

Click Here For Participation

The Role of the Internet in Party Political Participation

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
MSc Technology and Innovation Management

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August 2003



1.0 SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in political participation through a survey of members of Brighton & Hove Green Party (BHGP). The theoretical discussion begins by addressing the importance of parties to modern liberal representative democracies, exploring the various types of parties apparent in western democracies and differing goals they can have. This discussion is situated within the context of declining political participation and party membership. A general-incentives model for explaining individuals' membership and active involvement in parties is also introduced.

Technological determinism and social constructivism are both rejected in favour of the Emergent Process model for explaining ICT adoption. Once the normalisation and equalisation theses are discounted the Accelerated Pluralism model is used to explain how technologies will affect the political sphere. The theoretical discussions are concluded by proposing a 3-layer model that attempts to expose the key factors acting on parties and technologies.

The survey results reveal a unique demographic for BHGP members which raises both challenges and opportunities for ICT adoption at the local party level. Email and websites were found to be less popular for interactive activities than for purely informational functions. A significant proportion of modem users amongst the membership indicates that multimedia applications are still a long way from being widely usable. Furthermore a fifth of respondents were found to not use the Internet raising 'digital divide' issues.

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3.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Kitcat & Kitcat Ltd and Swing Digital Ltd for providing the financial support which allowed a postal survey of party members to be carried out. Without the help and understanding of my co-directors this research would have been impossible. I'd like to extend my appreciation to all members of Brighton & Hove Green Party who surprised me with such a huge response to the survey. In particular thanks go to Rik Child, the party's coordinator and a former councillor; Simon Williams, a city councillor and former external communications officer and Geoffrey Bowden, the party's treasurer and external communications officer who have all offered considerable help and advice in reaching the membership and better understanding the party.

Within SPRU both Carmen Long and Cynthia Little have been extremely helpful in smoothing the mechanics of dissertation work, the little things going right makes a *big* difference. My supervisor, Prof. Ed Steinmueller, has navigated me through this dissertation in a gentle, enlightening and engaging manner ensuring that the work remains mine but turning the map the right way when I've been looking at it upside-down! My sweetheart has been an inspiration, guide and wonderful source of support throughout this dissertation, even during moments of crankiness. Finally I cannot begin to express my appreciation for the support and love my parents have given me during this dissertation and MSc programme, as they do for all my exploits, no matter how futile they might at first seem. All errors remain my responsibility.

4.0 DISCLOSURE

The author has been a member of Brighton & Hove Green Party since the beginning of 2003, previously he was a relatively passive member of the Liberal Democrats for six years. He became the local Young Greens coordinator in May. In mid-July 2003 he was appointed to the local party's executive. He is also involved in developing the party's website, email and membership systems strategies.

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Our understanding of the adoption and use of ICTs and computer mediated communications (CMCs) is extremely incomplete. In the staid world of political parties this understanding is even more restricted. However with political participation in decline many see ICTs as a huge opportunity for reformulating politics and reconnecting with those who have disengaged with the political process. This dissertation aims to contribute to the debate on technology's use in reinvigorating political participation.

The few existing surveys of ICTs and political participation have tended to look on a national scale. Whilst offering useful insights, they lack the definition that examining a single local party might offer. The aim of this dissertation is to examine a local party's membership to reveal their ICT use and preferences. In doing so some directions for selecting and implementing ICTs for party use, particularly at the local level, can be derived. National parties are, of course, nothing without their local members, as Whiteley et al. point out:

"Without a participative grass-roots membership, political parties become dominated by legislative 'notables'. Such candidate-centred parties find it more difficult to maintain their cohesion... Responsible parties with well-developed political programmes require a participative, grass-roots membership... If the party base is weakened by reducing the role and importance of party members, then the party superstructure will also be weakened. Weakening the grass roots will have disadvantageous implications for the entire political system."

(Whiteley et al., 1994, pp7)

Thus by explicitly centring my research on the local party I hope to reinforce the centrality of the party member and the local organisation to the success and strength of not only parties but the political system to which they are so central.

In the next section I shall explore declining participation amidst increasing politicisation before turning to the theories for understanding political parties, arguing for a general-incentives model to explain party membership and activism. Then I will examine the different views of how technology and society interact, proposing the Emergent Process model before arguing that in the political context technological adoption will lead to no clear winners and losers, as described by the Accelerated Pluralism theory. Instead we shall see an increasingly complex and fluid political space with established parties using their resources to maintain their position online while smaller groups benefit from the 'force multiplier' effects of technologies to participate in debates they have been previously excluded from.

In section 7 the unit of analysis, Brighton & Hove Green Party, will be examined within the broader context of the environmental movement and the international growth of Green parties. Then the chosen methodology, a survey of party members, as well as its implementation will be detailed. Section 8 will introduce the results of the survey, these will be compared with data from surveys of members from other parties and broader national statistics. Finally section 9 will close the dissertation by summarising the arguments, drawing conclusions from the findings and suggesting potentially rich future avenues of research.

6.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section aims to provide an overview of the literature relevant for examining the key themes of this dissertation, technology-mediated political participation and the adoption of ICTs by political parties. I shall begin by introducing the political issues within the context of declining participation and then examine how technology might play a role in party and member functions. I will argue that the affordances of certain ICTs will, subject to certain factors, match with specific party functions to facilitate their performance. The section will conclude by bringing political and technological strands together into a new framework.

6.1 Political Issues

Western citizens have been experiencing an increasing politicisation of all aspects of their lives. In 1960 an average 27% of GDP accounted for government revenues, and 26% of GDP represented government expenditures in OECD nations. By 1997 the numbers were 45% and 47% respectively, an astounding increase over 37 years of perceived liberalisation and privatisation (van Deth, 2001). Yet the 2001 UK general election showed, arguably, the lowest British turnout¹ in a century, indeed turnout is declining across western democracies (International IDEA, 2001). Declining political participation poses a nascent crisis for representative democracies creating an impetus to examine how to reconnect with citizens. My view is that a low turnout only points towards a lack of enthusiasm for politicians and the political process that encompasses our electoral activity, not a total disengagement from civic life. Thus the challenge is to see how the political sphere, and the parties which play such a major role in this sphere, can be reinvigorated, with the appropriate use of technology being a promising avenue of exploration.

The UK political sphere lies between the two extreme models of direct or participative democracy (as typified by the Athens of Pericles) and the indirect or elitist model. The direct model views MPs as delegates while the latter would construct them as Burkean representatives². The truly participative model is logistically unworkable on national scales, given the populations in most democracies, and the elitist model is only regarded to be legitimate if held effectively to account by all of the people. The introduction of the Internet has re-opened the debate on whether a truly direct, or possibly a more communitarian, model of democracy could be facilitated by

¹ Arguably the lowest as elections competing for the title suffered from a lack of women voters, different rules of voter eligibility and horribly dated electoral rolls.

² In other words once elected representatives look to their own consciences to make decisions are not beholden to those who elected them.

the new technologies available (Gibson et al., 2003; Lusoli et al., 2002; Ponton and Gill, 1993; Ranney, 1971), creating a challenge to the mainstream opinion that favours reform of the existing indirect model based on political parties. It is at the party level I wish to examine this reforming debate, how can ICTs alter their operations and relationships? Before answering this question I will first examine and try to define political parties.

Political Parties: The Foundations of Democracy

Fundamental to the British mode of liberal democracy, and to the research questions being addressed in this thesis, are political parties. Indeed so central are parties to the modern examination of political science that Ranney begins his assessment by citing and defending the following statement by Schattschneider:

“It should be stated flatly at the outset that this volume is devoted to the thesis that the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties. As a matter of fact, the condition of the parties is the best possible evidence of the nature of any regime. The most important distinction in modern political philosophy, the distinction between democracy and dictatorship, can be made best in terms of party politics. The parties are not therefore merely appendages of modern government: they are in the centre of it and play a determinative and creative role in it.” (Ranney, 1971, pp95)

Coxall expounds a similar argument (from a very British perspective) stating that “It is hard to see how a liberal-democratic political system could work without a system of political parties. They form the main if not the only means of political recruitment, representation and participation. They form governments and oppositions.” (Coxall, 1980, pp10)

With such a centrality given to parties within our political systems it becomes clear how serious a challenge declining party membership might be to our current democratic paradigm. First though, how does one define a healthy party? Coxall certainly makes a good try in his argument above and also marshalled Burke’s own, somewhat optimistic, view that “[a] party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavour the national interest upon some principle in which they all agreed.” (Coxall, 1980, pp8). However, as Ranney highlights, there is continued disagreement over a precise definition of political parties (as separate from other forms of political organisation) partly, as we will see, due to the continually evolving nature of the party. Nevertheless he asserts the following incomplete list of characteristics which most would agree to:

- 'A party is an aggregation of people to whom a *label*... [Tory, Democrat]... is generally applied by both themselves and others.'
- 'Some of these people are *organised*; they deliberately act in concert to achieve whatever goals their party has.'
- 'The larger society recognises as *legitimate* their right to organise and promote their party's cause.'
- 'Some of the party's goal-promoting activities work through the mechanisms of representative government.'
- 'A party's key activity is thus *selecting candidates* and *nominating* for public office.'

(Ranney, 1971) [emphasis as in original]

Whiteley et al. focus these broad characteristics a little further by arguing that "Parties aggregate a vast range of disparate ideas and interests into a cohesive set of political demands; they provide direction and order to government; and they ensure a greater degree of representation and political accountability." (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp 7)

Agreeing with these broad definitions Rommele typifies the party's role in the political process as being that of a 'communicative hinge function' which he divides into the following key activities (Rommele, 2003):

- Opinion formation
- Interest mediation
- Organisation

In other words parties are a vital medium of communication between the electorate and the elites in government. Not only do they help form opinion, they aggregate views, mediate between opposing perspectives and then filter upwards. Margetts describes this as parties maintaining 'nodality' between the large range of actors in the political process. She argues (Margetts, 2001) for a slightly different range of core party activities, consisting of:

- Leadership recruitment
- Interest aggregation and articulation
- Providing a simple point of reference for supporters and voters amidst the complexity of the media-political landscape
- Direction to government

Clearly all these conceptualisations of the roles of political parties have significant commonality. References to recruitment hint at the vital cultural induction that parties undertake to draw potential leaders and activists into the heart of our political process. This induction process is radically altering as the nature of parties in western democracies are evolving towards a more professionalized form of campaigning amidst declining membership. Whiteley et al. strongly argue that "parties are the training ground for future political leaders... political parties are a vital feature of liberal democracy and ... their members are of considerable importance... without a participative grass-roots membership, political parties become dominated by legislative 'notables'." (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp6-7)

The cultural induction activities of parties leads one away from the purely functional definitions of the previous paragraphs. Parties can also be regarded as social groupings or networks who provide a key source of identity for participants. Indeed Whiteley et al. show that in the 1990s 64% of new Tory members were recruited through social networks, the highest proportion since figures became available in the 1930s (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp79). While the Conservatives have been the dominant party of government in modern British politics, and one of the most successful membership recruitment parties in post-war Western Europe, it is unclear what it actually means to be a Tory party member. A social rather than an instrumentalist conceptualization of the party seems far more appropriate (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp9). One might argue that the declining membership, that parties are all battling against, could be a result of effective competition from other social groupings such as NGOs or community associations which may or may not have explicit political activities. However statistics in the next section show that NGOs aren't even growing in some significant cases. Thus I would argue that people are dealigning from groups, they are not simply shifting loyalties away from parties to other groups (though this may happening on a small scale) but a general loss of faith in the political discourse has resulted in all groups losing members.

The challenge of declining party membership

Citing Mair and van Biezen, Margetts shows that mean party membership as a percentage of the electorate in twenty European democracies has dropped from 10.5% in 1992 to 5% in 2001 (the UK mean party membership is now at 2%). Even popular environmental groups have suffered a collapse, after quadrupling membership between 1971 and 1992 NGOs are now struggling. Greenpeace had only 170,000 members in 1999 which is much closer to 1985 levels than the 411,000 they boasted in 1993, though by 2002 they had

recovered mildly to 220,000³. The Green Party of England and Wales has seen a similar reversal dropping from 20,000 to 4,000 members between 1990 and 1995 and now stands at 5,900⁴ (Margetts, 2001). Thus not only parties but many of the obvious forms of political organisation are apparently in decline.

The political party has undergone an evolution whereby interaction with voters has diminished as mass mediation has been increasingly used by professionalized party workers (Gibson et al., 2003). Summarising political scientists' classifications Margetts argues that the evolution began with 'cadre' (or 'caucus') parties which consisted of political elites in legislative bodies principally working to ensure the election of their candidates which were not beholden to members. The subsequent party format, the 'mass' party, developed outside of the legislature with formal democratic structures including branches, national committees and conferences of delegates (Margetts, 2001). As previously identified, precipitously declining party membership is leading to a general, though not unanimous, agreement that the mass membership party is in terminal decline. At this point, as we shift our gaze from past developments to examine current activities and try to peer into the future, opinion unsurprisingly differs somewhat more noticeably. Some argue⁵ that western democracies are going to see an increasing number of 'catch-all' parties as typified by the US party system. In this case parties essentially revolve around the selection of leaders and the 'pragmatic elector-consumer' in an environment where votes change allegiance much more freely. Essentially parties become like football teams, if one supports the 'reds' or the 'blues' then one is part of the tribe, with common views on policy secondary but not completely ignored. The most important aspect of such a 'catch-all' system is the altered relationship between members and party elites: Members have diminished influence and there is little to distinguish between a supporter and an explicit member.

