Grey To Green

An Advanced Canvassing Strategy Based On The Analysis Of The Use Of Door-To-Door Canvassing in Campaigns Of The German Green Party

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B.A. in Governance and Public Policy, March 2011, University of Passau

A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of
College of Professional Studies
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Professional Studies

May 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2013

Thesis directed by

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Acknowledgments

I want to thank my parents Dagmar and Heinrich. Without their love and support I never would have been able to even get the opportunity to pursue this degree. Edward Grefe deserves praise for being a fantastic advisor providing me with invaluable guidance along the way and, most important of all, teaching me how to think big. I want to thank David Ettinger for serving as first reader and putting up with my numerous questions. Chris Arterton was very supportive in helping me construct my field research and keeping me on the right track.

Sebastian Reinkunz provided me with data on the research he conducted in Berlin, pointed me to important literature, and was an indispensable ally along the way. Without his help, this thesis would not be what it is today. All my interview partners deserve tremendous praise for sitting down with me and responding with patience and detail to all my inquiries. I especially want to thank the Holzer family who provided me with a cornucopia of information on the project.

Bernd Lynack answered my questions on his campaign and its use of canvassing in Lower Saxony. He was even so kind to send some paraphernalia from Germany. Tilo Fuchs helped me in reaching out to the members of the Green Party through an online survey. Although response rates were less than ideal his assistance was valuable and is greatly appreciated.
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1. Thesis Statement

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the possibility of using door-to-door canvassing in electoral campaigns in Germany. Canvassing is a well-established tactic in U.S. electoral campaigns but it has not yet been widely-applied by parties or candidates in German campaigns. This thesis therefore develops an understanding of the possibilities of adapting canvassing to a German campaign setting. Differences between the two countries political and electoral systems need to be acknowledged and taken into account. However, it is assumed that canvassing can in fact be applied successfully in campaigns of the German Green Party. In addition this thesis argues that canvassing should be used more often not only to gain votes, but also to improve communication between party volunteers and voters in their communities. To determine the validity of these assumptions empirical data as well as personal interviews are analyzed in this thesis. They allow for a thorough understanding of the extent to which canvassing can help the German Green Party gain votes and win elections.

Going beyond this analysis the thesis also provides a complete plan that is based on these findings and serves as a blueprint for the use of canvassing by the German Green Party in future electoral campaigns. These findings allow for the construction of a step-by-step plan that takes into account the specifics of the German electoral system, the country's political culture, and the Green Party's campaign capabilities.
1.1 Introduction

The main focus of this body of work is the question of growing the German Green Party's success in future elections. Since its departure from national government in 2005, the Green Party has seen a revival, winning seats and majorities in a number of state elections and even winning its first ever governorship in 2011. This trend is promising for the party, especially since it is also gaining members and many of its political goals are shared by other Germany parties.

Still, the Green Party has not been able to regain power on the national level. With the national elections coming up in September 2013, German parties have started to prepare for the upcoming campaigns. This thesis does not intend to look at possible tactics for the 2013 campaign as much as it tries to assess the feasibility of integrating previously unused tactics. One tactic that has been used for a long time in U.S. campaigns is door-to-door canvassing. In its most original form canvassing is a very simple, low-technology tactic of voter contact. While is has traditionally seen extensive use in the U.S., the same cannot be said for German campaigns.

There is some anecdotal evidence that suggests that door-to-door canvassing, while on an entirely different level, can still be wielded as a powerful tool in German electoral campaigns. In recent elections for the state legislature of Lower Saxony, an extremely close race ensued between the governing coalition of the Conservative and the Libertarian Party on the one side and the Social Democratic and Green opposition on the other side. In the end, the opposition won with a razor-thin majority of 69 to 68 seats. There were two ways the coalition of the Conservative Party
and the Libertarian Party could have preserved its majority. First, if the Libertarian Party had received an additional 2,000 “second votes”, it would have been assigned an extra seat, with the Social Democratic Party losing one.\textsuperscript{1} Another way would have been the win of an additional district. Winners in each district are determined through the first vote, on a winner-takes-all basis.

In district twenty-one, Hildesheim county, the Social Democratic candidate Bernd Lynack won by a difference of merely 334 votes.\textsuperscript{2} Lynack had low name recognition and ran against a widely popular incumbent. Early on, he used door-to-door canvassing excessively, knocking on almost 3,000 doors over the course of nine weeks prior to election day. In an interview conducted via email, he described the experience as “motivating” stating that “it gave him a lot [of energy]].” Lynack did not collect data on feedback, but based on his personal experience most reactions from voters were very positive. He even encountered people telling him that they were going to vote for his opponent, but “would love to see their candidate doing the same thing.”\textsuperscript{3} There is no empirical evidence attributing this close victory by Lynack to his use of door-to-door canvassing. But the increase of 6.1 percent in his party's share of the first vote compared to the 2008 elections in the district does suggest that his activities might well have had a decisive impact on the overall outcome of this extremely close election.\textsuperscript{4}


\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}
Based on such evidence as well as on U.S. experience it is suggested that to grow its electoral success in future elections, the Green Party should integrate door-to-door canvassing operations as a standard mobilization tactic into its campaign strategy. To test this hypothesis, the thesis looks at a field experiment conducted in 2011 during the Berlin state elections. This experiment was one of the first of its kind in Germany, testing the impact of door-to-door canvassing on an empirical basis. This thesis moves beyond the quantitative analysis of the experiment and takes a closer look at the perspective of volunteers involved in canvassing as well as at organizational details of the planning process. In doing so, it becomes possible to not only test the aforementioned hypothesis but also to detect ways to improve future canvassing operations.

