their support base, while at the same time remaining true to the ideals of the founders that initially attracted support.

The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand

The Greens have a relatively long and varied history in New Zealand politics; first emerging in 1972 as the Values Party and securing 5.2% of the vote in the 1975 election (see Browning, 2012). Despite this performance, the party was denied seats by the majoritarian First Past the Post (FPP) electoral system and subsequently disbanded in the mid-1980s. In 1990 the party re-emerged as the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, securing 6.8% of the vote, but again being denied representation (Carroll et al, 2009: 259). During the 1993-96 period the Green Party joined the left of centre Alliance Party and was rewarded with three seats in the 1996 election, the first held under the MMP system (Bale, 2003: 140). From this base the Green Party contested the subsequent elections independently and has been consistently successful in passing the 5% threshold required for representation if the party has no electorate seats (see Table 1). Representation in Parliament had important effects on the perception of the Greens, as ‘the Party’s 1999 intake showed that they were far from the ragtag bunch of organics-obsessed, dope-smoking, sandal-wearing subversive semi-hippies’ (Bale, 2003: 140).⁴ In order to understand the role of the Green Party in New Zealand politics and the significance of its performance it is necessary to examine its support base, the environment it operates in and internal challenges to the party structure.

[Table 1]

The focus of the Green Party on environmental issues has allowed it to carve out a niche within the political environment. Election results show a support base of around 5-6% in the 1999-2008 elections (and in earlier elections). Data from the New Zealand Election Study (NZES) shows (Figure 1) that in contrast to the electorate as a

whole the Green vote is younger, with over half of its votes coming from the 18-45 age group. However, it should be noted that as the party has matured, the proportion of older voters (61+) has increased. The data also show that a higher percentage of Green voters have tertiary education (averaging 36.0% over 2002-08 elections) compared to voters for all parties (18.5% over the 2002-08 elections).⁵ Although the Green Party established a support base of 5-6%, results from the NZES show some volatility in their vote. Only 48.1% of those who voted for the Green Party in 2002 did so again in 2005, this increased in 2008 with 57.8% of their 2005 voters choosing the Greens again. This compares with stronger consistency among Labour (68.3% and 66.3%) and particularly National (84.4% and 94.1%) voters. An examination of vote switching between elections shows that Green voters are most likely to switch to and from the left of centre Labour Party. The political context also plays an important role with the newly formed Māori Party attracting 12.4% of Green voters in 2005, while the unpopularity of Labour saw 46.7% of Green voters in 2008 coming from that party (significantly above the 28.1% in 2005).

[Figure 1]

The character of the political environment has played an important role in shaping the performance of the Green Party since its re-emergence. The 1999 election saw an expansion of the vote on the left, following nine years of centre-right National Party government. Sitting outside the governing Labour coalition from 1999 allowed the Greens to maintain a focus on their core aims and build an identity independent of their former Alliance colleagues (Bale, 2003).⁶ This independent stance saw the party to adopt a position of vocal opposition to the lifting of a moratorium on the testing of

genetically modified organisms, allowing the party to draw on wider public concern (see O'Brien, 2012a). Relations with the Labour Party soured with a hostile 2002 election campaign resulting in a minority Labour government with the support of the centre-right United Future and excluding the Greens (Bale and Bergman, 2006). The poor performance of the Green Party in the 2005 election can be traced to this peripheral position and resurgent National Party leading left of centre voters to return to Labour (see Table 1). This co-variance in the Labour and Green vote saw the Greens regain support in 2008, as the mood favoured National and a move away from Labour after nine years in government. It is clear that over the 1999-2008 period the Green Party was subject to fluctuations in the wider political environment, with their fortunes linked to the relative popularity of the Labour and National parties.

The 1999-2008 period presented significant challenges to the internal structure and operation of the Green Party. A central challenge was the need to balance activist roots with pragmatic political positions. This view was expressed by Green MP and long-time activist Sue Bradford (2002: 22) in a 2001 conference speech, where she argued:

If we are too soft, if we are so big on consensus and the principle of subsidiarity for every decision, we are hoist on our own petard. Action happens too slowly and by the time a decision is made, whatever opportunity has presented itself is long gone.