While evident, to an extent, in the US political system, the 'catch-all' parties are not dominant in Europe, for the time being at least. Instead Europeans have seen the rise of 'cartel' parties which are typified by inter-party collusion and an increasingly porous division between government and party. The small numbers of members in such parties are seen mainly as service providers to canvass or deliver leaflets for the elites and less as 'shareholders' to hold the party elites accountable. Because of declining participation the cartel parties look to the state for support and will consider resource and power sharing to maintain survival. A cynic might argue that the cartel party is not a new occurrence but merely a recognition of the reality (over the rhetoric) of what the mass membership parties have always done. Nevertheless, Margetts cites Mair (a key proponent of the cartel view) as arguing, in 1997, that "the United Kingdom is a curious case in which the behaviour associated with

³ See table in section 7

⁴ Current membership figure given in email from Green Party administrative officer.

⁵ Including a Liberal Democrat MP to the author in a private conversation.

the cartel party model is becoming less prevalent" (Margetts, 2001). Perhaps, but the declining membership in political organisations is an undeniable trajectory which will, if it hasn't already, be a force for change in party operations and structures.

Ward argues that the cartel and catch-all parties are predicated on a more individualistic notion of the party member than previous modes of party organization. The result is that while members may have more formal influence, such as through postal ballots on party leadership, the parties are run in a highly centralized and top-down manner which atomizes the membership – participating in a very limited way from home and unlikely to organize into groups or factions of any real or lasting influence on the party's direction (Ward, 2001). Strangely enough local Tory associations have long resisted Central Office attempts to formalise members' influence and rights, seeing such initiatives as an infringement on local party autonomy and not as a potential reinforcement of their power. Thus along with the blurring of the lines between formal members and informal supporters who donate and participate in party activities, there is an unclear sense of what it means to be a member in a modern-day political party (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp19-21). Individualism and atomization are common themes in many analyses of declining party membership and thus shall be explored further in the next section.

Decline due to individualism: An incentives model

Fr Mark Barrett OSB argues⁶, on the basis of Downey's work that with the increase of individualized spirituality and the resulting lack of communal experiences which provide citizens with the tools for social interaction and moral guidance, short lived single issue groups are a logical outcome. He argues that there is at least one generation coming of age without the ability to form lasting community bonds and thus to participate in any kind of communal action. Participation must be very clearly in the individual's interests for any action to occur but he/she is unlikely to offer any long term commitment. If such attitudes are true and become widespread then meaningful involvement in political parties is going to become increasingly unlikely (Downey, 1997, Chapter 1). Furthermore if social skills are lacking then ICTs are unable to help, they are only mediators to existing social connections and activities.

A more formalised approach to characterising increased individualism causing declining participation is through the general-incentives framework. This model, as applied by Whiteley et al., is grounded in the assumption that people join and become active in political parties in response to a variety of incentives. These incentives range from the private, which encompass direct personal benefits, to the collective, where members get involved to

⁶ In a private conversation with the author.

pursue, for example, policy goals which are felt to make all citizens better off. There are also what Whiteley et al. call non-instrumental motives which can be due to social norms, friends and family expecting someone to join a particular party, a sense of loyalty or an altruistic view that participation is a citizen's duty. However there is a logical problem for which Whiteley et al. use Olson's term, the 'paradox of participation'. The paradox applies to collective incentives if, as Olson did, one assumes an economist's rational-choice model of participants and an economist's understanding of collective goods. For economists collective goods have two key properties, jointness of supply and the impossibility of exclusion: This means that supplying a collective good to one person does not take it away from others, and that once supplied, individuals cannot be prevented from consuming the good⁷. The result of collective goods having such properties is that the individual benefits of political activism (e.g. improved healthcare, free education) do not outweigh the individual costs of participation (e.g. canvassing, attending weekly meetings), so why should a rational, self-interested person work for collective goods? Indeed survey data from across many political systems cited by Whiteley et al. and the results that shall be presented later in this dissertation show that few people are party members and even fewer are activists (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp80-83).

Political parties 'produce' collective goods and when policies are implemented successfully, everyone benefits whether or not they have been active in the political party. Thus the rational-choice individual is unlikely to spend money joining a party and expend time and resources working for the party if the benefits can be had without this work. If the party loses an election and the policies are not implemented then, by not participating in the party's activities, the individual suffers no losses. It is rational, within this model, to not participate in party politics purely for collective incentives.

One approach to encourage the self-interested into parties is through the use of 'selective incentives' which are private incentives available only to party members to make involvement worthwhile to the individual, for example special rates on credit cards, free legal advice or preferred insurance quotes. Whiteley et al. split selective incentives into three types: process, outcome, and ideological incentives. Process incentives refer to benefits which incur from the process of participation itself such as meeting like-minded people, the entertainment value of political events or catharsis through protest. Outcome incentives are motives concerned with achieving private rather than collective goals within the political process. These goals might include having ambitions to become a city councillor, wanting to be a school governor or trying to derive benefit for one's business through

⁷ Whiteley et al. use the example of national defence: Once defence has been provided by the Government a newly arrived member of society benefits from the good without others suffering a reduced supply. Furthermore it is impossible to prevent some members of society benefiting from the collective good of national defence, even if they have not contributed to its provision. In other words collective goods are vulnerable to free-riders.

party involvement. Finally ideological motivations are those where people wish to express their core beliefs and mix with those who hold similar values by joining a party. These incentives can help to resolve the paradox of participation by offering non-collective incentives. But, as Whiteley et al. point out, these incentives are only truly applicable to those wishing to become active members. For non-active members the key is understanding that in the rational-choice model the *perception* of the costs and the benefits is what matters. So if a rational individual perceives the costs of membership as being insignificant then even if their contribution to the collective good is negligible, the action is rational as it is the apparent difference between the costs and the benefits which is being assessed. Whiteley et al. further the model by arguing that individuals make an analysis at the party level, they ask whether the party collectively make a difference to outcomes. If they believe it can make differences to the lives of people with whom the individual can identify they will join, and vice versa (Whiteley et al., 1994,pp84-86). ICTs can reduce the costs of participation or membership but can't really act at the incentives level. This focuses and limits the range of tasks for which they are most appropriate.

Within the context of Barrett's earlier arguments, could increasing individualism mean that private incentives are gaining greater weight amongst citizens, resulting in more being caught in the paradox of participation, making party membership no longer worth their while? In my view the rational-choice model has become the dominant philosophy of Western society and is so internalised that many find the costs of political involvement far outweigh any benefits that they can perceive. Furthermore parties are seen as being less able to make changes relevant to peoples' lives, they are no longer the vaunted institutions of Churchill's time. The growing number of selective incentives such as credit cards, free gifts and so on that organisations, including political parties, are offering indicates that they recognise the cost-benefit balance is heavily weighted to the cost side in most potential members' minds.

Despite the troubles an incentives-grounded analysis hints at for political parties as membership continues to decline, they remain the dominant mode of political organisation even as their form has evolved from the caucus to the cartel and catch-all models of today. In the next section I will proceed to examine party goal structures.

Party Goals

Parties do and will continue to take a variety of forms, but to what ends? I have previously outlined the key roles of parties within the political process. These roles are not sufficient for analyzing parties, their members and chosen activities. One needs to examine the motivating factors behind why a party and its activists engage in the long hours of repetitive and often boring work. The incentives model examines these motivations at the

individual level, now I shall look at the organisational level. Rommele identifies four primary goals that a party might adopt (Rommele, 2003):

- **Vote Maximisation**

This is typified by a top-down approach (including in the use of the Internet) which treats members and voters virtually equally. Key to vote maximisation is encouraging swing voters to commit to the party, thus the primary party focus is the wider electorate. Mostly identified with catch-all and cartel parties, vote maximisers are indistinguishable from office maximisers in a two-party system.

- **Office Maximisation**

To gain the most positions in office, parties adopting this primary goal are highly focussed on the media and coalition partners (potential or current). As a result relatively few resources are dedicated to member-relations and ICT usage also tends to be top-down.

- **Representation of Members**

Parties adopting member representation as their core goal tend to be bottom-up, grassroots organisations which leverage technology to encourage member participation. Members have exclusive rights not transferable to voters and politicians see themselves as delegates, the focus is on *intra-party* democracy. Green parties often typify this approach.

- **Policy/Ideology Advocacy**

Parties following this objective tend to focus on particular issues (and thus ministries) to build their credibility. Their activities are more policy-oriented than candidate-oriented. Communications will be very targeted and focussed on the policy unless a candidate has specific expertise. ICTs are marshalled to help deliver targeted messages and reach the wider electorate.

Not only does such a typology help us to understand the core focus and drive of specific parties but, by exposing the fundamental motivations, helps us to understand which ICTs will be adopted and for which purposes.

While political participation does not have to be mediated by parties Bimber, citing Lippman, deploys an excellent, if slightly paternalistic, argument that there are so many issues of such complexity each with a multitude of potential policy responses that the landscape of politics is too complex for any individual to

navigate. Political parties provide the essential intermediaries that allow voters to get to grips with politics (Bimber, 1998), the media-party symbiosis is key to the digestion and dissemination of political information to the electorate. The size and quantity of legislation passing through parliaments backs this view, such a volume of dense technical language must be mediated by a political class well versed in both the language of government and that of the voters. If Rommele's typology of party objectives holds true then the intermediation function is somewhat of a side-effect of the parties' desires to achieve their chosen electoral objective, nevertheless ICTs can and already do play a role in this intermediation activity, such as by alerting stakeholders to new Early Day Motions in Parliament⁸.

Bimber cites Converse's argument that the increased availability of information might in fact depress participation as periods of heightened political engagement such as the 19th century may have been due to low information availability making much of the voting population susceptible to more emotional appeals. Certainly polling has shown there to be a certain type of modern citizen who chooses not to vote because they feel they don't have all the information necessary to make a rational decision (Bimber, 1998; Kitcat, 2001; Kitcat, 2002). So the knowledge that there is information available, that could be used to better inform a decision, effectively disincetivises those who haven't consumed the information as they feel they are not informationally 'qualified' to participate. This, in my view, is a sign of how deeply rational individualism has become the guiding philosophy of modern society. The challenge then is, if the rational individual remains the predominant mental model for citizens, how can practitioners deliver the information or incentivise citizens to retrieve it themselves? Ideally addressing this information delivery challenge needs to be aligned with party goals, thus making it directly in their interests to offer solutions.

A technologically catalysed revolution

The Second Gulf War has forced the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), a term that academics and generals have been debating for at least the last five years, to resurface into the mainstream. The RMA encompasses the vast changes NATO armed forces are trying to introduce to the way they wage war. In essence doctrinal changes are being enabled by the use of new technologies such as 'Just In Time' resource planning software for logistics, wireless mesh networks for inter-soldier communications and global positioning systems for target identification and tracking (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1997). In other words specific military functions are being augmented and changed by introducing ICTs. Similar changes are occurring in all types of organizations in what is referred to as the Information Revolution (InfoRev):

⁸ See <http://www.parliament.uk>

“The rapid global evolution and spread of microprocessor-based technology and its resultant impact on all aspects of human endeavour including communication, science, business and art due to its information processing capabilities.” (Kitcat, 2000).

Specific to this dissertation is an examination of the role the InfoRev plays (or will play) in political parties. By 1981 the Tofflers had argued that the InfoRev's influence on politics would lead to the emergence of a T-Net (Transnational Network) of non-governmental and governmental organisations at grassroots, regional, national, supra-national and international levels (Kitcat, 2000; Toffler and Toffler, 1981). Current zeitgeist activities such as the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalism protests typify the Tofflers' predicted political uses of technology to swarm a huge variety of autonomous groups into action on radical issues. While Seattle, Genoa, Davos and other protests have made a huge impact on the public consciousness through saturation media coverage, insensitive policing and radical anarchists piggy-backing on these protests; the reality is that, as discussed previously, even established and popular NGOs are bleeding members almost as dramatically as political parties. While the new anti-globalisation movements (for want of a better term) may be drawing new people into activism and political action, their decentralised, amorphous nature makes them extremely hard to count and, so far at least, not nearly as lasting as political parties have been (Klein, 2002; Lin and Dutton, 2003). Falling membership creates incentives for parties to be leaner and more flexible in achieving their objectives; ICTs can play a vital role in achieving such goals. After a brief summary of this section I will examine the technological potentials and issues in the next section.

Summary

Thus far I have introduced the challenge presented by falling electoral turnouts while questioning whether low participation in elections truly indicates apathy. What is certain is that within current thinking political parties are vital to the functioning of our democratic model yet parties (along with other political groupings) are suffering a marked decline in membership, despite the politicization of ever more issues within our society. The different possible roles and types of parties were introduced along with a general-incentives model of political participation. The InfoRev's potential to catalyse change in political organisations and enable new forms of protest was also addressed. Finally the role ICTs could have in supporting leaner, more flexible, political parties was discussed.