1.2 Abstract

Three empirical findings serve as the pillar of information required to determine the conclusiveness of the hypothesis outlined above. These are the quantitative results of the 2011 field experiment in Berlin, the findings of the subsequent interviews with participants, and the conducted online survey. Chapter three lays out and analyzes this information. It concludes with an optimistic, yet cautiously realistic outlook on the potential of canvassing operations in Germany. There is no empirical evidence suggesting that door-to-door canvassing is not welcomed by German voters. Reactions by a majority of voters were either neutral or positive, and only a minority was not welcoming to the canvassing efforts. This is all the more surprising given the lack of targeting that did not

allow canvassers to distinguish between likely and unlikely supporters of the Green Party.

What is more, while most volunteers seemed skeptical in the beginning, they quickly put away their inhibitions after a short time of canvassing. They perceived canvassing as more motivating than handing out info-material at street stands, and they enjoyed the authenticity of unfiltered conversations. On the quantitative level the field experiment validated their efforts in showing an increase in the first vote of 3.5 percent in the precincts in which door-to-door canvassing was applied.

However, there were also caveats that need to be addressed. The number of volunteers that can be recruited for a meaningful canvassing effort appears to be limited. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of data that keeps German parties from developing targeting capacities. Canvassing without targeting is significantly less efficient. With respect to the actual impact of door-to-door canvassing one additional finding deserves further interpretation. An increase in the share of the vote was observed only for the first vote, the vote that is cast for individual candidates. The respective share of the second vote, which is allocated to party lists, did not see a boost through canvassing. This has enormous strategic meaning because it suggests that canvassing should primarily focus on districts that can be regarded as Green Party strongholds. The chance to canvassing as an effective way to win a majority is likely to be highest in such districts. In order to overcome the skepticism that, based on the interviews, seems to be present among a large part of the party base with respect to canvassing, such flagship projects are the most promising way to break existing barriers of inhibition. Gradually the will allow for a more authentic and more direct conversation with voters.
Chapter four looks at door-to-door canvassing operations in the U.S. and describes the reasons of success or failure of these undertakings. This begins with understanding why canvassing is a more effective way to increase voter turnout than other methods of approaching citizens, like direct mail or telephone calls. It is also pointed out why it is so important to develop an organizational framework well ahead of the actual canvassing. Without flawless planning, door-to-door canvassing can easily become a chaotic endeavor. Unclear structures also inevitably lead to inefficiency and will likely have a negative impact on the motivation of volunteers. In addition, the preparation of inexperienced volunteers needs to be dealt with to assure the quality of voter contact. Especially older party members feel strong inhibitions when they are supposed to talk to strangers. This is an issue that can and should be addressed during conversations and training taking place prior to the actual operation.

One key aspect of every door-to-door canvassing endeavor is the message that is being delivered by volunteers. Drawing from practical experience and research on the matter, it becomes obvious that there is only a very small window of opportunity to make a successful pitch to each voter at their doorstep. This time frame usually does not last longer than fifteen seconds. Although the research on the subject matter is not unanimous, a number of clues point to the content of the message not being as important as a generally positive and polite tone of voice. A number of additional details are discussed to deliver a solid overview of how successful door-to-door canvassing is done in the U.S.

Combining the findings of the two previous sections, the chapter five concerns itself with the question of possible inroads toward the successful
implementation of the aforementioned strategy. In order to successfully grow the Green Party's electoral success, what elements of U.S. canvassing operations can be integrated into similar attempts by Germany's Green Party? More importantly, the limits of adaptation are described as to be mainly within the party's financial resources and the number of willing volunteers. While it is expected that volunteers' inhibitions are likely malleable, a less optimistic outlook seems appropriate concerning the resources needed to develop a sophisticated organizational framework that can serve as a backbone to a meaningful, nationwide door-to-door canvassing operation.