This reflects the tension between the ideals of participation that characterise Green politics and the reality of functioning in a formal political system and the need to adopt pragmatic positions. An example of the tensions was the decision to not rule out the possibility of working with the National Party in the run-up to the 2008 election, despite their ideological differences. Discussing the decision to negotiate and sign a

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was signed with National following the election, a former Green MP (Interview 22 June 2012) argued that:

it was very important...for us that we did that to show that we weren't just Labour's poodle and that...we will work with anybody that's got the right policies and the right ideas.⁷

Refusing to rule out co-operation with the National Party represented a move towards a more pragmatic stance and potentially created new opportunities, but also caused disquiet among some supporters.

The Green Party also faced internal change over the period as a number of MPs representing it in Parliament retired in 2008. Many of the MPs had been associated with the party since it re-emerged in 1990s and were distinct recognisable personalities in New Zealand politics. The death of co-leader Rod Donald in 2005 the day before Parliament was due to sit was also a significant blow to the party and presented a difficult question of succession. In line with the ideals of the co-leadership model, the party selected Russel Norman to maintain a gender balance and complement the strengths of Jeanette Fitzsimons. Norman was able to fulfil this role due to his 'understanding of the media, reflected in his role as the Green's 2005 election campaign manager.'⁸ (Hartshorn-Sanders, 2006: 51) The selection was also significant as it saw the emergence of a new generation of leadership and an attempt to move towards a more professional approach. Together these events presented a significant challenge to the continuity of the Green Party, with the ability of internal institutions and processes to manage the change representing a sign of professionalisation and less reliance on individual personalities.⁹

2011 Campaign, Election and Future Prospects

The 2011 election campaign period started three months before the 26 November election day. The majority of the campaign was overshadowed by the hosting of the Rugby World Cup (9 September to 23 October), limiting the ability of the parties to get their message across and favouring the incumbent National Party. Economically the country was recovering from a slide into recession following the 2008 election, re-establishing growth at a low level in 2010. The election campaign focused heavily on the two main parties (National and Labour), with much attention being paid to the character and likeability of the respective leaders. This favoured National, as former banker John Key was presented as ‘one of us’, while Labour leader Phil Goff’s style was described as ‘professional to the point of remoteness’ (Hubbard, 2011). Another important issue during the campaign was the exploitation of natural resources (particularly coal and oil) and the environmental impact (Rutzitis and Bird, 2011; O’Brien, 2012b). Together, the weakness of the Labour Party and the visibility of environmental issues provided a solid base on which the Green Party could campaign.

The Green Party had consolidated its position in the period following the 2008 election, with co-leader Russel Norman emerging as a credible spokesperson on economic matters. The party had been successful in using its MoU with the National Party to broaden its appeal with a journalist noting ‘they were pretty low key policy areas, but the home insulation stuff is great and it’s really helping a lot of people.’ (Interview 15 May 2012) This also showed that the Greens were able to move beyond ideological differences in the interest of achieving policy goals. This more pragmatic approach combined with the increasingly professional approach of the MPs led to a shift in the way the party was portrayed in the media, moving toward a more credible treatment.¹⁰ Change in the external environment also supported the performance of

the party. The Electoral Commission classified the Green Party as a medium-sized party for the 2011 elections, providing access to greater financial resources and differentiating it from the minor parties (Electoral Commission 2011).¹¹

The period leading up to the 2011 election saw further changes in the makeup of the parliamentary party. All of the MPs that had entered Parliament in 1999 had retired or were planning to retire in 2011, leaving the way for new members to come through. Perhaps the greatest challenge presented by this turnover was the retirement of co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons, who had been instrumental in building the credibility of the party and providing stability. Given Fitzsimons' pivotal role in the party since its formation there was speculation in the media that the party may not survive the transition (Interview with journalist 15 May 2012). As with the previous leadership change the issue of succession was hotly contested with the veteran activist wing (represented by Sue Bradford) coming into conflict with the emerging pragmatic wing (represented by Metiria Turei). The result of the change saw Turei appointed as co-leader and would seem to further consolidate the more pragmatic approach. She also represented a balance with an interviewee noting 'Russel Norman... [has become] a very credible voice on the economy... [with] Metiria on the other side who is really strong on social policy' (Interview with journalist 15 May 2012).

