1 Global green politics

The term ‘green politics’ was once synonymous with the German Greens, who have participated in governments for much of the last three decades. But Green parties have now gone global – from Kenya to Mongolia, Taiwan to Brazil. And green political activity encompasses non-electoral campaigns and direct-action techniques the world over.

IN 1983, 28 MEMBERS of the German Green Party were elected to the West German parliament. Dressed informally in jeans, some of them brought in plants to place on their desks. Their colorful arrival contrasted with the suited members from the traditional parties.

Their success marked the first entry into a national parliament of a group of greens. The German Greens were elected in 1983 on a platform with four key elements: ecology, social justice, peace and grassroots democracy.

Green parties were born in the early 1970s, grew in the 1980s and green politics is now a global phenomenon. Green politics is first and foremost the politics of ecology; a campaign to preserve the planet from corporate greed, so we can act as good ancestors to future generations. However, green politics involves more than environmental concern.

Ecology may be the first pillar of green politics but it is not the only one. Andrew Dobson, an English Green Party member and academic, has argued that green politics is a distinct political ideology. While much ink has been spilt defining the term ‘ideology’, Dobson argues that it is a set of political ideas rather than a single idea, even one as powerful as concern for the environment. He argues that a political ideology provides a map of reality, which helps to show its adherents how to understand the world. He also
believes that ideologies demand the transformation of society. He uses the term ‘ecologism’ to distinguish green politics from simple ‘environmentalism’.

The second pillar of green politics – social justice – is vital. Greens argue that environmental protection should not come at the expense of the poor or lead to inequality. This social justice element places greens on the left of the political spectrum. Greens argue, however, that the right-left spectrum is not the only dimension of politics, not least because there are many political parties that are committed to social justice but which fail to protect nature.

The third pillar – grassroots democracy – also distinguishes greens from many traditional socialists who have often promoted centralized governance of societies. This is a principle that greens share with anarchists and other libertarians. The demand for participatory democracy was one of the most important inspirations behind the German Greens. Greens during the 1980s made strong attempts to function in as decentralist and participatory a fashion as possible. Leaders were rejected, politics based on personality frowned upon and decisions made collectively. In the 21st century, Green parties are less radical but still pride themselves on allowing members to participate in policy and decision-making, even as democracy has gone out of fashion in many other political parties.

Nonviolence is the final pillar. Green parties evolved partly out of the peace movement and oppose war, the arms trade and solutions based on violence. Again, over time this commitment has become a little less clear-cut. The German Greens moved from being a radically anti-war party to participating in a government that sent German forces into Serbia. Greens have compromised over peace by supporting armed liberation movements such as the African National Congress, where they consider that strict nonviolence might lead to continued oppression.
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The German Greens under Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer were, however, leading opponents of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Green politics does not stop with Green parties; the green movement as a whole is much larger. For example, green direct action networks such as Earth First!, Reclaim the Streets and Climate Camp have emerged in recent decades. These green direct-action networks focus on environmental issues but also promote the other pillars of green politics such as grassroots democracy, nonviolence and opposition to social injustice. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have, meanwhile, a more ambiguous relationship with green politics. As environmental pressure groups, they lack party political ambition and ideology. Yet they have often worked with more radical direct-action networks and Green parties to achieve political change. Greenpeace has also combined the anti-war and environmental elements of green politics. Many environmental NGOs combine environment concern with promoting social justice and grassroots democracy.

The green movement is a little like an iceberg, with some highly visible Green parties, direct-action groups and radical NGOs looming large above looser and less visible networks of those who practice green lifestyles or contribute more sporadically to political change.

Green history

The origins of green politics are normally traced to the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first ecological political party – Australia’s United Tasmania Group – was formed in March 1972 to campaign against a big dam and to preserve the rainforests. Although they received a modest three per cent in state elections and failed in their goal of preserving Lake Pedder, they inspired the creation of Green parties all over the world. Their
charter, a kind of manifesto, noted that they were:
- United in a global movement for survival;
- Concerned for the dignity of humanity and the value of cultural heritage while rejecting any view of humans which gives them the right to exploit all of nature;
- Moved by the need for a new ethic, which unites humans with nature to prevent the collapse of life support systems of the earth.¹

A few weeks after the launch of the United Tasmania Group, a New Zealand/Aotearoa party called Values was formed at a meeting at Victoria University in Wellington. The Party had strong zero growth, gay rights and drug reform policies. It was the first party in New Zealand/Aotearoa to have a woman leader and an openly gay election candidate. However, in the 1970s, before the introduction of proportional representation, Values found it difficult to make an electoral impact and faded. It did, however, help to keep the country nuclear free and laid the foundations for the present Green Party, which is one of the strongest in the world.