6.2 Technological Issues

Captain Kirk vs. The Terminator

The Revolution in Military Affairs mentioned in the previous section highlights how the InfoRev doesn't just engender procedural and technological change but also (and possibly most importantly) organisational change. Military planners envisage (and to an extent are already using) significantly smaller units in greater numbers in new tactical and strategic configurations. To highlight such organisational impacts emerging from the InfoRev I have argued the existence of an Organisational Revolution (OrgRev) which is already quite advanced if organisational sloths such as the military are exhibiting its symptoms. I define the OrgRev as:

“The drastic change of existing organisational structures and the ability to create innovative and radical new organisational structures due to the impact of the Information Revolution.” (Kitcat, 2000)

If one accepts that the InfoRev and associated OrgRev are well underway then how will political parties change or be changed, if at all? Pippa Norris makes the engaging point that predictions about technology's impact are somewhat of a Rorschach test for commentators, revealing their technophobe or technophile biases (Norris, 1999). In the technophobes' camp lie the champions of 'hard' technological determinism who argue that technology imposes changes on society, outside of direct human control. I would argue that such a view is based on the idea that technology cannot be understood, it is a position fearful of technology which hints at a future akin to that portrayed in the 'Terminator' movies. At the opposite end of the spectrum lie social constructivists who argue that technology is created and implemented by humans and so can be controlled, though often by powerful elites. Social constructivists could be accused of subscribing to the utopian 'Star Trek' vision of our technological future where we harness innovations for the mutual well-being of, at worst, select elites, and at best, society as a whole. Technological determinism alone is not a particularly helpful analytical tool as it provides little room for understanding why certain technologies succeed or fail in our societies yet social constructivism risks situating all analysis around non-generalisable analyses of actors and elites. Some argue for 'soft' technological determinism as a middle way that recognises the human role in technological outcomes but notes that no single set of actors is in complete control of processes or technologies (Steinmueller, 2003).

This is a very short distance from the Emergent Process model, in fact some might argue that the difference is merely terminological. The Emergent Process model highlights the unpredictability of ICTs' impacts by noting

how technologies and users' choices interact with mutually causal influences to occasionally result in unanticipated consequences (Markus, 1994). This ties in with Schumpeter's technological innovation model which similarly recognises that by trying to make the best use of a technology an organisation tends to change its very nature in the process. Schumpeter sees technology first replicating existing processes; then the technology permits new, more efficient processes before the organisation reengineers to focus on the technology which has now become core (Harrop et al., 1999). In many ways the Emergent Process model is faithful to the Schumpeterian tradition as well as the more recent use of emergent and evolutionary behaviour models in understanding complex biological systems such as ant colonies (Kelly, 1994). This also aligns with Zuboff's view that organizations use ICTs to first automate then informate before transforming their processes (Zuboff, 1988). Applied to political parties the Emergent Process foresees existing tasks, such as canvass returns, being technologised before new processes, such as phone canvassing, come into use preceding even more fundamental changes such as completely restructuring the party's operations and member relations.

Transaction Costs and ICTs

Analysis of how technological change processes are affecting political organisations has been undertaken, in a limited way, for some time. An accessible and useful approach has been that of examining how ICTs might increase or decrease the transaction costs associated with running a political party. If one works on the basis that, as in the general-incentives model, the costs of an activity (especially a collective action) effects the activity itself as well as the likelihood of it being carried out then transaction costs become extremely pertinent. Bonchek argues that there are three types of costs effected by ICTs in political organisations (Bonchek, 1995):

- Communications costs.
- Coordination costs.
- Information costs.

These costs can be reduced by ICTs which allow fast, asynchronous, many-to-many communication with members and coordinators for a virtually zero incremental cost per message. However the question of whether more communication is at all equivalent to better communication is left unresolved by the transaction costs approach. Certainly Internet technologies allow groups such as political parties to add members with only a linear growth in messaging needs, compared to the exponential growth associated with one-to-one communication media. This becomes particularly apparent when considering bi-directional communications which are impractical on any significant scale without digital technologies' low costs (Bonchek, 1995).

Transaction costs are part of the barriers to entry for joining or forming political groups. Could ICTs' reduction of these costs encourage the formation of more groups, result in more people getting involved and also facilitate the formation of new types of groups? Possibly is Bonchek's answer, certainly asynchronous communications are conducive to the part-time participation that typifies much political activity while greater group efficiency could allow activists' limited time to be spent more effectively. However he argues that ICTs also introduce new costs into the equation which could undermine the potential benefits:

- **Network Access**

To access the new, more efficiently run groups participants need access to the networks through which messages are sent. Thus members must be computer literate and financially able to support a connection to the Internet or must at least be willing to go to a public access point regularly enough to make their online participation meaningful. The result at our current stage of technological development is that online participants are likely to be younger educated middle-class males.

- **Cognitive Complexity**

The low transmission costs that typify ICTs result in it being easier to send 'information' than it is to process it. The result is that as more members join their group's network an ever increasing burden is potentially placed on all members to process the vast quantity of communications generated. Part of the issue is a possible lack of education of members in the use of computer mediated communications (CMC) and the associated problems of 'information anxiety' (Wurman, 1989). Thus a challenge for political groups using ICTs is to minimise the cognitive burden for their members that is generated by using CMCs to support their activities.

(Bonchek, 1995)

Note that, as discussed when the general-incentives model was introduced, it is the perceived costs that are important, not the 'objective' costs. Thus if a member believes the cognitive complexity of dealing with, for example, a daily electronic mailing list is high then they may not even try it, even if in reality such a technology could reduce the costs of the member's participation.

The transaction costs approach provides a useful entry point into modelling how ICTs will influence participation in political parties and thus provide structure for deciding whether ICTs are worth adopting. However transaction costs can be used to support both positive and negative predicted outcomes and indeed there are theories that

champion both perspectives.

Technology & Politics: Normalisation vs. Equalisation

The Normalisation thesis argues that due to the existing power structures of funding, influence and 'brand awareness' that incumbent parties enjoy, technologies such as the Internet will make little or no difference to the political landscape. We will primarily experience 'more of the same' online with the existing major parties using their resources to overcome the new transaction costs associated with ICTs to buy the best web sites, the most effective email campaigns and so on.

The alternative, more optimistic, perspective of the Equalisation theory posits that the reduced transaction costs, disintermediating powers and flexibility of ICTs will allow outsider and alternative groups to 'equalise' their position in the political landscape against existing party organisations from previous generations (Lusoli et al., 2002; Rash Jr., 1997). As Streck points out however, the Equalisation theory is in many respects an intellectual slight of hand: Just because the culture of the Internet has been more open and democratic does not mean that such values will translate offline. To underline his point Streck quotes Tom Mandel's wonderful words "Visiting and posting frequently in Internet newsgroups about exercise equipment are not the same as exercising... [And] discussing lingerie via my online service's 'chat' utility... [is] not a good substitute for a Friday-night date." (Streck, 1998) While the Equalisation thesis is inadequate for explaining how ICT adoption will occur in the political sphere, many are not willing to surrender completely to the Normalisation thesis – thus technology is an organisational change catalyst, technology induced evolution will be seen in the world of politics.

The Accelerated Pluralism theory agrees that we will see change, but perhaps not as much or as quickly as the proponents of the Equalisation theory might have hoped. Bimber (1998) grounds the theory with two basic assumptions: The first assumption is that ICTs will not change the basic psychology and sociology of political participation – politics will still be restricted to a small number of activists, most people will find other things to do with their time. ICTs won't change the motivations of those who choose not to get involved, neither will improved communications change the likelihood that activists will group together into parties, though their format may be very different from those of today. The second assumption, which ties into Bonchek's work on transaction costs, is that ICTs will lower the costs (and thus barriers to entry) for grass-roots mobilisation and organisation. The result, Bimber argues, will be a 'democratisation of group elites' into a more fragmented and fluid political environment. New intermediaries will come into play as activists flow to and away from issues and

their dependence on existing stable institutions falters. Thus Accelerated Pluralism foresees increased diversity as fringe and outsider activists currently excluded by the transaction costs of participation will gain the ability to partake in debates they were previously unable to. Nevertheless existing parties will also benefit from ICTs by using them to become effective as leaner, more flexible organisations (Bimber, 1998).

ICTs have the potential to help parties refocus resources away from currently tedious tasks such as mass communication and membership management to more relevant and focussed communications and strategising. Few of the changes foreseen will reach out to those currently disengaged from political activities, as the web (and other interactive media) require users to make the first step. It is the user who must find the website and to be motivated to do so the user needs to have an interest in the topic. Thus without a latent political interest it is unlikely that disengaged users are going to access the potent political resources that are gradually becoming available online. It is a challenge for practitioners to provide incentives for the disengaged to reconnect with political discourse, whether through ICTs or existing media.

Studies show that Accelerated Pluralism is the dominant mode of political ICT adoption resulting in not so much a widening of political participation but a deepening of the level of participation with existing activists (Lusoli et al., 2002). Margetts' quotation of the ever witty Oscar Wilde seems apposite: "The problem with Socialism is that it cuts so dreadfully into the evenings." (Margetts, 2001) While ICTs' asynchronicity might allow Oscar to attend to socialist activities at any time, the reality is that most will find using the Internet to view football scores or download some new music a much more engaging way to spend their time⁹. In other words the 'logic of the database' on which the Internet is fundamentally built tends to help the informed become even more so, but provides no way to create active participants from the disengaged in the way that other media can (Kluver, 2002). If the benefits, in a political context, of accessing the user-centric database logic of the Internet were more apparent to users then perhaps it could be a tool for engaging those currently dissatisfied with voting and politics. But benefits such as greater influence on decision-making or simply being better informed probably are not seen as great incentives if faith in the entire system of government and politics is low. The challenge for practitioners is reasserted.

Mixed Media

The media has an undeniable role to play in engaging the public in political activities and ICTs may well

⁹ Though if wits of Oscar Wilde's calibre regularly attended party meetings surely more people would get involved!

permanently change the nature of this function. The media's role isn't as obviously negative as some disenchanted politicians would like to claim, long term polling since the 1970s by MORI for the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust have shown that levels of interest in politics (even among the younger cohorts) has remained virtually unchanged (Diplock, 2001). In fact a Times/MORI survey eight days before polling day in the 2001 general election found that interest in news about the election was higher than the equivalent time in the 1997 election: 58% were 'very' or 'fairly' interested compared with 52% four years previously. A follow-up survey for the Electoral Commission found that the respondents sustained this interest after the election campaign had ended suggesting that declining turnout is less to do with a falling interest in politics than the failure of campaigns to engage with the electorate. Indeed 66% disagreed with the statement that "it was an interesting election campaign", even 61% of those with an interest in politics disagreed. The Electoral Commission's survey also examined the role of information in the election campaign and showed a general satisfaction with the amount of information available but dissatisfaction about the type of information presented through the various media channels, the leading complaints being a lack of information on parties' policies and local constituency candidates (MORI, 2001). This provides clear opportunities for ICTs, such as the web with its low cost virtually infinite space, to remedy such failings by providing the information citizens lack yet desire.

Resnick, citing research by The Pew Center for The People and The Press, argues that while the mainstream media continue to cover politics in some depth, in the US at least, the past decade has seen a huge erosion of political coverage at the local level and that websites dedicated to local politics may be filling this new gap (Resnick, 1998). A local political news drought may partly be pushing parties onto the web but in fact parties and their 'consumers', the electorate, are already motivated to disintermediate their interactions. Rash highlights what many studies point to, parties and voters want to speak to each other directly, they are tired of soundbites and artificially oppositional debates created to fill newsprint – ICTs and the web in particular allow voters to fully explore the depth and nuance of policies and candidates without the hyperactivity of the media getting in the way (Rash Jr., 1997). The risk is, as previously discussed, that only those already actively engaged will reap the benefits of such disintermediation, the uninterested will still stew in the 'push' media of radio and TV whose digestion of political events often leaves so much to be desired.

Organisational and strategic factors in political ICT adoption

Despite the potential benefits of ICTs current research shows only limited use of technology on the ground of western political battlefields (Gibson et al., 2002a; Gibson et al., 2002b; Gibson et al., 2003; Harrop et al., 1999; Lin and Dutton, 2003; Lusoli et al., 2002; Norris, 1999; Norris, 2001; Norris, 2003; Rash Jr., 1997;

Ward et al., 2002). What factors inhibit or encourage ICT use in political parties? Can we identify which party functions will be best supported by which technologies? Ward argues that there are several key factors which will define how and for which tasks (membership, campaigning etc) political organisations adopt ICTs (Ward, 2001):

Comment: Need to run this quote by Ward as uses draft paper.

- Systemic and Technological Opportunity Structures.
- Organisational capacity (resources).
- Organisational incentives (and objectives).

Ward argues that ICT adoption strategies split into essentially two categories with associated potential outcomes if either strategy becomes predominant: The first is *innovation*, which can be characterised by experimentation and could lead to the erosion of established organisations' powers (de-institutionalisation). The other *supplementation*, sees less fundamental change but mainly improvement of existing practice and, if dominant, probably leads to no overall change in the political balance. Such a perspective can be tied into innovation studies which perceives there as being two primary models for managing innovation. The first is the militaristic 'rationalist' approach which assesses the situation, defines an objective and then proceeds to put activities in place to meet the target. Supporters of the alternative 'incrementalist' model argue that it is actually more rational to accept the uncertainty of innovation processes and thus adopt a more cautious and evolutionary approach by continuously adapting to the environment (Tidd et al., 2001). However both views assume the desire for innovation, as does Ward's categorization, so as in the commercial world we will see innovation 'leadership' and 'followership' from differing parties – their culture, size and main objective all having an impact on which role they take. The mix of leaders and followers will result in supplementation and innovation blending into, I would argue, the future envisaged by Accelerated Pluralism.

More strategic insights into the 'market forces' operating on political parties can be found if one recasts Porter's five forces model into a political landscape. Porter's model puts forward the following five forces as being the key factors acting on firms in a particular industry (his preferred unit of analysis) (Tidd et al., 2001):

- Relations with suppliers.
- Relations with buyers.
- New entrants.
- Substitute products.
- Rivalry amongst established firms.

If one changes the unit of analysis from firms in an industry to parties in a free representative democracy then the five forces, in my view, are:

- Relations with suppliers of resources/power (members, unions, government).
- Relations with voters.
- New parties and movements.
- Alternative models of government (direct democracy, dictatorship).
- Rivalry amongst established parties.