Chapter six builds on the information collected and the analysis conducted in the prior parts of the thesis. It lays out a comprehensive grassroots plan to be implemented in future urban campaigns by the German Green Party. The three key pillars of this plan are as follows. (1) A strong network of volunteers allowing the campaign to communicate with its supporters in real time, but also ensuring that the operation can profit from the experience of seasoned canvassers who will be asked to share their knowledge with new recruits. (2) A newly developed targeting capacity that allows for an increase in effectiveness of the operation within the legal limits of German data privacy laws. (3) A strong focus on a small number of flagship projects carried out in promising districts with a strong Green Party basis and candidates who are willing and capable of putting significant time and effort into a door-to-door canvassing campaign. This aspect is only intended to allow for a shorter route to proven success and, with that, to larger acceptance of the concept itself within the party. In accordance with the strategy canvassing operations are eventually to be expanded to more competitive districts and less urban areas.
1.3 Methodology

Aside from rare exceptions, door-to-door canvassing has not been applied as a tactic by German electoral campaigns. As described in the example of Bernd Lynack, candidates will occasionally engage with voters directly. Although German parties like to look to the U.S. for inspiration and new ideas in terms of political campaigns, canvassing was never adopted. In recent years however, there have been tacit attempts to determine whether canvassing would work in German campaigns as well. Among the few scientific attempts to answer this question was a field experiment conducted by the Green Party in Berlin in 2011. Prior to the state assembly election in September of 2011, the Green Party decided to test the impact of door-to-door canvassing in three districts of the “Mitte” county. Not unlike the research conducted by Green and Gerber in New Haven in the 2000s, the experiment used randomized assignments to ensure validity and reduce potential bias.

Berlin consists of twelve counties, with the “Mitte” county being the stage for this experiment. Earlier in 2011 the Green Party caucus in each county had elected candidates for each district and candidates from three districts had agreed to participate in the experiment. The precincts in their districts were then randomly assigned either to a treatment group (in which canvassing would be applied in addition to usual campaign methods such as leafleting) and a control group (in which only established campaigning methods like leafleting or street stands were used).

Due to a lack of targeting capacities as well as to a small number of volunteers, all precincts assigned to the treatment group could not be canvassed. Still, candidates and volunteers were able to knock on 20,055 doors and talk to 7,749 people
over the course of about four weeks. Unfortunately, methodological flaws undermine the significance of the results. However, the null hypothesis (“Canvassing does not affect the voting behavior of those canvassed”) could be rejected. Using regression analysis, the authors were able to attribute an average increase of 3.5 percent of the share of the vote to the use of door-to-door canvassing. This result is significantly lower than the data collected by researchers in the U.S., but if organizational weaknesses of the project are taken into account, it does not seem impossible that with more resources, manpower, and the development of targeting capacities, the impact of door-to-door canvassing could be increased even further.

In numerous conversations that took place prior to this writing, party members as well as political operatives voiced their skepticism with respect to door-to-door canvassing. The data collected during the 2011 field experiment does not support such assumptions. In fact, it suggests that a majority of German voters would react positively to being canvassed at their doorstep. However, the data does not tell us enough about their reactions to fully understand the reasons for these reactions, be they positive or negative. Researchers only noted whether people answered their doors and if they reacted in a positive, neutral, or negative manner. In order to further improve future canvassing operations, more information on this is crucial.

More importantly however, the information gathered through the experiment did not focus at all on the volunteers who participated. In addition to the three candidates about twenty volunteers participated. Unfortunately, virtually no information

was collected on how these people perceived their role as canvassers. This makes it extremely difficult to improve future canvassing operations with respect to key issues like the preparation of volunteers, the organizational framework of the operation, or even the pitch presented to voters.

In order to fill this gap, a qualitative analysis of the experience of individual canvassers was necessary. To develop a more detailed understanding of their experiences, interviews with participants were set-up in late 2012. The group of interview partners included two of the three candidates as well as party members. Due to the limited time that could be spent in Berlin, only eight of the participants were able to sit down with the author for an interview. Assuming that twenty people participated in total, this is not an ideal amount. Still, it did allow for a much deeper understanding of how the experiment was carried out, the experiences that were made, and possible inroads for future improvement of door-to-door canvassing operations.

To further back up the analysis, an attempt was also made to reach out to the entire Green Party chapter in the “Mitte” county. This was done through an online survey that focused mostly on the degree of involvement of individuals in the campaign, as well as their views on door-to-door canvassing. The goal of the survey was to look at potential differences in the perception of canvassing between party members who had participated in canvassing and those who had not. Unfortunately, even after numerous emails to the entire chapter only a four percent response rate could be generated. As this only allows for very rough observations, it does not provide reliable information that could be seen as strong evidence backing up the findings of the interviews.
2. Literature Review

Winning elections is about three things: (1) identifying voters who favor you, (2) persuading them through a message and (3) getting them to go out and vote. This very basic composition holds true for small local elections as well as nationwide contests. It transcends national borders and applies to different types of democratically held elections.\(^6\) Since this thesis is primarily concerned with the third aspect, the following review takes a closer look at the body of research that has focused on the process of communicating with voters and convincing them to cast ballots on election day. In accordance with the thesis' focus on canvassing operations in Germany, the review looks at the available research in Germany as well as in the U.S.

Unlike in the U.S., door-to-door canvassing is traditionally not part of election campaigns in Germany. This is primarily due to a drastic difference in the degree of professionalization of campaigning. Political science in Germany does not concern itself nearly as much with voter turnout as a party's strategic task. The subject matter is discussed in a deliberative context of democratic theory. The overall level of analysis however is much less developed.