Values and the United Tasmania Group were inspired by reports such as *Limits to Growth* and *Blueprint for Survival*, which argued that humanity was threatening vital ecosystems and depleting resources. *Limits to Growth* was produced by a team of scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and used computer models to argue that, unless growth ceased, ecological catastrophe would result. The oil crisis of 1973 made such ideas fashionable. *Blueprint for Survival*, based on similar assumptions, was published in Britain by *The Ecologist* magazine, creating a huge public debate.

On 6 December 1973, *The Guardian* reported the birth of a new British party known simply as PEOPLE. Its manifesto stated boldly that it sought ‘a transition
to a stable society in which people and places matter, which recognizes that the Earth’s resources are limited and that we must learn to live as part of nature, not as its master’. PEOPLE became the Ecology Party in 1975 and changed its name again to the Green Party in 1985. Today, it has two Members of the European Parliament, two members of the Greater London Assembly and over a hundred local councilors. The Scottish Green Party currently has two members of the Scottish Parliament.

The German and French Greens were also influenced by an anti-growth agenda. A Christian Democrat member of the West German Parliament, Herbert Gruhl, left his centre-right party to sit as an ecologist in the Bundestag. The French Ecologist presidential candidate René Dumont stressed the no growth agenda in his 1974 election campaign. However, in France and Germany, together with other western European countries, the Greens grew largely out of the movements against nuclear power in the 1970s.

The German Greens, in particular, saw themselves as the electoral wing of a wider protest movement. In fact, they contested elections into the 1980s as a list of candidates rather than as a formal political party, reflecting their social movement connections. The German extra-parliamentary left, which exploded on to the scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s, provided the German Greens with most of their initial key activists, including future Party leader Fischer. The events of Paris in 1968 – where the student demonstrators coined slogans attacking a society obsessed with shopping, such as ‘Down with the consumer society, the more you consume, the less you are’ – also fed into later developments in green politics.

The counterculture of the 1960s also fed into green party politics and the wider green movement. The counterculture drew on radical thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm from the Frankfurt
School. They condemned capitalism not just because it exploited workers but also because it dehumanized us as passive consumers and polluted the environment. Counterculture thinkers of a different ilk, such as Aldous Huxley and Hermann Hesse, also influenced the nascent green politics. Huxley’s last novel, the utopia Island, provides a green blueprint for many aspects of society, including education, spirituality and the family. Charles Reich’s The Greening of America and Theodore Roszak’s Where the Wasteland Ends were also important to the emerging green movement.

While the 1960s counterculture and the 1970s scientific challenge to a growth economy were vital parts of the mix, green politics can be seen as having deeper roots. Peter Gould’s book Early Green Politics argues that the most ‘important period of green politics before 1980 lay between 1880 and 1900’. During this period the socialist, writer and artist William Morris drew upon the romantic ideas of John Ruskin to promote a political agenda that opposed industrial pollution and promoted conservation. Morris, politically active in opposing the Crimean War, also established a group to conserve churches.

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**Greens in Europe**

Green parties’ share of the vote and number of MEPs gained in European Parliament Election 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of vote</th>
<th>No of MEPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.europaparl.europa.eu
Global green politics

He became interested in Marxism, joined the Social Democratic Federation, Britain’s first socialist political party, along with Friedrich Engels and Marx’s daughter, Eleanor. Morris worked tirelessly to promote his own version of ecosocialism and wrote a utopian novel – *News from Nowhere* – promoting a green alternative. Gould argues that he was part of a much wider network of socialists and anarchists who shared virtually all the values of the modern green movement. Another prominent early green political activist was Edward Carpenter, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. An openly gay man, an advocate of feminism and animal rights, he lived in near self-sufficiency with his partner George Merrill and founded the Sheffield Socialist Society. He believed that ‘The vast majority of mankind (sic) must live in direct contact with nature.’