Under the co-leadership of Norman and Turei the Green Party ran a campaign that sought to appeal more clearly to mainstream voters. The focus of the campaign was on three issues that were seen as important to the electorate: kids, rivers, and jobs (Interview with Green MP 13 June 2012; Browning, 2012). The campaign built on the success of the more focused approach adopted in the 2008 campaign. Discussing the difference between the 2005 and 2008 campaigns a journalist (Interview 15 May 2012) familiar with the party noted:

In 2005 they had these billboards that had too much on them and too much information and they were just messy and it wasn't a simple message.... And in 2008 they came up with a very slick 'vote for me' campaign so the billboards just had a really beautiful photo of a young girl standing on a jetty 'vote for me' and then a picture of the earth with 'vote for me' and such a good strong campaign.

The 2011 campaign was successful in taking the more focused approach and linking environmental issues with wider social justice and economic interests, thereby providing an opportunity to broaden the support base (see Carroll et al, 2009). The campaign placed an emphasis on economic development that did not come at the expense of the environment,¹² building on existing campaigns by NGOs and interest groups (particularly 'Dirty Dairying' led by Fish and Game New Zealand and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Sharpe, 2012)). Pushing a clear message allowed the party to capitalise on Labour weakness and infighting between the minor parties to emerge as a credible challenger to the National Party.

Polling data over the 2008-2011 period shows that support for the Green Party was relatively stable, averaging 7.4% to August 2011 (see Figure 2).¹³ However, from the beginning of the campaign period the party saw its poll numbers rise to 11.3% just before election day. Discussing the election campaign, a Green MP noted that the use of social media (driven by an active youth wing) played an important part in communicating with voters and further differentiating the party (Interview 13 June 2012). Support for the two major parties has co-varied, with periods of decline/growth in either tending to be replicated in their opponent's numbers. This would seem to indicate supporters fluctuating between the two main parties and potentially providing an opportunity for the Green Party to attract wavering supporters (as appeared to be the case during the election campaign).

The 2011 election saw the Greens achieve their highest ever share of the vote and significantly increase the number of votes received in an election with historically low turnout (69.6%). The National Party was unable to achieve the predicted majority and the Labour Party saw its vote share fall (see Table 2). The minor parties also struggled (with the exception of New Zealand First's re-emergence) to gain traction with the electorate, a number having outperformed the Greens in size during previous parliamentary terms. The performance of the Greens suggests a gap opening between the party and the other minor parties. This is strengthened by the fact that the Greens are the only minor party to pass the 5% threshold in the five elections from 1999-2011. Table 2 further reinforces the point that the Green Party has emerged as the third party in the New Zealand political system. Although the party continues to rely on list votes, its share of the party vote means that it secured more list seats than Labour and rivalled those received by the National Party.¹⁴

[Table 2]

In addition to voting in the General Election, electors were also asked to vote on whether the MMP system should be replaced, with a subsequent referendum planned to select a new system if required (Trevett, 2008; Young, 2009). Given the reliance of the Green Party on list seats to gain representation, the outcome of the referendum was significant for its future. Opponents of MMP argued that it gives too much power to minor parties and limits the ability of the government to operate. The difficulty for the anti-MMP campaign was that it did not clearly identify a preferred

option, with four being proposed for the second referendum (Chapman, 2011). The result of the referendum saw 57.8% voting to maintain the status quo. Following the result the incoming National government announced a review by the Electoral Commission of how the system was working with arguments put forward to lower the threshold to 4% and make it mandatory in order to receive list seats, thereby preventing parties that win electorate seats from receiving disproportionate representation (Dominion Post, 2012).¹⁵ Such a change would benefit all parties passing the 4% threshold and require parties to cultivate a genuine support base, rather than relying on a successful electorate MP bringing MPs into Parliament through the distribution of list seats (Dominion Post, 2012).