Within his industry-focussed model Tidd et al. argue that Porter perceives four possible strategies which firms can pursue (Tidd et al., 2001):

- Overall cost leadership.
- Product differentiation.
- Cost focus.
- Differentiation focus.

Rommele has provided, as previously introduced, four strategies for political parties (Rommele, 2003):

- Vote Maximisation.
- Office Maximisation.
- Representation of Members.
- Policy/Ideology Advocacy.

A dichotomy is apparent between the two lists with focus being on either differentiating the product (policy) or through maximising sales (votes) through cost and process efficiencies. But one must be careful to draw too close comparisons between parties and firms as while financial considerations are increasingly important in election campaigns, profits and electoral success are very different goals with accordingly divergent imperatives. Nevertheless combining the politically adapted forces and strategic models can help party managers focus the direction and purposes of ICT implementations. Of course Porter's model and my own adaptations are simplistic and fail to take into account the importance of technological trajectories, the size of the firm/party or, in my adaptations, the socio-political trajectories – sometimes economic and demographic factors come together in

click here for participation: theoretical framework

such a way that a party's electoral success (or failure) is virtually inevitable. Nevertheless by understanding a party's market position and strategy one can make a more informed decision about the appropriateness of adopting an ICT.

Mapping functions and ICT capabilities

If ICTs are to assist political parties in an environment of falling membership, loose swarm-like coalitions of interests, and uncertainty, over the level of participation by the electorate then one must be clear what functions the parties will be carrying out. By mapping such functions one can then assess which technological capabilities may assist with which activities. Using Margett's headings I have created a map of party functions and the ICTs which may prove useful to each of these functions, dependent on previously outlined factors such as party goals and resources. The ICTs listed are detailed subsequently.

Party Functions	Appropriate ICTs
Leadership recruitment Membership recruitment Membership relations/engagement Committees, groups and posts Enculturation and providing identity	Online Payments, Data Mining, Mail Merges CMC, Web, Personalization, MRM CMC, DTP CMC, MRM, Event Management
Interest aggregation and articulation Policy Analysis Policy Development Conferences & Meetings Communication with: Members Voters Decision makers/Government	Databases, Internet CMC, Online Polling MRM, Event Management CMC, TV, Advertising CMC, TV, Advertising CMC, TV, Advertising and also DTP
Providing simple point of reference Opinion Polling Policy Analysis Policy Development Conferences & Meetings Communication with: Members Voters Relationships with media	Web, email Databases, Internet CMC, Online Polling MRM, CMC, Event Management CMC, TV, Advertising CMC, TV, Advertising Databases, CMC, DTP
Direction to government Election campaigning Canvassing Communication Policy Parliamentary activities Motions and Bills Committees Working with constituents Ministerial activities Consultations Championing bills Responding to situations Managing civil service Delivering manifesto Accountability to party	Financial Software Databases, Mobile Comms. CMC, Web, TV, DTP, Advertising CMC, Web CMC, Custom Software CMC Contact Management, CMC CMC CMC, Databases CMC, Mobile Comms., Databases CMC CMC, MRM

Table 6.2.1 Mapping party functions to ICTs which could improve and/or alter their performance.

The ICTs listed in table 6.2.1 are explored in a little more detail below:

- **Advertising**

Modern advertising technologies generate rich viewer profiles which allow highly targeted advertising to be delivered across a wide variety of media in a coordinated manner. Responses to such campaigns can be carefully tracked and tied back to profiles allowing much more sophisticated use of limited budgets than has been previously possible.

- **CMC**

Computer Mediated Communications encompasses email, video conferencing, online community tools and more. The low incremental cost of messages, their ability to be indexed and categorised and their asynchronicity make them extremely powerful in many contexts.

- **Contact Management**

Contact Management systems work with CMC tying individual profiles with all communications to and from them, flagging items for follow-up and helping to manage mail shots. Contact Management is already proving vital to many MPs.

- **Custom Software**

Major parties in most western democracies have dedicated technology groups which develop customised software to meet the specific needs of their officers and elected representatives. This software can interface with party and governmental systems to provide access, for example, to the legislative process.

- **Databases**

A hugely broad area but in essence databases allow data to be stored in a structured, searchable and flexible format. Their use allows research findings, membership data, canvassing results etc. to all be accessible and usable for a wide variety of purposes.

- **Data mining**

Data mining is a term for advanced database searching of usually longitudinal data to find useful patterns.

- **DTP**

Desktop Publishing technology allow low cost computers to create high quality publications for any medium. The latest software supports content management technology which allows a single article to appear in print, web and ebook format with no human intervention.

- **Event Management**

Event Management software is usually an extension of Contact Management systems which enable registration, payment and attendance to be tracked and managed. Such systems often also help with

managing exhibitors and conference space.

- **Financial Software**

As major organisations parties need to keep track of their finances. They also have statutory requirements, particularly during elections to carefully track expenditures and software can help with this potentially onerous and bureaucratic task.

- **Mail Merges**

Mail merges are where presentation data (from a Desktop Publishing system) is brought together with individual data from a membership database, for example, to create customised letters, leaflets or brochures for dispatch.

- **Mobile Comms.**

Mobile Communications, whether with mobile phones, short-range digital radios or pagers enables flexible, low-cost coordination to occur during events, in response to unexpected occurrences or to keep in touch when on the campaign trail.

- **MRM**

Membership Relationship Management systems are specifically developed database systems which aim to manage and maintain the relationship with members of an organisation. Such systems normally have a web component that allow members to update their details and interact with other members. The administration side of the software usually offers contact management, subscriptions tracking, donation management and mail merge functions.

- **Online Payments**

Online Payments can be as simple as accepting credit cards online. Alternatively they can cover managing direct debits online, providing fulfilment (sending something back in return for payment) or interacting with newer payment systems such as PayPal or NoChex.

- **Online Polling**

Online polling is generally cheaper and faster than other forms of polling. With corrections for the demographic biases of online users it can be fairly accurate.

- **Personalisation**

Personalisation is the combination of several technologies including databases and neural networks to provide personalised service on a mass scale. This is achieved due to the low costs of storing large amounts of data about people which allow a profile to be built so that suggestions can be made based on past activity, such as with Amazon's music recommendations.

- **TV**

Television is an ICT which is experiencing a resurgence due to the low cost of digital hardware and

software now available for shooting and editing films. Furthermore software such as Flash is making advanced animation and compositing available to virtually anyone.

- **Web**

The world wide web technologies cover online publishing, online communities and online transactions such as registering for more information, all of which parties can make great use of.

I have outlined which ICTs, in my view, are appropriate to certain party functions. In the next section I shall outline what current studies are telling us about how ICTs are actually being used by parties.

Current political uses of ICTs

While research of current uses of ICTs in politics is best described as tentative, the findings do provide some insight into existing uses of ICTs in political parties. In the paragraphs below I have structured the current findings available into the same headings, taken from Margett, that I have used to structure table 6.2.1. As the table showed, many of the technologies are applicable under several headings, thus to avoid repetition I have chosen to address them under the heading I feel most relevant.

Leadership Recruitment

Does political Internet usage lead to stronger bonds with parties and activist groups, through the more regular contact the lower transaction costs of ICTs enables? Or are virtual interactions a weak influence resulting in 'chequebook' activism such as with Greenpeace where the vast majority of members are completely removed from the organisation's activities (Rommele, 2003)? The answer is not simple in my view, when combined with other (offline) interactions we are likely to see bonds strengthen, but the connections will remain weak if only mediated through ICTs. Preliminary findings detailed in this sub-section reinforce this view.

Partly due to the falling membership numbers which are forcing parties to do more with employees and third-party suppliers ICTs are being used mainly to professionalize operations and not to increase member participation (Pedersen, 2001). Indeed Pedersen shows in her research, for Danish parties at least, that visiting party websites (or using postal ballots for party elections) does not improve participation whereas attending local meetings does. This challenges the Equalisation perspective which casts technology as being a key tool for encouraging and enriching participation.

Studies of the British population to examine predispositions to using the Internet for political activities have found not only a desire to interact with representatives online, but also that Internet users tend to be significantly more politically active than non-users (Gibson et al., 2002b), offering some hope that membership recruitment online might be fruitful.

Many parties do offer online joining and membership renewal, the Liberal Democrats have even run consultation exercises on ICT policy via the web. However many of the more advanced interactive features show a low usage: When online LibDem members were surveyed even commercial offers and membership renewal were used by only 36% and 30% respectively of members who visit the party site. The same survey showed that email and web contact had a low impact on mobilising members, about one in nine claimed that email from party sources was functional in getting him/her to contact the party and/or other members or to volunteer time for the party or participate in a specific campaign. Nevertheless email was generally more effective than the web at boosting involvement levels, especially with members who were already active and frequently used email. The paper concluded that, while the web was significant for recruiting new members, email was the most important ICT for parties as it helped to further tie members into the organisation (Ward et al., 2002).

CMCs such as email raise many challenges, especially when one examines how to authenticate voices online – Rash offers an excellent illustration of this point: Bill Clinton's staff decided when he was President that he would never send an email outside of the White House, in this way politicians and constituents could be sure that if they received an email from him it was a fake and thus identity 'spoofing' was avoided (Rash Jr., 1997, pp9). While public-key infrastructure (PKI) exists and is widely available for email (through, for example, the venerable Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) and its many offspring) the additional work required to use such a system, as well as the cognitive leap needed to understand why it works, have prevented email from becoming a trustworthy medium. Not only can one doubt *whose* voice is really being 'heard' online but one can also easily choose to filter out voices. Yet acknowledgement is a key part of finding one's voice and participating, but nowhere is it easier to ignore someone than online (Mitra and Watts, 2002), raising questions about how authoritative voices can be online. Certainly anecdotal and survey results show that many representatives put little weight on electronic communications due to the ease with which they can be sent and authorship can be doubted (Gibson et al., 2003; Harrop et al., 1999; Lin and Dutton, 2003; Rash Jr., 1997).

Interest aggregation and articulation

Despite some controversy over its accuracy online polling is becoming increasingly popular with the political editors of newspapers and psephologists within party headquarters. As a result in the British marketplace alone there are several firms, including YouGov and Populus, competing against the established pollsters to provide faster and cheaper insights (Kellener, 2003; Sparrow and Curtice, 2003; Travis, 2002; Travis, 2003).

CMCs are being actively used by political interest groups and parties to coordinate and activate members as well as supporters. However they still only reach out to a limited number of people who are online and willing to be involved. Nevertheless even in developing democracies where the proportion of people online is small, they can have a noticeable impact on policies as opinion leaders tend to be online (Bonchek, 1995; Lin and Dutton, 2003; Rommele, 2003).

Providing simple point of reference

When communicating outside of the party the most recent surveys on the US 2002 mid-term elections regarded the offerings as generally unadventurous with candidates' home pages being "larded ... with news releases and endorsement lists, but didn't include much from and about ordinary citizens." (Cornfield and Horrigan, 2003) This is despite Gibson et al. having already shown that in some marginal seats the Internet population is already enough to swing a result (Gibson et al., 2002a).

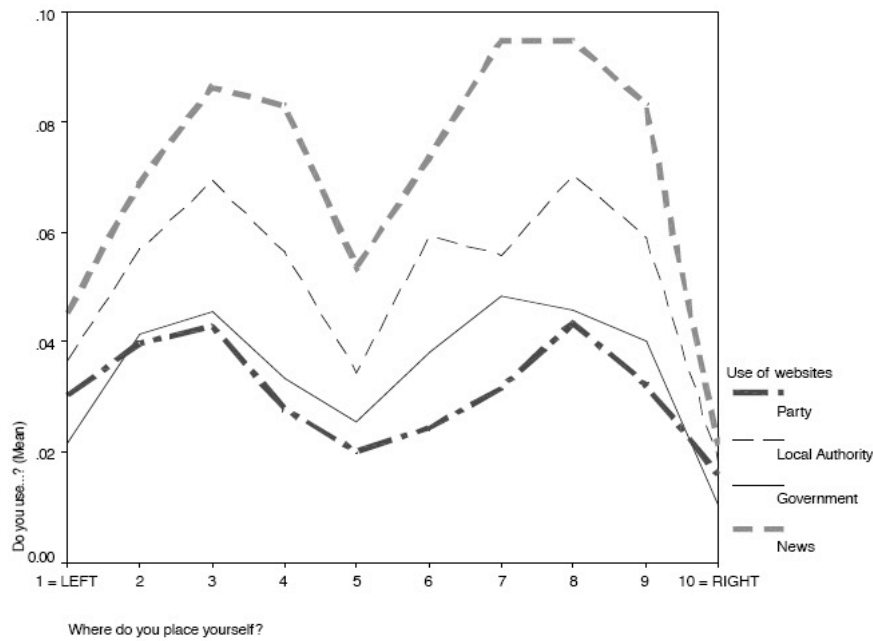


Figure 6.1 Use of political websites by left–right ideological self-placement (Norris, 2003)

Norris has shown a clear 'M' shape in the use of political websites when plotted against responders' left-right self-placement. Her research shows the heaviest users of political sites are those in the middle of the 'left' and 'right' with use declining markedly at the centre and extreme edges of each political camp (see figure 6.1) but that consistently across the range political parties and government websites are the least accessed. Norris also shows that political site usage generally declines with age group, particularly markedly between the 45-54 and 55-64 cohorts (see figure 6.2). This indicates that in 15 years we are likely to see high usage across all ages as generations comfortable with Internet use spread across all the age groups. This data also shows the same low use of party and government websites across all age groups (Norris, 2003).