Even earlier examples of green politics can be found: the left-wing English Romantic poets such as William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley, along with Mary Shelley, come to mind. Indeed the novelist EM Forster described Carpenter as practicing the ‘socialism of Shelley and Blake’. Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* is an early piece of eco-literature, critiquing a science that manipulates nature with destructive results and creates a sad monster. The French philosopher Rousseau can, meanwhile, be seen as an early or proto-green who advocated a closer human connection to nature. While global environmental threats from nuclear weapons testing in the 1960s to climate change more recently has led to the growth of green politics, environmental problems have a long history. Indeed, laws against air pollution were enacted in Britain as early as the 13th century.

Green parties go global

Green parties are now a global phenomenon. The most successful African Green party has been the
Mazingira Green Party of Kenya – *mazingira* is the Swahili word for ‘environment’. Mazingira’s 1997 presidential candidate Wangari Maathai also founded the Green Belt Movement, which encouraged tree planting as a conservation measure. She won a Nobel Prize for her work promoting peace and environmental justice. In 2009 the global federation of Green parties contained 19 members from African countries.

Greens have been elected in Benin and Senegal. There have been several attempts to create Green parties in South Africa, and most recently the Ecoplace Party and a variety of socialist groups based in Soweto have come together to found the Socialist Green Coalition. A Green Party candidate in Burkina Faso received seven per cent of the vote in the 1998 presidential election, while the former left-wing President Thomas Sankara – sadly assassinated – was a keen exponent of environmental policies such as community tree planting.

There are also a number of Green parties in Central and Latin America. The most successful by far has been the Brazilian Green Party (PV). The musician Gilberto Gil, a party member, acted as Minister of Culture in the coalition government. The former Environment Minister Marina Silva is to run as the Green Presidential candidate. Silva, who comes from a family of rubber tappers, has been a passionate defender of the Amazon. The Green Party of Chile is also well established but has not yet managed to elect parliamentarians. In much of Latin America left-leaning governments have become aware of environmental issues and green NGOs have emerged. The contribution of indigenous groups to green politics is particularly important in Latin America. Many Latin American Green parties have a skeletal organization and may represent little more than small groups of individuals with access to websites.

Green parties are relatively weak in North America
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as well – there are no Green representatives in the US Congress or the Canadian Parliament. One of the key factors affecting Green parties’ electoral success there has been the voting system. Green parties in much of Europe have gained some success because of proportional representation (PR). While PR systems vary, they typically guarantee that, if a political party gains 10 per cent of votes in a national election, it will gain 10 per cent of seats in parliament. Like the UK, Canada and the US have a ‘first-past-the-post’ system, which explains the absence of nationally elected Greens in all three countries – though as this book goes to press the Green Party of England and Wales is confident that it will achieve an historic breakthrough by winning at least one parliamentary seat in the 2010 General Election.

In the US, the highest office achieved by greens so far is that of Mayor. US greens started organizing in the 1980s with a radical decentralist model inspired by the German Greens, as activists established Committees of Correspondence – a reference to revolutionary organization in the 18th-century war of independence against Britain. The Citizens Party, headed by the ecologist Barry Commoner, stood on an essentially green election platform during the 1980s before dissolving. In 1996, the consumer activist Ralph Nader stood as the Green Presidential candidate together with the indigenous activist Winona LaDuke. In 2000, Nader gained three per cent of the national presidential vote but his success led to bitter controversy as Democrats argued that his votes had prevented their candidate Al Gore from beating George W Bush. In 2008 the former US congress member Cynthia McKinney ran for President, together with hip hop artist Rosa Clements. The number of votes gained was modest but the campaign helped to build the party, which held to a platform of 10 key green demands. McKinney has
been highly active in promoting conservation and civil rights, and in opposing both nuclear power and Israeli treatment of Palestinians.

The Green Party in Canada was preceded by a group called the Small Party, inspired by EF Schumacher’s book on green economics *Small Is Beautiful*. The Party is currently led by Elizabeth May, who is one of Canada’s most famous environmentalists. It is proud of its ‘neither right nor left’ orientation and has shifted from its decentralist and somewhat anarchic roots. Despite much favorable media attention, it has found it difficult to elect members to either the national or state legislatures. There are strong environmental direct action groups and indigenous networks in Canada, currently campaigning against exploitation of the highly polluting tar sands in Alberta.