The 2011 election represented a high point for the Green Party, seeing a significant improvement on performance in previous elections. Although the party has established a position of relative strength there are challenges that will need to be overcome. The reliance on list seats has allowed the party to generate a degree of stability and insulated it from the vagaries electorate competition. The future recovery of the Labour Party, including the adoption of 'green' policies, presents a challenge to the Greens as they compete for votes and position as the party of opposition (Interview with Green Party member 3 July 2012).¹⁶ The adoption of a more pragmatic position involving working with parties across the political spectrum can be seen as an attempt to diversify the base of the party. However, it was noted that the party is 'coming to a crossroads and they...can't lose that close relationship with the grassroots because that's always been the Green Party's strength' (Interview with journalist 15 May 2012). Managing the shift from minor to middle-sized party requires that the party maintain these organisational strengths while also appealing to a wider constituency. The strength of the Greens also presents a challenge regarding

whether they will be able to enter government as a minor partner in future while still maintaining a distinct identity, policy programme, and support base (Interviews with former Green MP 22 June 2012 and Green Party member 13 June 2012).

Conclusion

The Green Party has developed steadily since its first electoral success (as an independent party) in 1999. Consistent performance saw the party argue successfully for medium-party status in the lead-up to the 2011 General Election. Certification in this manner has allowed further differentiation from the minor parties and the start of a credible challenge to the Labour Party as the party of opposition. Returning to the aims of the article, it appears that the strong performance of the Green Party has been built on a consistent message and an increasingly professionalised approach. As the party has matured, it has sought to carve a space in the political system that transcends the left-right spectrum, focusing instead on policy issues. This was described by a party member as an attempt ‘to give effect to the idea that they are neither left nor right, but out in front’ (Interview 3 July 2012). Whether the Green Party can maintain its high level of support will ultimately be shaped to a large degree by external factors. Recovery of the Labour Party, together with the pressures of government on junior coalition parties will present a challenge if there is a change in government in 2014. The task is therefore to continue to build and stabilise the support base to withstand these pressures.

The lessons that can be drawn from this case are varied and influenced by the specific context. Maintaining a consistent environmental message is important, but linking it to more mainstream concerns of economic and quality of life together with a strengthened focus on social justice can lead to increased recognition. In conjunction

with the focused message, a move towards greater professionalization and internal discipline can increase the credibility of such parties. Success also brings challenges as expectations about what the party can achieve are heightened, potentially leading to disappointment. The experience of Green parties in Germany, Latvia, and Sweden show that maintaining support, while remaining true to the founding ideals is a key challenge over the medium-term.

¹ The countries were: Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Nine of the countries were democratising over the period, possibly pointing to the importance of weaker party cleavages in allowing Green success.

² In a recent article Orr has found that the presence of ethnic differences limit opportunities for collaboration between environmental NGOs on areas of common concern (Orr, 2011).

³ Auers (2012) notes that the Latvian Green Party has been successful in being part of the governing coalition, but this has come at the expense of credibility, given the radical-right orientation of its partners.

⁴ A current Green MP notes that the strategy at the time was to choose 'individuals who had almost a personal constituency, but non-overlapping constituencies to get us over the 5% threshold.' (Interview 13 June 2012).

⁵ These figures are calculated from the NZES and include respondents with either 'Degree' or 'Postgraduate' as their highest formal educational qualification.

⁶ It was argued by a former Green MP that the party was the last choice of coalition partner for Labour, as the party was interested in policies rather than the 'baubles of office' (Interview 22 June 2012).

⁷ Although the same interviewee noted that the National Party had subsequently violated significant parts of the agreement (Interview former Green MP 22 June 2012).

⁸ The change in leadership was complicated by Norman's position as co-leader outside Parliament (elected 2008), requiring careful management to ensure the party continued to operate effectively.

⁹ A specialist in New Zealand politics made the point that the other parties have not yet undergone similar generational change (E-mail correspondence 18 June 2012).

¹⁰ A former Green MP captured the change by stating ‘we’re not treated like the minnows anymore’ (Interview 22 June 2012).

¹¹ In its decision on broadcast funding allocations the Electoral Commission noted that ‘Over a significant period the Green Party, in terms of numbers of MPs and polling data, was clearly in a separate category [from the minor parties] in the time and money allocation compared with all other parties.’ (Electoral Commission 2011: 7)

¹² Commenting on a draft of this paper, a Green Party member noted ‘that it *always was* about the economy, and quality of life, as well as the environment....It may not always have been perceived in this way, by outsiders, and Green politics isn't always practised that way, by insiders.’ (E-mail correspondence 8 July 2012)

¹³ Figure 2 is adapted from the pundit.co.nz ‘Poll of Polls’ using data supplied by Rob Salmond. For a discussion of the ‘Poll of Polls’ methodology see: Jackman, 2005. ‘Minor parties’ includes the five parties that gained representation in Parliament following the 2011 election.