Of course the differences in electoral campaigning between the U.S. and most European countries need to be accounted for when undertaking such a comparison: The German political system is much more reliant on political parties, meaning that volunteer activism in electoral campaigns is a rare occasion. In addition, electoral

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campaigns are by and large publicly funded, leading to significantly smaller budgets.\(^7\) The German legal framework regarding data privacy and the marketing of personalized information is much more restrictive than its U.S. counterpart. An individual's voting history is not public record in Germany, which means that voter lists do not exist. This means that German political parties have little to no opportunity to develop meaningful targeting capacities. These circumstances turn nationwide, large-scale door-to-door canvassing operations into almost impossible endeavors. Thus, it should not be surprising that German political science has not focused on a campaign tactic that, by and large, remains unused.

Canvassing appears to have played a small role in German election campaigns in the early 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^8\) The scientific evidence remains thin, and hence there are virtually no German publications on the subject matter. A recent work by Reinkunz stands out due to its use of a field experiment and randomized assignment.\(^9\) Using a non-partisan message, Reinkunz was able to measure a significant effect of door-to-door canvassing on young voters in a local election in the small town of Waldkirch, Baden-Wuerttemberg. Beyond this work there are only studies that focus on specific

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campaigning techniques. These remain descriptive and do not develop a focus on door-to-door canvassing as a specifically utilized tactic to mobilize voters or look at mobilization efforts in U.S. campaigns from a German perspective.10

The academic work focused on the German Green Party can be described as very extensive.11 For the purpose of this thesis only a few specific areas of research need to be included. Specifically, this includes the Green Party's campaign approaches and the development of its electoral success. The latter is discussed by Ruedig who looks at the party's electoral success in 2009 and attempts to find reasons for its long term success through qualitative as well as quantitative methods.12 Bluehdorn's work is an outlook on the 2009 elections. As such it is more issue-centered and attempts to determine whether the German Greens have positioned themselves in a promising way to allow for electoral success.13 In an earlier work Bluehdorn also looks at the party's strategic position with respect to other German parties. He analyzes the party's potential of options to form other coalitions beyond the traditional cooperation with Social


Democrats. The Green Party's campaigning structures have not been subject to excessive academic research. Only a small number of publications attempt to shine a light on the Green's capacities in electoral campaigns.

Unlike their German colleagues, political scientists in the United States have composed an extensive body of research on the issues of voter turnout and political parties' attempts to increase it. Since the forming of the large political parties in the nineteenth century, there have been organized attempts to ensure that a party's supporters do in fact cast their ballots. President Lincoln was quoted saying: “Our intention is to organize the whole State, so that every Whig can be brought to the polls in the coming presidential contest. We cannot do this, however, without your co-operation; and as we do our duty, so we shall expect you to do yours.”

Lincoln goes on to describe in detail the requirements of what would even today be seen as a standard get-out-the-vote operation.

Political scientists did not begin to take a closer look at the subject matter until the beginning of the 20th century. With U.S. parties becoming increasingly influential mass organizations, the interest in their leverage over participation in elections


17. Ibid., 38.
rose. Another factor that sparked scientists' interest was the inclusion of the large number of impoverished industrial workers in America's urban centers into the democratic process. In the 1920s Harold Gosnell was among the first to conduct field experiments to develop an understanding of the impact of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts on voter turnout.\(^\text{18}\) His intention was rooted in the goal to increase participation especially among uneducated citizens. Gosnell used randomized selection of households in low-income areas of Chicago to determine how postcards would influence mobilization. The postcards encouraged participation in municipal elections and were sent to pre-selected households. While Gosnell was able to find significant increases in electoral participation, his sample sizes as well as the method of ex-post interviews with participants as a way of measuring participation seriously diminished the validity of his data. The ten percent increase in turnout recorded by Gosnell can thus not be regarded as scientifically robust. His research also focused entirely on postcards. It did not include the study of door-to-door canvassing.

Another effort to determine the impact of different get-out-the-vote tactics on voter turnout was made by Samuel J. Eldersveld in the 1950s.\(^\text{19}\) Eldersveld conducted a series of field experiments during local elections in Ann Arbor in 1953 and 1954. By comparing the impact of mailed letters and door-to-door canvassing, a more sophisticated analysis became available. Eldersveld was the first researcher trying to measure the influence of these tactics during different campaigns. In doing so, he was able to discover


that “the impact of propaganda techniques to get out the vote varies with the electoral context and the nature of the group on which influence is exerted.” Still, his findings remained suggestive at best due to weaknesses in methodology and sample sizes.