**Asian-Pacific progress**

A network of Asian-Pacific Green parties was established in Kyoto, Japan, in 2005 and its full membership includes parties from Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Japan, Pakistan, Korea, Taiwan and New Caledonia, with associates in Nepal, Mongolia and Polynesia.

The Australian Green Party is particularly strong, having won seats both in the Senate and in state assemblies, most significantly in Tasmania. It evolved from the United Tasmania Group and the 1980s Nuclear Disarmament Party and has gradually overtaken the centre-left Democrats. In 2007, the Australian Greens received nine per cent of the vote in national elections and elected five senators, while in 2009 they won the seat of Fremantle in Western Australia with 54 per cent of the vote. They are growing fast. The Socialist Alliance also strongly promotes green policies, not least via the ecosocialist newspaper *Green Left Weekly*.

The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, which
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evolved from the earlier Values Party, is also booming. A shake-up in the New Zealand political system in the 1990s saw the creation of the Alliance, a coalition of political parties, which the Greens joined for a time, and the introduction of proportional representation. Both factors helped them gain their first Members of Parliament in the 1996 election and they have since had some influence with Labour governments. They have been strong opponents of GM farming. Currently they have nine members of parliament. The Party has two co-leaders, one of which must be female and one

Green politics in the Middle East

There are a very small number of Green parties in the Middle East. Some, like the Green Party of Saudi Arabia, are underground organizations comprising little more than a website and a few committed individuals. The long-standing Egyptian Green Party typically finds it difficult to progress in a country where democratic participation is limited.

Israel, however, contains two such parties, the new and more radical Green Movement and the Green Party, which has been closer to the Israeli state. There is also a Green Leaf Party committed to cannabis legislation. None have elected parliamentarians, although the Green Party has elected local officials.

The Green Movement narrowly failed to elect members of the Knesset in the 2009 election. It supports a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and campaigns strongly on civil liberties and tolerance to religious difference. It believes that energy consumption in the country should be cut by 25 per cent.

However, green politics is probably best represented by the left party Hadesh. Dov Khenin from Hadesh is co-coordinator of a network of Israeli environmental groups, a member of the Knesset and came second in the 2008 Tel Aviv mayoral election with 34 per cent. Hadesh has opposed Israel’s attacks on Gaza and the Lebanon and supports the creation of a Palestinian state.

The Lebanese Green Party, one of the world’s newest, campaigns with the slogan ‘The earth knows no religion’ in a country where most parties have Shi’a, Sunni or Christian affiliations. As well as the pursuit of peace, a particular concern is forest conservation: their chair Christopher Skeff observed that ‘5,000 years ago a squirrel could travel the whole country by merely hopping from tree to tree’. He also noted: ‘I cannot pretend that Lebanese people will rally to us because of our non-confessional status, but I know a lot of them have had enough of sectarianism.’
male – currently Metiria Turei and Russel Norman. The Party has been a keen advocate of law reform on cannabis and managed to put through anti-smacking legislation to protect children. The party made history by achieving the election of the world’s first Rastafarian MP, Nándor Tánczos, in 1999. A passionate radical ecologist, when Tánczos left parliament in 2008 he smashed his watch in a symbolic gesture. Concerned that his radical edge would be dulled, he noted: ‘The danger is the system changes us as much as we change the system, if not more. And that’s why I’m leaving.’ He claimed that he did not need his watch. ‘When I look at the state of our rivers, our atmosphere and our communities, I don’t need a watch to know what time it is.’

The Japanese Green Party came about through a merger between the Rainbow Green network of local groups and the Environmental Green Party. They first gained national electoral success with the victory of Ryuhei Kawad in a Tokyo seat in the Lower House – though, because of the expense and difficulties of registration, he ran as an independent. Infected with HIV via a blood transfusion, he is a well-known campaigner in the country. As a parliamentarian his first act was to visit the Kashiwazaki nuclear power plant, which had been damaged by an earthquake. As well as campaigning against nuclear power, he has worked for patients’ rights and protested against Japanese support for the military regime in Burma.

There is an underground Chinese Green Party as well as a Green Party in Taiwan, which has elected local officials but has so far failed to gain national representation. At present there is no national Indian Green Party. But in China, India and much of East Asia, there are vigorous environmental protest movements. Campaigns against dams that displace people and destroy forests have been significant in both China and India. In West Bengal, the ruling Communist Party lost
state elections in 2009 after decades of power because of its support for industrialization that led to peasants losing their land. The most controversial case was at Nandigram, where a car factory was built on land taken from local peasants who argued that they had not agreed and were not adequately compensated.