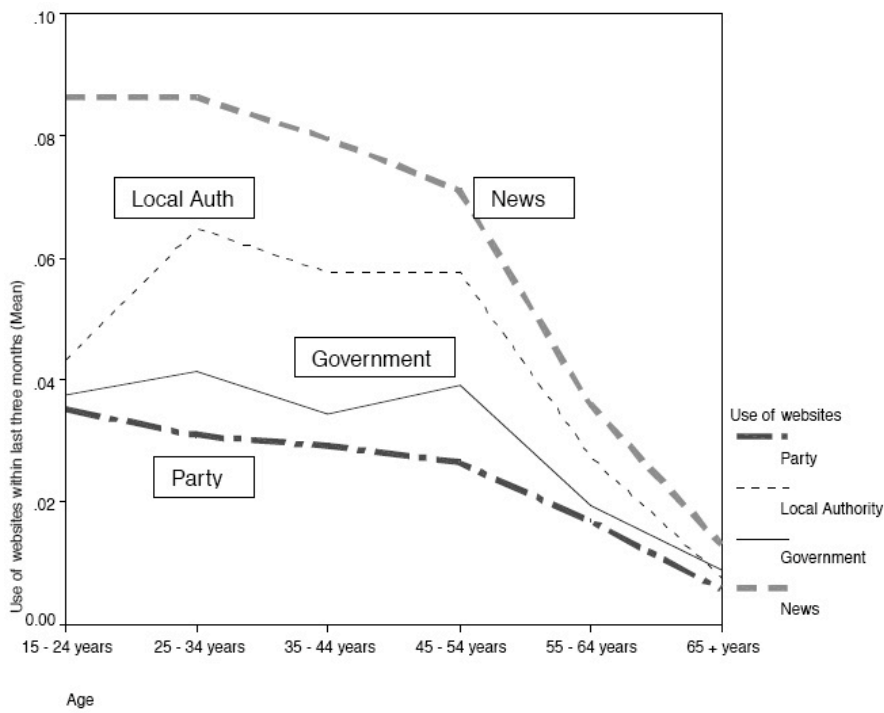


Figure 6.2 Use of political websites by age group (The percentage of the European population using political websites in the prior three months, based on Eurobarometer data 2000.) (Norris, 2003)

Studies looking at the quality of online political communications, primarily focused on the somewhat subjective content analysis of party websites, have shown the Green parties taking a lead with the level of information and participation available on their websites (though surprisingly the far right are close behind the Greens but the extreme left do poorly) yet all sites are largely ‘signs of modernity’ which attempt to disseminate information within the old mass media paradigms (Gibson et al., 2002a; Norris, 2003). Other studies show that major parties dominate online (in terms of links to their sites at least) as they do offline and this is also reflected in online news sources, though smaller parties do get a little extra coverage on the web compared to an analysis of offline coverage. Despite some commitment to fundraising and campaigning online, interviews with party officials have shown CMC to be perceived as being supplementary to the ‘main business’ of electioneering (Gibson et al., 2003).

Perhaps indicating the new vibrancy in single-issue campaigns and NGOs, research has shown that protest network/campaign websites have a better understanding of the unique strengths of ICTs when compared with

the sites of other political organizations, including parties. Despite this, party websites actually offer more opportunities for participation than other forms of organization, though none of the classes of site assessed by Lusoli et al. showed a participation score above 8 out of a possible 15, indicating significant progress can still be made (Lusoli et al., 2002).

Direction to government

The 24-hour news cycle has pushed parties to technologise their activities by procuring policy databases and multicast pager systems for their officers and representatives, helping them to stay 'on message' whilst responding quickly and consistently in crises. A leading British example is Labour's Excalibur system, a US product used by most of the intelligence community, which analyses data in over 200 formats to build personal profiles. The Tories bought the system but mothballed it after the 1997, preferring more traditional monitoring and clippings services. Many, even within the Labour Party, have voice disquiet over a progressive party using such powerful profiling technologies (Agencies, 2001; Harriman, 2001).

Companies such as Aristotle International are providing customised, interactive banner advertisements for election campaigns. For example in the 2000 US presidential elections they ran a banner across over 1,500 sites, including CNN and Yahoo, asking "How much will the Bush tax cut save you? Find out right now in the banner... Click here now." Entering information such as earnings and marital status would result in a savings figure being displayed that could be pocketed if the user voted for the Texas governor (Borger, 2000).

This is a very brief overview of some of the ICTs being used, a body of case study and anecdotal evidence is being built, but very little qualitative data is available. Nevertheless one can see the traditional party focus on top-down communication is unsurprisingly being reasserted in their use of ICTs. Clearly newer modes of interaction and using ICTs for political parties will take time to emerge as officials slowly begin to understand their potential and align ICTs with their parties' goals. Additionally the level (and bandwidth) of Internet access will continue to grow creating a stronger imperative from the consumers and the parties for doing more online.

Summary

In this section the OrgRev has been used to introduce discussion of how technology effects society and organisations. Technological determinism and social constructivism were shown in their opposing corners before examining the Emergent Process model and its connections to Schumpeter's technological innovation process. Subsequently the key role transaction costs play in ICTs and political activism was shown. The opposing models of Equalisation, Normalisation and the middle ground thesis of Accelerated Pluralism were shown to all draw on the transaction costs approach. The uncertain and changing role of the media was discussed before addressing some of the organisational and strategic factors which may influence the adoption of ICTs within political parties. Finally the limited knowledge of the current state of ICT use by parties and their members was reviewed.

6.3 A 3-Level Model

Every political party is likely to have a different goal which is dependent on the size of the party, its current electoral strength and the electoral system of the legislature. Thus while all competing in the same political 'market' some parties are more concerned with vote maximisation while others are focussed on membership representation and so on. Similarly parties will, due to their histories, funding and personnel have varying strengths in carrying out certain activities. This complex of objectives, resources and opportunity structures interacting within the techno-political context will result in technological introduction and use being an Emergent Process.

The Emergent Process is the core macro-technical trajectory effecting technological use within political participation. This exists within a macro-context of informational and organisational revolution trajectories (InfoRev and OrgRev) as well as the continued commitment to a representative democracy. These filter down to a meso level of political parties, media outlets and NGOs all of whom are undergoing internal change and competitive change by new entrants in their respective landscapes. These organisations are made up of, interact with and depend upon the citizen/voter/consumer/activist. The Accelerated Pluralism theory predicts that changes will offer new opportunities for activism and will help to equalise some of the imbalances between established parties and newer political parties (Bimber, 1998). Nevertheless existing parties will be able to leverage their resources and power to retain a significant degree of influence amid the more complex, ambiguous, interconnected and fluid political sphere as typified by the T-Net (Toffler and Toffler, 1981). By using a general-incentives model linked to an understanding of ICTs' effect on transaction costs one can integrate an understanding of the barriers and incentives to participation with how specific technologies can help or hinder member involvement in a variety of party activities.

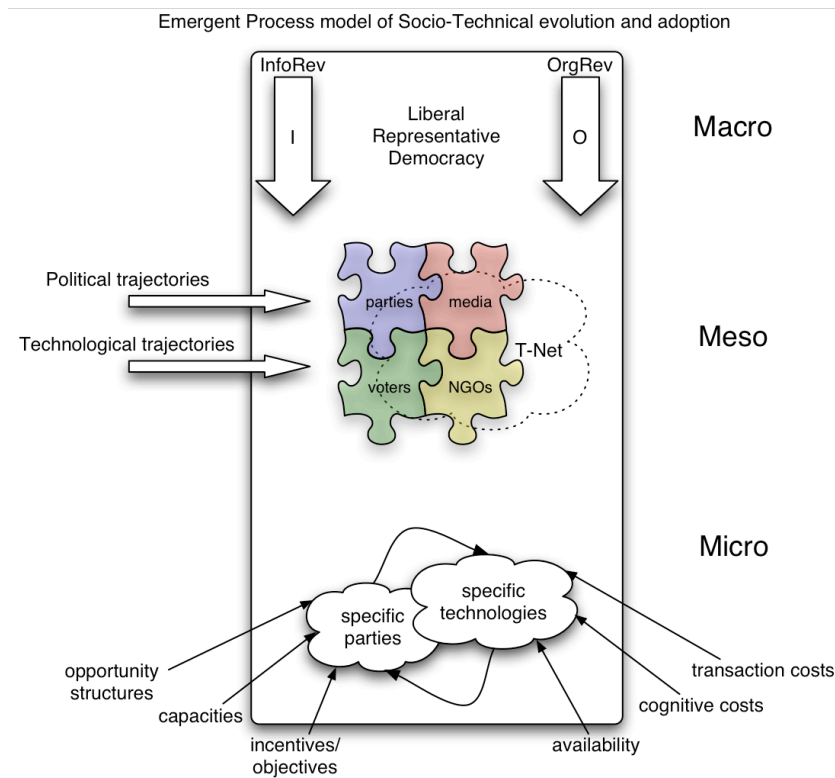


Figure 6.3.1 3-layer model showing technological & political issues at the Macro, Meso and Micro levels.

To summarise the model illustrated in Figure 6.3.1, at the macro-level the InfoRev and OrgRev act within a liberal representative democracy. These forces act, at the meso-level, on parties, media, voters and NGOs some of which are connected to the T-Net. All of these actors are subject to political trajectories (such as changing voter demographics) and technological trajectories (such as increasing broadband penetration) as explored in my repurposing of Porter's five forces. At the micro-level these forces and trajectories can be seen to work as specific parties and technologies interact in an evolutionary way which typifies the Emergent Process that encompasses the entire model. Specific parties are driven by their capacities, incentives and objectives as well as the systemic and technological opportunity structures. Technologies are driven by availability, cognitive costs and transaction costs. How these forces, trends and trajectories operate at the micro level is the fundamental question of this research. How does a specific instance of Green politics at the local level reflect these theories and ideas, and how is ICT actually used in such an instance? By examining this instance one can learn the positive and negative factors relating to the use of ICTs in certain functions.

7.0 METHODOLOGY

This section provides background to the research questions that will be posed. The unit of analysis, a local Green party, will be introduced in the context of the global movement of Green parties, drawing particularly on Castells' work. Finally the research methods selected and how they were implemented will be discussed.

Selecting a Unit of Analysis

Studies are available that show Internet usage at the US and EU (and constituent nations) levels as well as for the membership of the Liberal Democrat party in the UK (Fieldhouse and Russell, 2001; Norris, 1999; Norris, 2003). At the same levels there are studies examining the nature and use of political party websites as well as how party members use the Internet for political activism (Gibson et al., 2002a; Gibson et al., 2002b; Lusoli et al., 2002; Ward et al., 2002). What seems to be lacking is analysis of what role ICTs are playing at the local party level. For while national parties attract most media attention, it is the local party organizations which most members experience and do much of the legwork involved in actually winning elections (Whiteley et al., 1994). Thus by examining a local party it may be possible to derive findings with greater applicability for today's practitioners looking to use ICTs in political parties.

To achieve this a local party had to be found which was sufficiently active to be a useful unit of analysis while also being receptive to a researcher intruding into its activities. With my limited time and resources it was important that the chosen party be close by, thus the parties within Brighton and Hove were examined. Anecdotal evidence implies that the mainstream local parties are not very active in the city with the exception of their elected councillors and a very few activists. On the other hand Brighton's Green Party is extremely active and has just completed a successful election campaign which saw the mobilization of 5-15 activists every day for nearly two months resulting in the party winning 6 council seats (compared with 3 in the previous term) on a council of 54 seats (compared with 78 previously) with no overall control – giving the Green Party effective balance of power on many votes (Brighton & Hove City Council, undated; Green Party, 2003; Trimmingham, 2003). Furthermore nationally the Green Party is seen to be gaining momentum as part of a wider European political 'green wave' at European, national and local levels.

The Green Party in Context

In spite of this perceived momentum Castells questions the long-term effectiveness of politicising environmental issues in such an explicit manner arguing, with reason, that Green parties are less of a movement and more a strategy for getting environmental policies implemented through electoral victory which hasn't shown much major success (Castells, 1997, Chapter 3). The hybrid pressure group/political party format of the Green parties (Castells cites Petra Kelly calling the German Green Party 'the antiparty party' (Castells, 1997, pp120)) has the potential to plug the rift in political participation that Castells perceives as being created by increasingly active NGOs bypassing and undermining the existing political processes and institutions. This rift is due to the fact that many NGOs, though they make up an important part of the democratic discourse, are not inherently democratic in their own structures and processes; they are not accountable to members and voters in the same way parties usually are. Castells' hope emerges partly from the fact that, as he notes, grassroots democracy is the model implicit in most environmental movements and that they have a global, open emphasis while staying focussed on local issues that matter to voters. It is the Greens' issue orientated approach which appeals, it makes voters feel that change is possible in contrast to more traditional parties. But there is also conflict within the movement, the ecological focus on 'glacial time' (i.e. an extremely long-termist perspective) contrasts with the short-termist imperatives of electoral success; conflict exists also between the pragmatists and those loyal to environmental fundamentals ('realos' versus 'fundis' in the German Greens' language). Not unlike Labour's tussles with the trade unions, there is a risk of adopting totalitarianism and reformism in successfully integrating the political party with the constituent movements (ecological, peace, LGBT etc) and the opposing forces within. Certainly the German Greens have been seen to publicly struggle with these issues but all parties including the British party in its torrid history since the 1970s has had similar troubles. Of course all parties are coalitions of opinion to an extent, with certain tendencies (sets of opinions of varying stability) and factions evident at any one time (Coxall, 1980, pp24), nevertheless Green parties have particularly struggled to align enough of these sub-groups into working coalitions. Castells concludes his analysis by arguing that Greens do well in local elections due to a direct linkage between the movement's issues and its representatives; they also do well at the European level where the power is mostly symbolic and thus voters' principles can be championed without overly risking influence. It is at the national level where, Castells argues, Greens struggle most (Castells, 1997, Chapter 3). However alternative voting systems in Scotland, for example, have shown that Greens can succeed even at this level. Thus the voter pragmatism Castells effectively puts forward as the reason for Greens' relative lack of success at national levels is, I would argue, more to do with the voting systems in place than the Greens themselves.