The ideas of isolating specific campaign tactics and determining their influence on voting behavior began to intrigue more and more political scientists. Kramer, as well as Blydenburgh and Bochel and Denver in the United Kingdom began to extent the body of research. Kramer decided to rely on survey data instead of field experiments, which allowed for much larger sample sizes to increase external validity. However, this change came with two important caveats: First, using voter turnout as the independent variable, survey data on voting was prone to bias. Often times respondents would simply lie about their voting records. Second, it has to be assumed that electoral campaigns reach out to voters based on strategic targeting and not randomized selection. This is yet another source of potential bias in the survey results. In turn, Kramers finding of strong increase in voter turnout due to canvassing also needs to be looked at with caution. His research added a level of analysis because he saw canvassing as both a way to persuade voters as well as to mobilize them. Kramer differentiated between turnout effects and preference effects. And while he did not find strong evidence for a preference

20. Ibid., 158.

effect in door-to-door canvassing, this was later picked up by other researchers like Huckfeldt and Sprague and Rosenstone and Hansen.22

Blydenburgh's work was centered around an actual race in Rochester, New York. He utilized Kramer's distinction between turnout and preference, but came to different conclusions. He cooperated with the two campaigning parties and was thus able to measure the effects of telephone calls and door-to-door canvassing in a local election. A similar approach was used by Brochel and Denver who worked together with the British Labour Party in a municipal election in Dundee in 1970.23 While this experiment is interesting in particular because it is one of the few of its kind done in Europe, it unfortunately suffers from a very small sample size and methodological flaws. The authors themselves acknowledge that the ten percent increase in turnout found in their research has to be partially attributed to the setup of the experiment.

The 1980s saw a significant shift in campaign tactics. Due to the increasing scope of television, telephone, and direct mail, electoral campaigns started to invest heavily in these technologies. Consequently, the influence of party structures decreased while professional consultants began to take charge of more and more campaigns on all levels.24 And while get-out-the-vote tactics still played a role in their plans, surprisingly little research was conducted to actually measure the efficiency of these tactics. This immense


lack of empiricism in political consulting has been looked at more closely in recent years, but it did not play a role either in political science nor in political practice before the late 1990s.  

In 1999, Green and Gerber picked up the method of experimental design to attain a more thorough understanding of the effectiveness of different get-out-the-vote tactics. Their experiments carried out in New Haven in 1999 were the first solid evidence of a quantifiable impact of direct contact with voters on turnout.  

By using randomized selection and through reliance on an extensive sample size, they were able to demonstrate the influence of a non-partisan message on voter turnout. In addition, Gerber and Green allowed for measurement of efficiency of different tactics such as door-to-door canvassing, phone calls by volunteers, automated phone calls, and direct mail. Among the channels that were tested, door-to-door canvassing was found to be the most effective tactic, leading to an increase in turnout probability between six and seven percent.

This finding spurred a large amount of follow-up research and was tested in different settings in the years thereafter, with different areas of focus. Some researchers focused on partisan messages. Other researchers reiterated the study of non-partisan


efforts. Panagopoulos combined these approaches and compared both partisan and non-partisan messages. A 2005 study looked at the influence of a non-partisan get-out-the-vote effort in a congressional race and found that the effectiveness of canvassing is significantly lower in heavily contested races.

The exact content of the delivered message was subject to scrutiny in a number of experiments. While these studies focused on different messages, neither found significant differences in their impact on voter turnout. The specific influence on voters of different age groups was tested, as well as different ethnic backgrounds, and voting habits. A study published in 2004 looked specifically at the effects of door-to-door canvassing on groups with different voting propensities and found that canvassing is most efficient when focused on intermittent voters. A 2010 study based on focus groups


points to detailed differences in the quality of the contacts made through door-to-door canvassing, even testing different forms of attire, accent, and the age of canvassers.\textsuperscript{34} Two rather extensive works provide an overview of the accumulated findings and develop possible ways of applying them.\textsuperscript{35} Even further down the road of practical experience, there are a number of works that provide extensive insights in the reality of door-to-door canvassing operations. Faucheux, himself running for office at the time, describes with granular detail the challenges of candidate canvassing. While Johnson gives a more general overview of the required planning for a strong door-to-door operation, Bedolla and Michelson look at phone banks as well as at door-to-door canvassing with a focus on the difficulties in volunteer recruitment.\textsuperscript{36}

3. The 2011 Berlin experiment

In 2011, Berlin elected a new state legislature. The elections took place on September 18, which placed the parties' campaigns right into the heat of the Berlin summer. In addition to enacting laws, the Berlin state legislature also elects the mayor of the city, turning the elections into contests not only between parties but also between personalities. The mayor


of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, had been voted into office by a coalition of his own Social Democratic Party as well as the Socialist Left Party in 2001. In 2006, he and his coalition had won re-election despite a slight drop in support.\(^{37}\) Due to a number of unresolved problems, that support declined significantly during his second term. Thus, in early 2011, Wowereit faced a credible challenger in the Green Party's leading candidate, former Secretary of Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Renate Kuenast. In March and April of 2011, both Wowereit's Social Democrats and Kuenast's Greens were polling around 30\%, turning the upcoming elections into a head-to-head race between two parties that are close in ideological terms and tend to form alliances.\(^{38}\)

3.1 The Green Party's strategy

Due to the promising polling data, the Green Party's goal was to win the largest share of the vote on September 18. Kuenast was seen as a strong candidate with high name recognition due to her former position and her current status as party whip in the Bundestag. Aiming for the mayoralty was unprecedented for the Green Party in Berlin. However, the Green Party enjoyed strong support in public opinion polls in late 2010 and early 2011 due to a number of national and international developments. Thus, a victory for Kuenast in Berlin did not seem unthinkable.\(^{39}\)


A number of strategic mistakes thwarted the Kuenast campaign. With Kuenast being an experienced, knowledgeable candidate, the party ran an issue-centered campaign. But Kuenast was unable to form a clear message on the issues, resulting in controversy on a number of policies. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, focused entirely on the popularity of their candidate, Klaus Wowereit. Their campaign was centered around his personality. In the end, Wowereit successfully defended his majority. The Green Party gained seats, but came well short of its original goal of ousting Wowereit. This was the political background against which the door-to-door canvassing experiment was conducted in the summer of 2011.