Such protests against land seizures for industrial development are also increasingly common in China. China has seen the emergence of widespread environmental protest as when, in May 2007, students and professors at Xiamen University sent out a million text messages urging citizens to protest against the

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**Petra Kelly**

Despite her opposition to leaders and personality politics, the best-known face of green politics during the 1980s was the German activist Petra Kelly. Born in Bavaria, the most conservative state in the country, Kelly went to study in the US and embraced nonviolence, feminism, environmental concern and a radical style of participatory politics, before helping to launch the German Greens.

She saw herself as part of a tradition that embraced Rosa Luxemburg, Martin Luther King, Gandhi and the suffragettes. She was deeply affected by the death of her sister from cancer, fearing that radioactive emissions and other forms of pollution were leading to the ‘cancerization’ of the world.

Active in the growing anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s, she coined the phrase ‘anti-party party’, seeing the Greens as an alternative to traditional party politics in the grey West German system. As well as helping to found the Greens, she was a Green member of parliament and a party speaker.

During the 1980s and early 1990s she was excited by the growth of the Greens but anxious that they were becoming just another a political party. Her energy symbolized the potential for green politics to put women at the center. During the 1980s, she became well known in countries as diverse as Australia, India and the US as an inspiring political figure.

She was killed in mysterious circumstances, apparently murdered by her partner Gert Bastian, another Green politician and former General, in 1992. She is still greatly missed today and her book *Fighting for Hope – the Nonviolent Way to a Green Future* continues to inspire activists.

She once noted: ‘We, the generation that faces the next century, can add the solemn injunction, “If we don’t do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable”.’
proposed construction of a $1.4 billion petrochemical plant; between 7,000 and 20,000 people marched on the resultant demonstration, ignoring threats from the authorities.\textsuperscript{4} Chinese Green Party members have argued: ‘Environmental sustainability is impossible without social justice, and social justice is impossible without democratic politics.’\textsuperscript{5}

The Green Party in neighboring Mongolia is one of the more successful in the region, having elected members of parliament and participated in coalition government. In 2008, its leader, Saruul Agyaandorj, was briefly imprisoned following protests against election irregularities.\textsuperscript{6}

**Greening Europe**

Green parties are strongest in western Europe and have had members in the European Parliament since 1984. They have been able to use their strong position to promote renewable energy, cuts in carbon dioxide emissions, legislation against pesticides and strong social policies. Currently the Green group in the European Parliament is the fourth largest after the centre right, socialist and liberal blocs. It has 55 members, currently including a member of the free software Pirate Party from Sweden.

Green Parties have moved from the margins to the mainstream to participate in coalition governments right across Europe. Paradoxically or not, some of the most notorious radical figures of European politics in the late 1960s, such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit, have become important green realists or moderates.

The German Greens saw a debate in the early and mid-1980s between ‘realos’ who wished to go into coalition with the Social Democrats and ‘fundis’, fundamentalists who believed that coalition would lead to compromises and dilute the green message. ‘Realos’ have tended to favor conventional party structures, while ‘fundis’ are radical democrats, putting forward
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the view of the prominent 1980s activist Petra Kelly that the Greens were an ‘anti-party party’. The ‘fundis’ lost the debate and the German Greens soon gained a share of political power. Acting as coalition partners with the Social Democrats, first at a regional level, they helped to govern Germany between 1998 and 2005. The iconic radicalism of the Green Party was rather diluted but they introduced policies to phase out nuclear power and opposed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Their leader, Joschka Fischer, moved from being a street activist (closely associated with some of those who drifted into terrorism in the Red Army Faction) to becoming Germany’s Foreign Minister and the country’s most popular politician.

Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy and Sweden have all seen coalition governments involving Green parties in the last decade. Even in the UK, the Greens have had a share of power in the Greater London Assembly, working with Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London between 1999 and 2008, to introduce the congestion charge on cars using city roads, promote cycling and fight for higher pay for London’s workers.

There are also a number of specifically red-green parties and groups. Iceland is currently governed by a coalition between the Green Left Movement and the Socialist Alliance. The Nordic Green Left, meanwhile, is a bloc of left parties, including a number of communist parties, that embrace ecosocialist politics.