¹⁴ The party has adopted a strategy (re-evaluated before each election) to focus on list seats to maximise the use of its resources (Interview with Green MP 13 June 2012).

¹⁵ These changes were recommended in the Electoral Commission’s (2012) Proposal Paper released for consultation in August 2012. The paper also noted that the growth in the number of electorate seats, at the expense of list seats, needs to be addressed by Parliament.

¹⁶ Labour clearly recognise the threat posed by the Green Party, as Labour leader (David Shearer) gave a speech to a farming group saying that he hoped they had eaten their greens, because that is what Labour intended to do (Interview with Green party member 3 July 2012).

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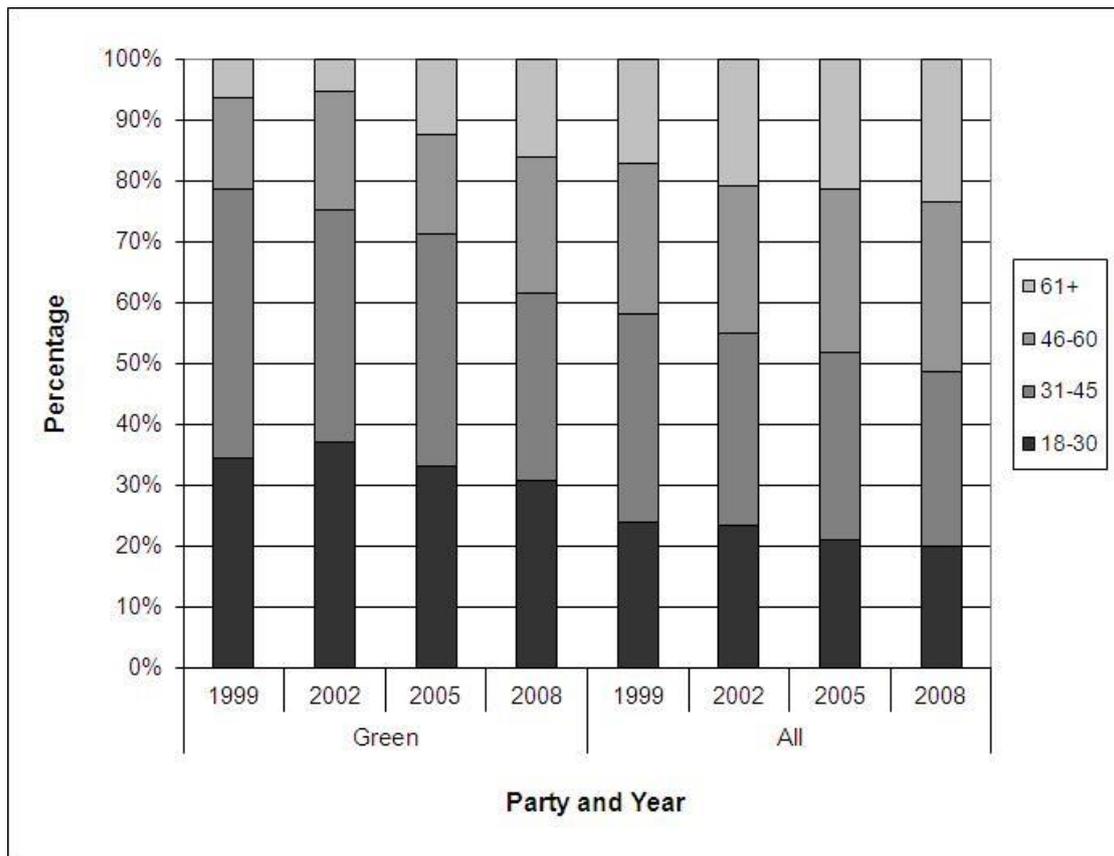
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Table 1: Green Party Electoral Performance (1999-2008)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Turnout (%)</i>	<i>Votes (#)</i>	<i>Votes (%)</i>	<i>Seats</i>
1999	84.8	106 560	5.2	7
2002	77.0	142 250	7.0	9
2005	80.9	120 521	5.1	6
2008	79.5	157 613	6.7	9