The Rise & Fall of Party Membership

Against a backdrop of falling party membership the Green Party of England and Wales, as previously mentioned, is slowly growing its numbers: The party has moved from 4,000 in 1995 to 5,900 in June 2003. The 'next party up', the Liberal Democrats have been cited as having a membership figure of 'around 100,000' but Ward et al. rightly question this figure particularly on the basis of turnout for the party's 1999 leadership ballot (Ward et al., 2002) According to 2002 figures from Guardian Unlimited Politics not only are the Liberal Democrats figures lower than those cited by Gibson et al. but all the parties have somewhat embarrassing figures when put alongside other mass membership organizations (though the Tories can claim some comfort from their mild growth if the figures are accurate, see Table 7.1) (Various, 2002; Wintour, 2002)

Organization	2002	2001	2000	earlier
Labour	280,000	X	311,000	400,465 (1996)
Lib Dems	76,023	74,176	71,641	98,611 (1996)
Conservatives	330,000	X	318,000	350,000-400,000*
Greens	5,000	4,000	X	20,000 (1990)
TUC	X	6.7m (69 unions)	6.8m (76 unions)	6.7m (73 unions) (1996)
Amnesty Int.	195,000**	154,611	136,348	125,362 (1998)
Greenpeace	221,000***	193,500	176,000	194,309 (1998)
Friend of the Earth	X	110,248	105,185	94,528 (1996)
Stonewall	X	6,000	5,000	X
RSPB	1.19m	1.11m	1.4m	925,000 (1996)
RSPCA	X	49,760	54,000	29,504 (1996)
National Trust	2.8m	2.7m	X	2.29m (1996)

*Figures taken from a 1997 Times survey

**Figure from <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/amnesty/aiuk/index.shtml>

*** Figure from

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/contentlookup.cfm?SitekeyParam=CI&CFID=88444&CFTOKEN=27335679&MenuPoint=C#4>

Table 7.1 Annual membership figures of political and other national organizations, adapted and updated from:
(Margetts, 2001; Various, 2002).

Prior to a membership audit which is being undertaken at the time of writing, the Brighton & Hove Green Party had 241 entries in its membership database but with a small number of these entries being for people who had

since resigned and roughly 40 entries being couples, I estimate there are between 250 and 270 individuals in the party. In a city of around 250,000 (247,817 in the 2001 census) this means the party membership represent 0.1-0.11% of the population (and 0.13-0.14% of an electorate of 197,414), which seems surprisingly low considering the party's 16.5% share of the vote in the 2003 city council elections (Electoral Commission, 2003; National Statistics, 2003a). A comparison at national level, which should be taken as indicative only due to Green politics being highly localized and focused on council elections, nevertheless shows that with a UK population of 58.8m and electorate of 44.4m in 2001: Labour membership represented 0.5% of the population and 0.67% of the electorate (using a median 2001 figure of 295,500 calculated from 2002 and 2000 figures); Conservatives represented 0.55% and 0.73% respectively (using a median 2001 figure of 324,000 calculated from 2002 and 2000 figures); Liberal Democrats represented 0.13% or 0.17% whilst Green members were a mere 0.008% or 0.011% (based on 750 for Scottish Greens¹⁰ and 4,000 for England and Wales). Nevertheless 40.7% of the voters cast their ballots for Labour, 31.7% for the Tories, 18.3% for the Liberal Democrats whilst 145 Green candidates averaged 2.85% in the 2001 election (BBC, 2001; Electoral Commission, 2003; Green Party, 2001; National Statistics, 2003b). Smaller parties do get 'good value' for their memberships when it comes to election time, the Brighton party's vote share puts it in line with national statistics for the Liberal Democrats, and indeed in Brighton the Green Party is the third party.

Research Questions

An active party with political influence and a reasonably sized membership who were willing to be investigated had been found. Furthermore existing research shows that Green parties globally tend to lead the way in terms of using ICTs for participation (Gibson et al., 2002a; Norris, 2003) which, when coupled with the national party's unique lack of a leader, makes for a potentially interesting party culture for study. However the success of the Brighton party, in particular its status as the national party's top target constituency for Westminster elections (having achieved a 10% vote share in the 2001 general election (Green Party, 2001)) could allow one to construct an argument that the Brighton party is in fact atypical of other Green parties. But I would argue that due to the heterogeneous nature of the Green Party it is dangerous to generalize on the basis of any of its local parties.

So the unit of analysis is the Brighton & Hove Green Party, but what are the research questions? The aim of the research is to understand how the local party members use ICTs and how their demographics provide opportunities or barriers to using ICTs in the party's participatory functions. Thus questions of age, income and

¹⁰ Source: personal email from Scottish Green Party office manager.

education will need to be asked as well questions regarding member's political activity as well as their level of ICT use, specifically expertise with and access to the Internet.

Methods & Implementation

To answer these questions, with the permission of the party's executive, a questionnaire was formulated and delivered to the 210 valid addresses in the membership database. The questionnaire asked a range of demographic and motivational questions as well as asking for the respondents involvement in certain activities and groups, see Appendix A for the full questionnaire. The questions were formulated to provide comparability with existing studies on political Internet usage although the diverse methodologies used by the most relevant studies prevented consistent comparability across all the findings available (Fieldhouse and Russell, 2001; Gibson et al., 2002a; Gibson et al., 2002b; Gibson et al., 2003; Lusoli et al., 2002; Norris, 1999; Norris, 2003; Ward et al., 2002).

To ensure that both those with and without Internet access would respond the questionnaire was sent on 15th July by post with a pre-paid response envelope. The letter and questionnaire both highlighted the deadline for returning the surveys, 1st August, which allowed a reasonable time of two weeks for completion and return. Included with the questionnaire was a covering letter explaining the purposes of the research, the party executive's approval of the exercise and the absolute anonymity of the survey responses. Despite this a small number of surveys were only partially completed with notes about the confidentiality of certain information, others incorrectly completed questions (ticking all options, including for sex!) or ignored those questions concerning the Internet. One response had a complaint that it implied members were not appreciated if they didn't use the Internet. This highlighted an interesting debate that had occurred in the run-up to the research where some members were failing to receive agenda for meetings as they were only distributed via email and these members did not have email or only checked it very irregularly and wanted to get the agenda posted. While others in the party had been sympathetic, posting meant that not only would a cost be incurred but that agenda and minutes would have to be typed up much earlier which conflicted with the schedules of others – email enabled a more 'just in time' administration few were willing to give up.

Certainly some of the invalid survey responses could have been avoided by improved survey design, particularly some of the later questions could have been simplified – but time pressures were such that after piloting the questionnaire once and making some alterations there wasn't sufficient time to re-pilot if envelopes were to be stuffed and stamped in time. A production error also resulted in the house number being omitted from the pre-

paid response envelope, fortunately however it seems that the other information was sufficient to get the responses to me, though an email was sent out to members informing them of the error (the error was also highlighted in a reminder email sent 5 working days prior to the deadline) and subsequently one response was hand-delivered to the party coordinator. A further problem was that there was insufficient funding to send a questionnaire to every individual: Funding had been arranged on the basis of the number of members as reported by the party coordinator, however when it came to produce the mail-shot it became apparent that the number quoted referred to the quantity of records and not people in the party. Thus unfortunately joint members of the party (couples) only received one questionnaire, though one couple did photocopy theirs and returned two survey responses. Thus out of the 210 survey packs posted a total of 107 surveys were returned. From this 5 were discarded due to their being blank, incorrectly completed or otherwise invalid. 2 other responses were kept with the valid surveys even though they came from people whose party membership had lapsed, it was felt that they were still representative of party members as their subscriptions had ended only recently.

While a postal survey reaches out to a large number of the membership it has several failings which direct observation of member activities could have overcome. Firstly surveys are self-selecting, only some will respond and those with disabilities or particularly busy lifestyles are the least likely to respond. Yet it is these constituencies which ICTs might have the most to offer in improving their relations with the party. Furthermore self-completed surveys are reliant on respondents correctly understanding the questions and that their memories are accurate. Thus one might have to question the accuracy of data collected on how long respondents have been party members or on how long they have been online. Nevertheless the data is probably still useful as being indicative of the qualitative nature of the party membership, even it is not enough for demographic certainty – if such a thing is possible. The results collected from the survey are presented in section 8.

8.0 FINDINGS

This section begins by outlining what was expected to be found and why, before presenting the actual findings and an analysis of how and why they differ from expectations.

Expected findings

If the Green Party is truly different in structure (as evidenced by its lack of a leader at local and national levels and the autonomy that emerges from such an approach) and is part of a growing movement across Europe then one would expect the membership to be more vigorous than that of the other parties in the UK. Thus I expect the average member to be younger than the 50-60 years that the other mainstream parties have as average members. I would also expect there to be a higher proportion of women in the party, though due to family pressures they would be less likely to be as active as male members. I would also anticipate a high level of Internet use by a large proportion of the party as implied by national and international survey data highlighting Green parties' strengths in their use of ICTs. Due to the leading role of the Green Party in Brighton and Hove I expect to see members involved in a large number of other local organisations, though mainly focussed on animal rights and environmental issues as these are the party's historical and local strengths. I have no expectations with regards to the levels of active involvement in these groups or how many members will interact with these groups online as there is very little data on which to base a hypothesis.

Aside from these demographic insights I expect the results to offer some clues as to which types of ICTs would be most appropriate for engaging members, what barriers may be in place preventing their adoption and how these might relate to the function/technology matrix presented in section 6.

The results

Demographically the members of Brighton & Hove Green Party (BHGP) have quite a unique profile when compared with other samples. Table 8.1 summarises the data, though a note of caution must be raised over drawing too many conclusions from the Tory and Labour member data as they date over 10 years in both cases. Unfortunately, due to different categorisations, a comparison against Brighton's population for age is not possible. Nevertheless Brighton & Hove does have a younger than average population with a mode of 30-34, BHGP members' modal age is 46-55 which compares favourably with modal ages of greater than 66 for the Liberal Democrats and Tories but 36-45 for the Labour data, though more recent press coverage states that

the average Labour member is now over 50 years old (Mason, 2001). Figure 8.1 shows how the age distribution differs between the parties, Tories and LibDems are clearly ageing where Green and Labour members are more evenly spread but all parties struggle desperately with the under 25s. There is little directly comparable data for the proportion of student members, but it is higher than the British sample and there are more full-time students than the timely LibDem data. With 67.7% achieving a degree or higher BHGP members are considerably more educated than other party members, which is not entirely surprising considering that the figure is 28.7% for Brighton residents aged 16-74 against an England and Wales figure of 19.8% (see Table 8.2).

No comparisons are possible for the income data as although matching categories were used every survey used different questions, some referring to household income, other wanted figures net of tax while others asked for gross incomes. However one can see that party members' incomes are strongly skewed to the low end with most members earning less than £12,000 per annum. For some indication of how this relates to other parties, 56% of Labour members had a household income of under £15,000 in 1989/1990 whereas only 45% of Tory members had the same household income in 1992.

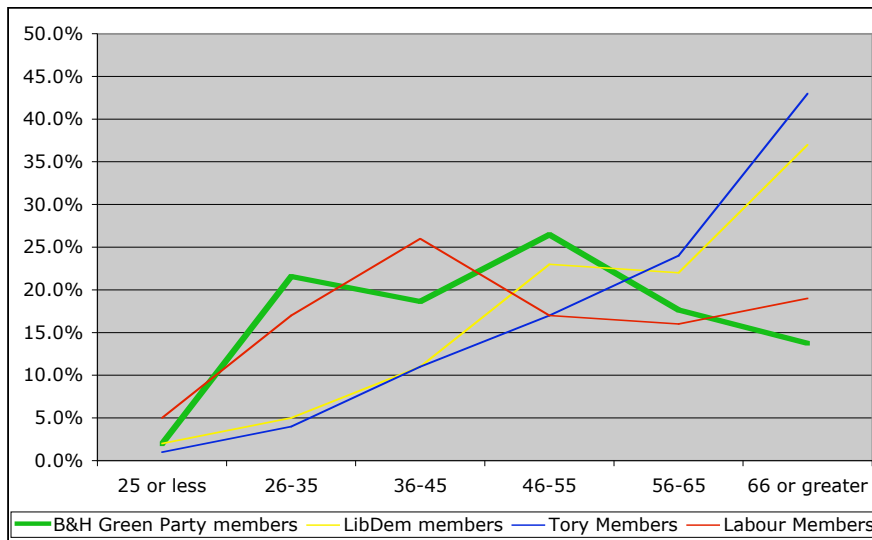


Figure 8.1 Age profile of Brighton & Hove Green Party members plotted against members of other parties. (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992; Ward et al., 2002; Whiteley et al., 1994)