3.2 Door-to-door Canvassing – a field experiment

The idea to use door-to-door canvassing in the 2011 state election was originally proposed by Tilmann Holzer, a party member in Berlin's "Mitte" county. After the party chapter had selected its candidates, Holzer wanted to volunteer for the candidate in his precinct, Alessa Bergenkamp. When interviewed, he stated that he had had no prior experience with the tactic, but had read about it as he had been following the 2008 U.S. elections. Holzer and his wife began their volunteer work for Bergenkamp's campaign with a number of other activities and it was not until later in the summer of 2011 that they began to seriously contemplate a canvassing operation. Bergenkamp was a young first-

February 5, 2013.

time candidate running in a precinct that was not very favorable to the Green Party. The Holzer's, also young and energetic, suggested canvassing. Bergenkamp was open to new ideas and willing to test canvassing.

As they began planning the canvassing operation, operatives at the national headquarters of the Green Party heard about the project. An analyst working for the party's executive director was the volunteers' liaison at headquarters and decided to turn the idea into a field experiment. Having concluded that he would need more than just one district to gather reliable results, the staffer was able to win over two other candidates, Daniel Gollasch and Silke Gebel. All three were running in districts in an area called “Wedding,” a part of “Mitte” county that is significantly less affluent. Together, these districts consisted of 115 precincts, 99 of which were included in the eventual analysis of the experiment. The goal was to conduct field research that would replicate the findings of the work done by Alan Green and Donald Gerber in the early 2000s in New Haven, thus launching a modest experiment to see if canvassing would, in fact, have a measurable impact on voter turnout in Germany as well.\footnote{Donald Green and Alan Gerber, “Does canvassing increase voter turnout? A field experiment,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Science 96, no. 19 (1999): 10939–10942.}

### 3.3 Planning ahead – arrangements prior to implementation

Surprisingly, the biggest challenge for the project was not finding enough volunteers to participate in it. The group's main concern was the scientific validity of the operation. Having read about the weaknesses of previous research on the effectiveness of GOTV tactics, it tried to ensure that the results would be robust enough in scientific terms to
allow for clear conclusions. Thus it opted for randomly assigning precincts to both groups, instead of just canvassing in one precinct after another. This decision made organizational procedures far more challenging.

As Holzer commented: “That made it a lot harder to for us, because we had to get all volunteers to follow the plan. Due to the random assignment of precincts we could not just go into the areas we intuitively would have gone into.”

From a researchers perspective however, this was the only way to avoid potentially spurious data that would have undermined the purpose of the project. This way it became possible to rule out other factors having a significant impact on any change in voting behavior. The team devised randomized lists of the 115 precincts that could be processed precinct-by-precinct. This acknowledged the fact that, due to a lack of manpower, it was unlikely that all 115 precincts would be covered.

Holzer and Bergenkamp were able to recruit “a handful of volunteers” from within the Green Party and their social circles. With Gebel and Gollasch (the two other candidates) doing the same, a team of around twenty people was found to carry out the project. The Holzers made it clear that the majority of these canvassers were young people. These were usually well-educated, and according to Holzer, “the idea of trying out something new was appealing to them.”

Inhibitions with respect to canvassing were much stronger among party members who were older and had been with the Green Party

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for a longer time. A statement made by Heike Kaehler, a party member in her forties, is illustrative of this attitude: “I was very skeptical at first. I did not want to get yelled at, like Jehovah's witnesses.”45 Most interview partners admitted to having had a strong sense of skepticism towards the idea prior to their first experience. But when they overcame their skepticism and began to canvass, most inhibitions quickly dissipated as canvassers realized that most people did not react as they had anticipated. According to Kaehler: “We did not get that many negative reactions. A lot of people were neutral, but respectful. And we got more positive responses than I expected. The reactions were generally better than the ones we get when we hand out leaflets.”46 Another example was Daniel Gollasch, one of the three candidates who canvassed primarily by himself: “I was a bit nervous talking to strangers at their doorsteps at first, but after about ten doors or so, I started getting excited about the idea.”47

While this is a promising observation in terms of future canvassing operations, it is important to stress the degree of unease that many volunteers will likely feel when they are at first confronted with the idea. When developing a pitch to recruit new canvassers, this concern needs to be kept in mind. The goal should not be to convince newcomers of how great canvassing is, but rather to get them to the point where they are willing to give it a try despite their skepticism.