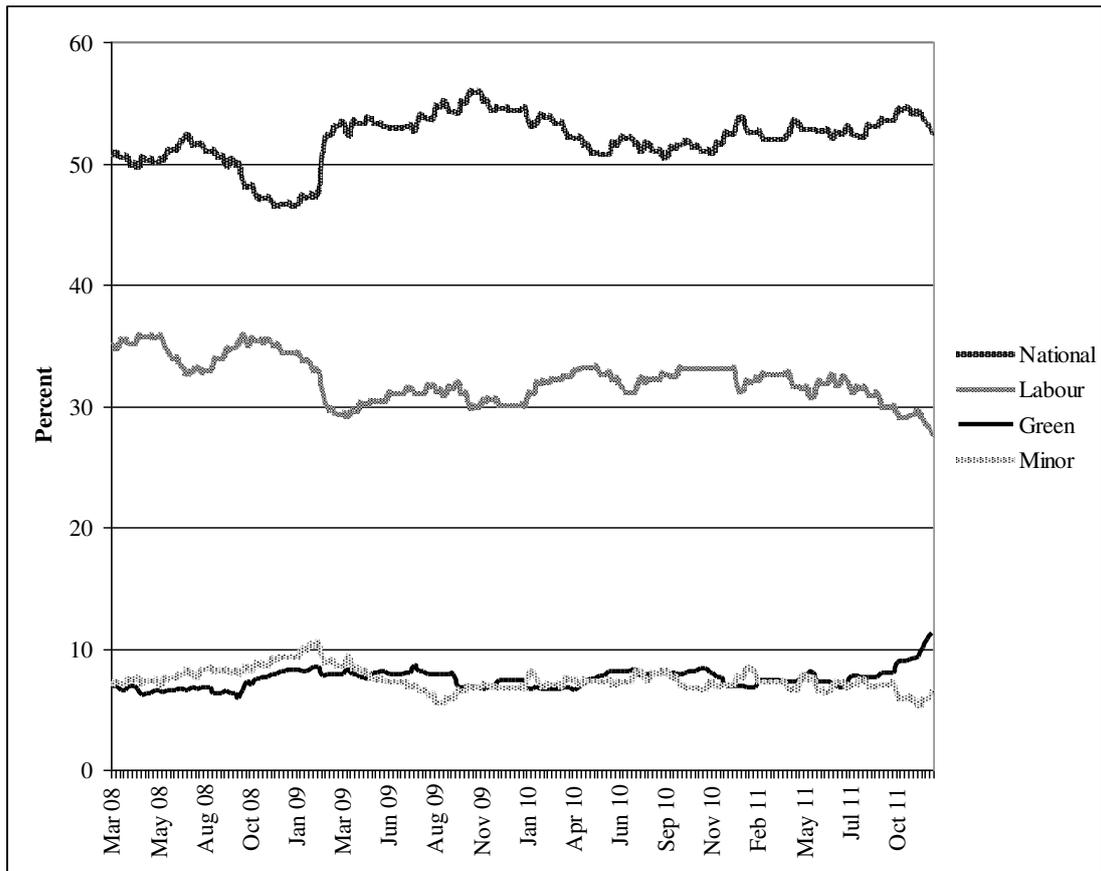
Source: New Zealand Electoral Commission. Available from: www.elections.org.nz

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Voters (1999-2008)



Source: New Zealand Election Study. Available from: <http://www.nzssds.org.nz>.

Figure 2: 'Poll of Polls' (2008-2011)



Source: Pundit 'Poll of Polls' URL: <<http://pundit.co.nz/content/poll-of-polls>>.

Consulted: 27 November 2011.

Table 2: 2008 and 2011 Election Results

Parties	2011				2008			
	Vote %	Elector	List	Total	Vote %	Elector	List	Total
National	47.3	42	17	59	44.9	41	17	58
Labour	27.5	22	12	34	33.9	21	22	43
Green	11.1	0	14	14	6.7	0	9	9
NZ First	6.6	0	8	8	4.1	0	0	0
Minor [‡]	4.2	6	0	6	7.8	8	4	12
Other	3.4	0	0	0	2.5	0	0	0
Total	100	70	51	121	100	70	52	122

Source: Elections New Zealand. Available from: www.elections.org.nz

[‡] Includes the five minor parties that gained representation in Parliament.