	BHGP members	British population ^a	LibDem members ^b	Tory Members ^c	Labour Members ^d
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	44.6	49.0		51.0	61.0
Female	54.5 (N=101)	51.0 (N=1972)		49.0 (N=2405)	39.0 (N=5032)
<i>Age</i>					
25 or less	2.0		2.0	1.0	5.0
26-35	21.6		5.0	4.0	17.0
36-45	18.6		11.0	11.0	26.0
46-55	26.5		23.0	17.0	17.0
56-65	17.7		22.0	24.0	16.0
66 or greater	13.7 (N=102)		37.0 (N=4442)	43.0 (N=2424)	19.0 (N=5007)
<i>Highest level of education</i>					
No Qualifications	2.9				
GCSE/O-Level	6.9				
A-Levels	9.8				
Graduate	28.4				
Postgraduate	36.4				
Doctorate	2.9				
Other	12.8				
- Degree level or higher	- 67.7 (N=102)		- 42.0 (N=4442)	- 19.0 ^y (N=2412)	- 30.0 ^y (N=4893)
<i>Student</i>					
Full-time	3.9		2.0		
Part-time	11.8				
- Total students	- 15.7 (N=102)	- 7.0 (N=1972)	(N=4442)		
<i>Annual income</i>					
Less than £12,000	37.6				
£12,000-£25,000	34.7				
£25,001-£45,000	20.8				
£45,001-£60,000	5.0				
£60,001-£85,000	1.0				
over £85,000	1.0 (N=102)				

a. NOP face-to-face survey of random sample of British population aged 15 and older conducted in May 2002. Source: (Gibson et al., 2002b)

b. From Whiteley and Seyd's 1999 survey of LibDem members for the ESRC. (Ward et al., 2002)

c. Postal survey of random national sample of Tory members conducted early 1992. (Whiteley et al., 1994)

d. Postal survey of random national sample of Labour members conducted late 1989 early 1990. (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992)

y. This figure represents the percentage of respondents who ended full-time education at 19 or over and as such is not directly comparable, however it is a proxy for degree-level education and is included because of its surprisingly low value. (Whiteley et al., 1994, pp43; Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, pp32)

Table 8.1 Demographics for Brighton & Hove Green Party members alongside comparable results from other recent surveys. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

	Degree or higher held	In full-time education
BHGP members (N=102)	67.7	3.9
LibDem member survey ^a (N=4442)	42.0	2.0
Brighton population ^b (N=247817)	28.7	8.1
England & Wales population ^c (N=58789194)	19.8	5.1

a. From Whiteley and Seyd's 1999 survey of LibDem members for the ESRC. (Ward et al., 2002)

b. Source: (National Statistics, 2003a)

c. Source: (National Statistics, 2003b)

Table 8.2 Detailed education comparisons. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

Table 8.3 highlights the low importance social contacts were felt to have on members joining BHGP. This contrasts strongly with the Tory party where the majority of new members join through social contacts (Whiteley et al., 1994). Also interesting to note is the relatively low score and high standard deviation for statement (a), indicating that while a large number of members see BHGP as an extension of their environmental interests, there are significant minority who don't feel this way or at least regard the party in a wider context.

Rate the following factors between 1 and 5 (where 5 is very important) as to their importance for you joining the Green Party.

(a) The Green Party is a natural extension of my interest/involvement in the environmental movement.

Mean answer **4.01** SD 1.11 (N=101)

(b) I feel that politics is an important way to create the long term change I want see in this country.

Mean answer **4.37** SD 0.64 (N=102)

(c) The Green Party was the only political party I could identify with.

Mean answer **4.23** SD 0.9 (N=100)

(d) I knew people in the party and felt that if they were involved it must be ok.

Mean answer **1.79** SD 0.76 (N=99)

Table 8.3 Motivations for joining the Brighton & Hove Green Party

	BHGP members	Male BHGP members	Female BHGP members	Tory members ^a
<i>Length of time a party member</i>				
Less than a year	23.0	13.0	30.4	
1-2 years	33.0	32.6	32.1	Up to 5 years:
3-5 years	20.0	26.1	14.3	19.0
6-10 years	15.0	19.6	10.7	15.0
Over 10 years	9.0	6.5	10.7	66.0
Left then rejoined party	5.0	2.2	7.1	9.0
	(N=100)	(N=46)	(N=56)	(N=n/a)
<i>How actively involved in the party</i>				
Not at all	39.2	32.6	44.6	
Minor	26.5	21.7	30.4	
Medium	11.8	17.4	7.1	
Quite	15.7	17.4	14.3	
Very	6.9	10.9	3.6	
- Not very or not active ^x	- 65.7	- 54.4	- 75.0	- 83.0
- Very or fairly active ^x	- 22.6	- 28.3	- 17.9	- 17.0
	(N=102)	(N=46)	(N=56)	(N=n/a)

a. Postal survey of random national sample of Tory members conducted early 1992. (Whiteley et al., 1994)

x. These categories are from Whiteley et al.'s survey, they are close but not exactly the same so caution must be used in comparing them. I have used 'Not at all' and 'Minor' to calculate 'Not very or not active' and 'Quite' and 'Very' to calculate 'Very or fairly active'.

Table 8.4 Levels of party involvement. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

Considering that BHGP won their first council seat seven years ago membership is quite evenly distributed though unsurprisingly with a skew towards the shorter membership periods (see Table 8.4). Due to the higher age of their members and the party's long history it is reasonable that the majority of Tories have been members for more than ten years. While not an entirely safe comparison, it seems that BHGP members are more active in their party than Tory members. It is clear that male BHGP members are more likely to be long-standing and active than female members.

Table 8.5 shows a an Internet use profile significantly different from the British population. Not only are 77.5% of members online, compared with 60% of British adults (National Statistics, 2003c), but 60.8% have been using the Internet for 3 years or more. BHGP members are experienced and heavy Internet users, 58.6% accessing it at least once a day similar to the 60.0% of LibDems who do the same. Home and work-places are by far the dominant locations from which members access the Internet, with most still connecting with dial-up modems, though due to the city-based nature of the party broadband connections are well represented.

	BHGP members	British population ^a
<i>How long ago started using Internet</i>		
Last few months	0.0	5.0
6 months – 1 year	4.9	18.0
1 –2 years	10.8	25.0
3 –5 years	30.4	38.0
6 years or more	30.4	14.0
Not applicable	23.5	
	(N=102)	(N=959)
<i>How often use Internet (web or email)</i>		
All day	28.3	
Once a day	30.3	
Weekly	13.1	
Monthly	1.0	
Very Irregularly	7.1	
Never	20.2	
	(N=99)	
<i>Locations from which the Internet is accessed</i>		
Home	66.7 ^x	
Work	41.2 ^x	
School/University	4.9 ^x	
Internet Café/Other	7.8 ^x	
	(N=80)	
<i>Type of primary Internet access</i>		
Dial-up modem	46.8	
ISDN modem	5.1	
Cable/ADSL	24.1	
T1/Leased line	5.1	
Don't know	19.0	
	(N=79)	

a. NOP face-to-face survey of random sample of British population aged 15 and older conducted in May 2002. (Gibson et al., 2002b)
x. Multiple responses were allowed thus percentages total more than 100.

Table 8.5 Internet use characteristics of members. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

When one examines the profile of an online BHGP member with the wider membership and online LibDem members, the demographic biases of Internet usage become apparent. The male-female ratio of BHGP members is almost reversed and, with the exception of the under 25s amongst online LibDems, online, BHGP members are younger and significantly more educated than the other samples. While being more likely to be students online BHGP members are in general better off, with earnings skewed to higher categories than the body of all BHGP members.

	BHGP members	BHGP online members	LibDem online members ^a
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	44.6	52.6	
Female	54.5 (N=101)	47.4 (N=78)	
<i>Age</i>			
25 or less	2.0	2.5	14.0
26-35	21.6	27.9	16.0
36-45	18.6	22.8	17.0 ^x
46-55	26.5	31.7	23.0 ^x
56-65	17.7	11.4	20.0 ^x
66 or greater	13.7 (N=102)	3.8 (N=79)	10.0 ^x (N=2116)
<i>Highest level of education</i>			
No Qualifications	2.9	1.3	1.0
GCSE/O-Level	6.9	2.5	7.0
A-Levels	9.8	10.1	12.0
Graduate	28.4	31.7	40.0
Postgraduate	36.4	41.8	21.0
Doctorate	2.9	2.5	7.0
Other	12.8	10.1	12.0
- Degree level or higher	- 67.7 (N=102)	- 76.0 (N=79)	- 68.0 (N=2116)
<i>Student</i>			
Full-time	3.9	5.1	10.0
Part-time	11.8	12.7	
- Total students	- 15.7 (N=102)	- 17.7 (N=79)	(N=2116)
<i>Annual income</i>			
Less than £12,000	37.6	26.9	
£12,000-£25,000	34.7	41.0	
£25,001-£45,000	20.8	24.4	
£45,001-£60,000	5.0	6.4	
£60,001-£85,000	1.0	1.3	
over £85,000	1.0 (N=101)	0.0 (N=78)	

a. Web-based survey of online Liberal Democrat members conducted from February 26 to March 18 2002. (Ward et al., 2002)
x. These figures were based on normal approximations by Ward et al as age categories used were different.

Table 8.6 Demographics for Brighton & Hove Green Party members compared with online members. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

When it comes to assessing what political activities members perform online and offline one can see that not only are BHGP members significantly more active online than the British population, but that in all cases save one, there appears to be a significant preference for performing activities online. Some caution should be used however as a significant number of members did not respond to these questions, particularly if the member did not use the Internet, leading to a bias in these results. In spite of this bias it is interesting to note that petitions are still primarily signed offline. Also, in keeping with findings discussed in section 6 that questioned the weight of electronic messages with representatives, communications with elected politicians was finely balanced between the offline and online channels. The largest split was for news bulletins which members vastly prefer online than offline.

	BHGP members online	British population online ^a	BHGP members offline
Look for general political information	64.2	8.0	48.2
View the site/brochure of any political organisation	58.0	5.0	40.0
Signed a petition	56.8	4.0	68.0
Sent an email/letter/fax to an elected politician	58.0	4.0	56.8
Sent an email/postcard/article to a friend/colleague	86.4	4.0	56.8
Sent an email/letter/fax to a public service	58.0	3.0	45.7
Signed up for an email/paper news bulletin	61.7	3.0	30.9
	(N=81)	(N=1972)	(N=81)

a. NOP face-to-face survey of random sample of British population aged 15 and older conducted in May 2002. (Gibson et al., 2002b)

Table 8.7 Political activities Brighton & Hove Green Party members have performed online and offline. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

More specifically to BHGP, members were asked which online services from the party they used (see table 8.8), only 46.1% (59.5% of online members) used at least one service when 77.5% are known to access the Internet. The most popular service was email-based whereas online LibDems had showed a huge use of their national party's site compared to BHGP members. The LibDem survey probably has significant bias as members were invited to respond via email, their addresses mainly having being collected from the party website. The least popular activity was also email based, discussing and organising through email systems.

	BHGP members	BHGP online members	LibDem online members ^a
Receive minutes agenda via email	30.4	39.2	
Discuss issues/organise through email	20.6	26.6	
Visit the party website	26.5	34.2	
Visit the national party website	27.5	35.4	81.0
	(N=102)	(N=79)	(N=2116)

a. Web-based survey of online Liberal Democrat members conducted from February 26 to March 18 2002. (Ward et al., 2002)

Table 8.8 Party services used as a proportion of all respondents and online respondents. All figures are percentages and have been rounded.

The final portion of the survey examined what other local groups BHGP members were involved with and if they interacted with the groups online. Members listed 83 groups with 309 interactions registered, where an interaction consisted of being a member, being active or interacting with the group online. Interactions were concentrated into a few groups, the top 20 are listed in table 8.9 and account for 68.3% of all interactions. Of the 83 groups recorded however only 34 had one or more online interactions with the top 20 groups accounting for 75.4% of the online interactions. Despite this, the graph in figure 8.2 shows no correlation between group popularity and online interactions, implying that online tools are not a good indicator of group popularity, amongst BHGP members at least.

The average number of interactions for a member was 4.2, with a standard deviation of 3.10, showing in general a relatively low involvement with groups, but some individuals being 'nodal', connected to a large number of groups. The only comparator available is that 72% of online LibDems never visit pressure group websites, hinting at a similarly low emphasis on Internet tools for such groups, but no conclusions can be drawn from these figures alone.

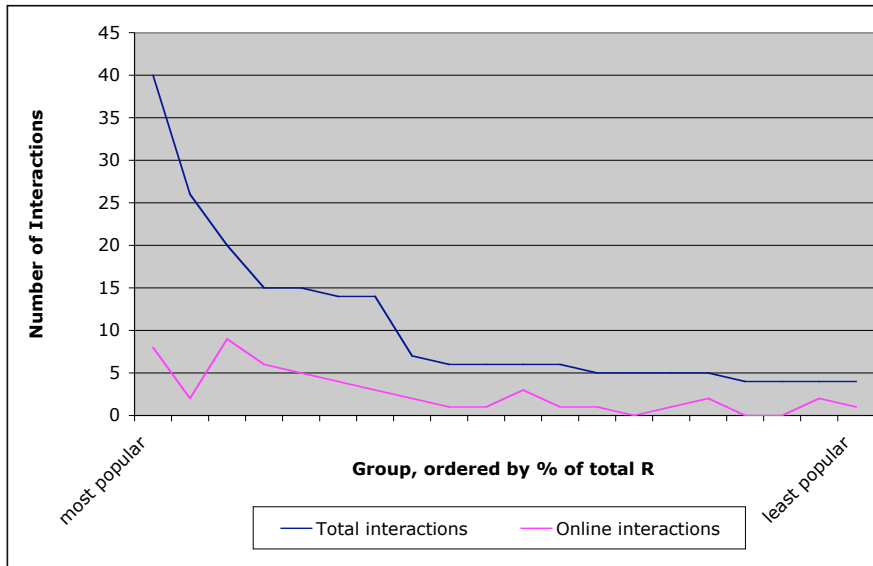


Figure 8.2 Group popularity (as defined by proportion of interactions against total interactions recorded [R]) plotted against number of interactions showing online interactions as a separate series.