46. Ibid.

Since they had little precedent, organizers did not conduct extensive training seminars before their first canvassing attempts. One meeting took place to prepare volunteers on how to deal with extreme reactions. Canvassers were also provided with a list of what to do when facing problems and what not do to under any circumstances. The list also stressed the importance of positive body language, a service-oriented message, and a short pitch. When asked about how they would feel about being trained ahead of the actual canvass, some interview partners pointed to the need for individual experience. Kaehler for instance indicated that she was “more of an introvert.” She went on to say that she doubted that such training would have given her any sense of additional security.48 When asked about this aspect, others were more open to receiving training prior to the actual canvassing. The Holzers for instance suggested a focus on “multipliers”, meaning party members with a strong network and experience in canvassing who could be asked to share their knowledge and skill with peers.49

3.4 Organizational problems

Volunteers and candidates began to canvass in July. This early start was decided upon for two reasons: First, the simple fact that only a small number of people was available called for more time to collect sizable results. Second, the primary purpose of the experiment was not just to observe a potential change in voting behavior, but also to develop a solid understanding of German voters' reactions to being canvassed. When execution began in July, a number of problems arose. Although volunteers routinely checked the areas they

48. Kaehler interview.

49. Holzer, Kunzweiler-Holzer interview.
were about to canvass on Google Street View prior to going out, it became difficult to always follow the research design and only canvass in the precincts that were supposed to be covered. These precincts formed the treatment group, meaning they received the treatment of canvassing. Hence, some precincts had to be disregarded in the final analysis. They were either supposed to be in the treatment group and had not been treated, or they were not meant to be in the treatment group but had seen canvassing.

A key problem that had been anticipated and yet caused frustration was the lack of targeting. Volunteers had no targeting capacities to rely on. Information on individual voting behavior is not public in Germany. Hence, canvassers could not distinguish between likely and unlikely voters. Oftentimes they found themselves talking to people with unfavorable attitudes towards the Green Party. Although no interview partner described unpleasant interactions as a major source of frustration, some did admit to being somewhat discouraged by insults. Nico Winkler, a young canvasser, stated that he faced some general stereotypes about the Green Party, especially from men. He recognized “that they got to me, personally”. Even though it is presumptuous to state that frustration could have been minimized with a targeted focus on likely Green Party voters, responses suggest that especially newly recruited canvassers would be more likely to remain engaged if they witnessed less negative reactions from voters.

This problem was directly related to another one: How to deal with non-contacts? In total, canvassers knocked on 20,055 doors. Having talked to 7,749 voters,


51. Kaehler interview.
this amounts to a contact ratio of 39%, which drops to 14.4% when correlated to the number of people in each precinct who were in fact eligible to vote.\textsuperscript{52} These numbers are not far away from what is commonly seen as the standard ratio for door-to-door canvassing in the U.S.\textsuperscript{53} Unfortunately, no information was collected about these non-contacts, so that it would have been cumbersome to reach out to them again.

While canvassers were given general suggestions on how to address voters, they often times did not follow suit. Lacking experience, many tried to get too much information across. According to Holzer: “We blabbed too much. We tried to inform people about our policy goals, and we could tell that we overwhelmed them and did not get through to them. So we adapted our pitch and made it shorter and more service-oriented.”\textsuperscript{54}

Eventually, most canvassers switched to a more informative pitch and did not engage in lengthy conversations with voters. This seemed to work better for them, and it certainly increased the efficiency of their work. One candidate described his presentation as “very short and informative,” explaining that it almost never lasted for more than thirty seconds. Yet this lack of message discipline remains problematic because it does not allow for decisive conclusions on what messages are most effective.

A common issue for canvassing operations is how to keep volunteers engaged and motivated over a long period of time. In this case the challenge was even

\textsuperscript{52} Heinrich, Reinkunz, \textit{Berliner Haustuerwahlkampf}.

\textsuperscript{53} Green, Gerber, \textit{Get out the vote}, 37.

\textsuperscript{54} Holzer, Kunzweiler-Holzer interview.
greater because the project went on for eight weeks. In order to keep the group motivated, volunteers would meet up whenever possible after their canvassing tours. Lacking office space, Holzer's private apartment became the go-to place for these meetings. Meetings allowed volunteers to share experiences and provide feedback. This was not done on a methodical basis and, therefore, only allowed for gradual improvement on the basis of trial and error. Unfortunately, feedback was not documented to allow alterations in future canvassing operations.

3.5 “It's all about presence” - a candidate's experiences during canvassing

Face-to-face communication with voters does play a role for candidates in German campaigns, but usually not at a voter's doorstep. Instead, candidates try to reach out to voters at festivals or street stands. Very few candidates have actually canvassed with a somewhat methodical approach. The candidates who took part in the Berlin experiment chose different ways of participating, but their experiences were strikingly similar since they were very well received. This was apparently due to their presence in the precincts. That is not to say that voters did not have positive reactions to volunteers, but they were more eager to interact with a candidate they recognized from a poster or a newspaper article.