The rise of green direct action

Green politics has never been limited to Green parties. It has always had an anarchist element that is skeptical of elected politicians and fears being absorbed by the political system. There are a number of green grassroots networks that reject party politics, one of the most notable of which is Earth First!

Earth First! (EF!) was originally founded in the
US during the 1980s by activists in environmental groups such as the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club. They felt that existing environmental groups had failed, especially during the years of the right-wing Reagan presidency. Working under the slogan ‘No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth’, Earth First!ers advocated direct action, including ‘ecotage’ (green-themed sabotage), to deal with environmental threats. Some of the individuals involved in EF! put forward what was effectively an extreme right-wing version of deep ecology. Founder member Dave Foreman shockingly argued, for example, that AIDS was beneficial if it cut population levels. EF! was widely criticized by other greens for such opinions. Foreman later recanted his more regressive views and

What is green politics?
Jonathon Porritt’s criteria for identifying the key elements of green politics:

- A reverence for the Earth and for all its creatures;
- A willingness to share the world’s wealth among all its peoples;
- Prosperity to be achieved through sustainable alternatives to the rat race of economic growth;
- Lasting security to be achieved through non-nuclear defense strategies and considerably reduced arms spending;
- A rejection of materialism and the destructive values of industrialism;
- A recognition of the rights of future generations in our use of all resources;
- An emphasis on socially useful, personally rewarding work, enhanced by human scale technology;
- Protection of the environment as a precondition of a healthy society;
- An emphasis on personal growth and spiritual development; respect for the gentler side of human nature;
- Open, participatory democracy at every level of society;
- Recognition of the crucial importance of significant reductions in population levels;
- Harmony between people of every race, color and creed;
- A non-nuclear, low-energy strategy, based on conservation, greater efficiency and renewable resources;
- An emphasis on self-reliance and decentralized communities.

activists like Judi Bari moved EF! in a progressive direction, making alliances with workers to tackle environmental threats such as logging.

EF! inspired green direct action in many other parts of the world. The British branch of EF!, which was launched in 1991, became a key part of a campaign to stop a huge program of road building that would have devastated the environment. At Twyford Down in Hampshire, a loose group of new age travelers, local people, Earth First!ers and other greens, used direct action to try to prevent the building of a motorway through an area of natural beauty. They failed – as did protests that mobilized thousands to stop roads in east London, Newbury, Glasgow and elsewhere. However, the government cut the wider road-building program and the green movement in the UK was both energized and radicalized. British EF! activists rejected Dave Foreman’s ideas and, with their emphasis on social justice and anti-capitalism, overlapped with an anarchist approach to green politics. They went on to form Reclaim the Streets, an anti-roads movement that held street parties involving thousands of people, aimed at reclaiming roads from the car culture.

With the rise of concern over climate change and a fear that governments will either fail to act effectively or act too late to prevent catastrophe, the climate camp movement has emerged. In Britain, activists have occupied land to build protest camps in opposition to coal-fired power stations at Drax in Yorkshire, Kingsnorth in Kent, Heathrow airport and the City of London, Britain’s financial heart. This climate camp movement is spreading worldwide with camps in Australia, Belgium, Ecuador and the US. Radical greens from all over the world have played a major part in protests at IMF summits, WTO meetings and similar global gatherings.

Individuals can, of course, build community groups to further green politics without being involved in
either direct action or elections. In the first decade of the 21st century the concept of Transition Towns has grown, based on the idea that communities should plan for a future in which they can live sustainably without relying on fossil fuels. This movement – originally created in Kinsale, Ireland – is growing fast and is fostering a sense of community in the present even as it works towards a sustainable future.

Green politics also includes, to some extent, the contribution of environmental NGOs, the more radical of which sometimes put forward all the key elements of a green political agenda. However conservation groups that just emphasize environmental reformism are difficult to categorize as fully green in the political sense. Of course boundaries are often blurred and it would not really be in the spirit of green politics to exclude some networks or NGOs with a cry of ‘Ungreen! Ungreen!’

Green politics is, to repeat, not just about political parties but includes wider social movements. In turn, the philosophies that underpin green politics extend beyond environmental concern. Green politics is more than environmentalism but increasing evidence of climate change and other eco threats has fueled its growth. The next chapter explores the ecological crisis in more detail.