Findings vs. Expectations

As expected BHGP members, as far as can be told from the available comparators, are more active than other parties' members. They are also younger and more likely to be women than mainstream party members, which was anticipated. However, as predicted, female members were less likely to be active in the party and unexpectedly were also likely to have more recently joined the party.

Predictions regarding a high level of Internet use were accurate, though the proportion who weren't online was also surprisingly high. Finally the large number of other local groups was anticipated, however the spread of groups was wider than the expected primary focus on environmental and animal rights organisations.

	Total interactions	Online interactions	% of total R ^a
Friends of the Earth	40	8	12.9%
Amnesty	26	2	8.4%
Sussex Action for Peace	20	9	6.5%
Pride	15	6	4.9%
BUDD	15	5	4.9%
Community Association	14	4	4.5%
Greenpeace	14	3	4.5%
Charter 88	7	2	2.3%
Cowley Club	6	1	1.9%
Peace & Environment Centre	6	1	1.9%
South East Forum for Sustainability	6	3	1.9%
Shac/Animal Aid/Viva/Uncaged	6	1	1.9%
Sussex Counselling	5	1	1.6%
Bricycles	5	0	1.6%
Local Church	5	1	1.6%
Local Branch of Trade Union	5	2	1.6%
Campaign to Protect Rural England	4	0	1.3%
Sussex Wildlife Trust	4	0	1.3%
Hove Action for Peace	4	2	1.3%
Oxfam	4	1	1.3%

a. Total interactions for the groups as a proportion of total interactions recorded for 102 responses.

Table 8.9 The top 20 most popular local groups amongst BHGP members.

Summary

This survey shows that BHGP members are well educated, experienced regular Internet users with quite low incomes. Their political use of ICTs is mixed; generally tasks, with the exception of petitions, are primarily done online but low use is made of party resources on the Internet. While members are involved in a diverse set of other local groups, on average members don't spread themselves too thin between groups and show no preference for groups that make good use of online tools. In section 9, I shall draw some conclusions from these findings and suggest what additional research they might lead to.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has aimed to explore the use of ICTs in political participation. This has been discussed within the context of declining participation, falling party membership and constantly evolving party structures. I have argued that ICT use within the political sphere is characterised by the Accelerated Pluralism thesis, current findings show that this is indeed the case so far with minor groups gaining new influence via ICTs though established groups also benefit. The nature of the benefits accrued depend on the party's goals along with its capacities and opportunity structures. The result is that with differing capabilities, objectives and affordances every party will have fairly unique ICT requirements and usage.

One of the core capabilities of a party in the context of ICT use is the nature of the membership. How does its makeup hinder or aid the adoption of ICTs? Can the members fund significant ICT investment, are they able to connect to online services and are they even interested in such facilities?

By surveying the members of Brighton & Hove Green Party I aimed to gain some insight into these issues at the local level of a party that nationally and internationally has been shown to be a strong, yet participative, user of ICTs (Norris, 2003).

The findings showed the members to be highly educated, and thus likely to handle the cognitive complexities of ICTs. Members were generally heavy and experienced users of the Internet, indicating that they would be comfortable with conducting political activities online. However 20% of members did not use the Internet, a significant minority who are already excluded from party functions performed exclusively online. While as time passes and the Internet generation ages the proportion of non-users should fall, there will probably remain a not insignificant number of refuseniks who have a legitimate right to be involved in political activities even if they are offline. They may pose a situation for parties where the costs of supporting their participation are not worth the benefits to the party of their involvement – how far does a party's duty for encouraging participation go?

The low income of BHGP members on average severely limits the resources available for building technological tools for the party although ironically not their personal preference to operate online. Also the national Green Party has no full-time staff for any functions, let alone ICT development, meaning that local parties do not benefit from centrally delivered technologies as other parties do.

The 47% modem usage by online members shows that, even if the resources were available, rich online applications are not appropriate. While the 29% with broadband or faster connections is a promising proportion this is partly due to work connections, which raise issues of privacy and appropriate use, and the fact that all the city councillors get free broadband connections from the council, potentially accounting for 26% of the broadband or faster cohort.

While 23% of party members define themselves as quite or very active in the party, a high proportion have been politically active both online and offline, but with preference generally given to performing activities online. Indeed BHGP members are very significantly more active online than the British population with 64% looking for general political information online and 58% visiting the site of a political party. Email was popular, particularly for communicating with friends and colleagues as well as for receiving news bulletins. But for communications which needed to matter and have 'weight' such as petitions and letters to representatives, email was considerably less popular. These findings lead one to conclude that members are keen to use the Internet as an information resource and exchange, but for persuasion and representation other media are preferred. This could be due to the unique nature of electronic media whose authenticity can be questioned, the fact that emails are easy to send thereby reducing their impact or perhaps nostalgic biases for traditional media. Whatever the reasons for this preference it is evident in members' use of their own party's online resources with receiving information via email the most popular activity whilst discussions (persuasion activities) via email being the least popular. With only 46% of members using an online party service one must question the quality and attractiveness of the resources available.

The final portion of the survey results highlighted a large number of local groups, but that members were generally not involved in that many with a few nodal exceptions. The most striking result was the low overall number of online interactions with the local groups and the lack of any correlation between online interactions and group popularity. This leads one to conclude that, for the time being at least, ICTs are not central to participation and one should not lose sight of the simple, human aspects of groups. Of course local groups just may not see the need for CMCs, by definition their membership will be geographically accessible to each other thus CMCs may be seen as unnecessary complication but if I had examined national groups a different pattern of ICT use might have emerged.

So where do these findings lead a practitioner? Clearly large scale projects such as data mining are best left to well funded national party central offices. But web-based and email-based functions are very possible. When building such functions the dominance of modem access should rein in ambitions for multimedia and large files

to download. Web tools should focus on providing easy to access information to support members' interests and activities. Email functionality should also be primarily information based, using its low cost to deliver regular bulletins to members and stakeholders. However the significant minority (21%) of members who do use party email services for more interactive activities should be supported, but separately, as the cognitive complexity of email lists may put many members off.

These are tentative findings within the limitations of a small scale survey of a successful local party. Thus there is plenty of room for further work, not only could the scale of the survey be expanded to cover a greater number of local parties but the questions could focus with more clarity onto the motivations as well as likes/dislikes of members with regards to online services. Thus working directly from the general incentives-model one can formulate questions which try to understand why members participate in certain activities and whether ICTs modify the costs or benefits of participating. Another area for exploration is to use a policy analysis approach to model how certain factions push particular technologies within parties. From such an analysis a clearer understanding of why parties are using ICTs the way they are can emerge.

What is evident that despite BHGP having achieved some exciting electoral successes, their members use of technology is above the norm but not particularly groundbreaking. Indeed all the studies discussed in this dissertation paint a similar picture of low technological innovation. While email is a powerful tool which can dramatically reduce transaction costs, is this 1960s technology along with the more recent emergence of websites all there is? Perhaps the lack of innovation is due to party's limited ICT expertise or just the lack of incentives for innovators. Unlike in so many other markets technological developments for politics are unlikely to make innovators rich. Thus the bulk of the improvements are being left to part-time activists who usually neither have the resources or the skills to create truly new and powerful technologies. So while examining and assessing parties' use of technologies poses challenges, the greatest challenge for those passionate about political participation is how to drive innovation into a field which is so desperately in need.

10.0 GLOSSARY

BHGP	Brighton & Hove Green Party
CMC	Computer Mediated Communications
DTP	Desktop Publishing
FLOSS	Free/Libre Open Source Software
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
InfoRev	Information Revolution
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender
MRM	Membership Relationship Management
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OrgRev	Organizational Revolution
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs

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APPENDIX A: The Questionnaire

The next page shows a copy of the letter sent with the questionnaire which is included on the subsequent pages. Some formatting has been adjusted from the original to fit the questionnaire into the mandated formatting for this dissertation. The questionnaire was posted a two stapled double-sided sheets with the letter in an A5 envelope with an A5 stamped addressed envelope included for return.

Flat 3, 38 Queens Road
Brighton BN1 3XB

15th July 2003

Dear member

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE: DEADLINE 1st August

Let me introduce myself to those who don't know me: I'm Jason Kitcat, a Brighton & Hove Green Party member since the beginning of the year. I'm also a postgraduate student at SPRU (Science & Technology Policy Research), University of Sussex reading MSc Technology & Innovation Management.

For the completion of my master's dissertation I am undertaking research of the local party, its use of the Internet and its connections with other local organisations. The aim is to produce a case study which sheds some light on how parties function at the local level, particularly when using technology, and also highlight some of the unique aspects green politics lends to party organisation.

To gain a better understanding of the party membership I am sending you a questionnaire which I would be most grateful if you would take the time to complete. This mailing has been sent through the party (but at my expense) and so your address has not been shared with anyone. The questionnaires are completely anonymous and will be destroyed once the research is completed. The party executive have approved this questionnaire and will receive a summary of my findings so your responses will also help the party.

Please do complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, the deadline for returning them to me is 1st August. If you have any queries about the questions I'm asking or the research in general then please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing jeep@j-dom.org or calling 01273 733 649

Many thanks,

Jason Kitcat



BRIGHTON & HOVE GREEN PARTY MEMBERS QUESTIONNAIRE
PLEASE COMPLETE ALL 15 QUESTIONS AND RETURN USING THE INCLUDED
STAMPED ENVELOPE BY **1st AUGUST**.

General Demographic Information: Learning more about you

1. Please indicate your gender Male Female
2. Please indicate your age range (tick one only)
- 25 or less 26 – 35 36 – 45 46 - 55
- 56 – 65 66 or greater
3. Please tick only the highest level of education you have achieved (tick one only)
- GCSE/O-levels A Levels Graduate (e.g. BA)
- Postgraduate (e.g. MA) Doctorate Other
- No qualifications
4. Are you currently a student? (tick one only)
- Yes, full time Yes, part time No
5. Which annual income bracket do you fall into? (tick one only)
- Less than £12,000 £12,000 - £25,000 £25,001 - £45,000
- £45,001 - £60,000 £60,001 - £85,000 over £85,000

Getting Involved: Your relationship with the party

6. Please rate the following factors between 1 and 5 (where 5 is very important) as to their importance for you joining the Green Party. Circle the relevant number for each issue.

a. The Green Party is a natural extension of my interest/involvement in the environmental movement.

Not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

b. I feel that politics is an important way to create the long term change I want to see in this country.

Not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

c. The Green Party was the only political party I could identify with.

Not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

d. I knew people in the party and felt that if they were involved it must be ok.

Not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

7. How long have you been a continuous member of Brighton & Hove Green Party?
(tick one only)

- Less than a year 1 – 2 years 3 – 5 years
 6 – 10 years Over 10 years

If you left the party then rejoined please tick here

8. How actively involved in the party are you? (Please tick only one)

- Not at all, I just pay membership dues
 Minor involvement
(e.g. attend the odd fundraiser)
 Medium involvement
(e.g. attend some general meetings)
 Quite involved
(e.g. deliver leaflets, canvass, attend many meetings)
 Very involved
(e.g. weekly contact, executive position, Green Team leadership etc.)

Using the Internet: Your experience and preferences

9. When did you start using the Internet? (tick one only)

- In last few months 6 months – 1 year ago 1 – 2 years ago
 3 – 5 years ago 6 years or more ago N/A

10. How often do you use the Internet (web or email)? (tick one only)

- All day Once a day Weekly Monthly
 Very irregularly Never

11. Where do you access the Internet from? (tick all that apply)

- Home Work School/University Internet Café/Other

12. How fast is your Internet access? (tick one box only for the speed at which you usually access the Internet)

- Dial-up modem ISDN modem Cable/ADSL
 T1/Leased line Don't know

13. For the following activities please indicate (in the 'Online' boxes) if you have done the activity online and (in the 'Offline' boxes) if done offline. (tick all that apply)

	<u>Online</u>	<u>Offline</u>
Looked for general political information.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Viewed the site/brochure of any political organization...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed a petition.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sent an email/letter/fax to an elected politician.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sent an email/postcard/article to a friend/colleague.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sent an email/letter/fax to a public service.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed up for a email/paper news bulletin.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Which of the following Brighton & Hove Green Party online services do you use? (tick all that apply)

- Receive minutes and agenda via email.....
 Discuss issues and organise activities through email....
 Visit the party website.....
 Visit the national party website.....

Links to other organisations: Where do you fit into the activist community?

15. Which other local groups are you involved with? The list on the next page was collected from Green Party members after a recent General Meeting. For each group indicate if you are a member, if you are actively involved and/or if you interact with the organisation and your fellow members online (web or email). For each group you can tick no boxes (for no involvement whatsoever) or any combination of boxes. So, for example, you could tick 'Member' and 'Interact Online' if you aren't actively involved but do get emails from a group listed.

Spaces have been provided for you to write in groups not listed. (Note that this refers to local Brighton & Hove groups, not the national organisations, so for example only tick Friends of the Earth if you are involved in the Brighton FoE group, not if you are just a national member) Leave each row blank if you are not involved in that group.

PLEASE ANSWER THE LAST QUESTION (15) IS ON THE NEXT PAGE

	Member Involved	Actively Online	Interact
Amnesty.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brighton Animal Rights Campaign.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brighton Urban Design & Development.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charter 88.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Association.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cowley Club.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends of the Earth.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justice for Animals.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peace & Environment Centre.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pride.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
South East Forum for Sustainability.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sussex Action for Peace.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sussex Vegetarians & Vegans.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others: Please fill in any other groups not on the above list (use block capitals)			
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(if necessary continue on an additional page)
THANK YOU – PLEASE RETURN BY 1st AUGUST