Daniel Gollasch canvassed by himself most of the time and was only accompanied by volunteers on occasion. To him, it was more important to engage directly with voters as their candidate, trying to strengthen his relationship with the community. He stressed multiple times that his experience was better when he canvassed by himself as opposed to being accompanied by volunteers. Although Gollasch admitted to having
some security concerns (especially after sunset), he was convinced that his role as a candidate helped him to approach voters and show them his dedication. He did not feel as comfortable about volunteers canvassing in his stead, stressing the difference in voters' reactions: “When volunteers came in my stead, the reactions were not always that positive.”\textsuperscript{55} He strongly preferred candidate canvassing because he felt that volunteers did not have a very strong impact on a voter's decision.

Voters recognized Gollasch from posters they had seen of him, and they felt special when a politician came to them in person to inform them about the upcoming election. Gollasch described the respect people demonstrated towards him for making this effort. One man approached him and said: “Really, I think you should win this. Nobody has ever been as present around here as you have been.”\textsuperscript{56} This happened in a low-income area that cannot be regarded as a traditional stronghold for the Green Party. According to Gollasch even voters who indicated that they were not intending to vote for the Greens still considered supporting him. “One person told me: 'I have never voted for the Green Party, but I will support you because I feel that you really want it.’”\textsuperscript{57}

Alessa Bergenkamp was more inclusive with respect to volunteers. She usually canvassed with at least one or two other people. The Holzers, who were often among those going door to door with Bergenkamp, described the difference between canvassing with or without her as “enormous.” Winkler confirmed this. Having

\textsuperscript{55} Gollasch interview.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
canvassed with Bergenkamp a number of times, he described “a strong difference” when she engaged with voters. Kaehler even drew motivation out of canvassing with Bergenkamp. “It was extremely motivating to see Alessa go out and talk to these people. It literally helped us to get a foot in the door.”

A lot of people recognized Bergenkamp from posters and signs that had been placed in the district. According to her this made it much easier to get through to people. She also felt that a significant number of voters were very surprised to see a politician coming to their doorstep, and they showed a positive attitude towards her because of this. “They appreciated the effort of us coming to them, and informing them about the elections. They definitely did not expect that.”

Holzer also credited some of the success to Bergenkamp's personality and appearance, describing how she immediately engaged with voters and was quite obviously enjoying herself when communicating with them.

A word that was often mentioned by both candidates was “presence”. The fact that candidates running for office did not just engage with voters, but did so at the voter's own doorstep was something that most people had never witnessed before. The majority of voters did not perceive the presence of a candidate as intrusive, but rather as a politician actually caring about their problems. This is especially striking when one considers the often times weak connections the Green Party has with local organizations. When asked about the Green Party's presence in her home precinct, Kaehler openly

58. Kaehler interview.

59. Bergenkamp interview.
admitted that this was something the Green Party would have to “dramatically improve” in the future.⁶⁰

Bergenkamp reported that in a few instances, voters had already talked to their friends about her coming to their doorstep. In turn, these friends were already aware of the canvassing project when Bergenkamp eventually reached out to them. This is evidence of the so-called spill-over effect of door-to-door canvassing and stresses the underlying positive effects of the tactic that are sometimes difficult—if not impossible—to measure. Voters who have been canvassed will talk to their peers about the experience, and the campaign's outreach is increased indirectly. Gollasch's encounters with first-time voters are another strong indicator of this. People who explicitly stated that they had not voted for the Green Party in the past said they would now choose to support him thanks to his engagement. Winkler observed similar reactions. He stated that the presence of a candidate increased the chance of positive reactions significantly. When he was canvassing with Bergenkamp, a man said to him: “To me, politicians live in a different world.” I went on and probed him about how he felt about such statements. Winkler described a feeling of mutual respect: “If you can prove to voters that you respect them, they will begin respecting themselves.”⁶¹ By asking voters for their vote and caring about their concerns canvassers can make people feel wanted at the polls. This helps voters to get engaged and have respect for themselves. In turn, they may very well also begin developing respect for members of a political party.

⁶⁰ Kaehler interview.

⁶¹ Ibid.
3.6 “I did not want to get yelled at” - Volunteers experience canvassing

Before the project, none of the participants had ever gathered any experience in door-to-door canvassing. Most of them described a similar first reaction when confronted with the idea. Kaehler and Winkler mentioned skepticism, and even the Holzers, who had come up with the idea to begin with, were unsure whether it would work and how people would react.

According to the Holzers, canvassing in teams of two helped in overcoming these inhibitions because it made volunteers feel more confident and allowed them to deal with negative reactions right away. It also increased their efficiency. Many apartment blocks in Berlin have three to four separate stairways. Working in a group, volunteers could enter buildings together and focus on different stairways. Gollasch stated that this way he would sometimes knock on over 200 doors during one shift.62

Later on, going in groups also became a helpful way of integrating newly recruited volunteers. Instead of having to talk to voters right away, these people could join and just document reactions first. It was striking to hear the changes in volunteers' perspectives as they described their first canvassing experience. They were unanimously surprised by peoples' positive reactions, and they all stated that they would certainly support such projects in future elections. This finding is also supported by the survey, in which all twelve participants who had experience with canvassing said they would do it again.63

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62. Gollasch interview.

63. Appendix Four, question seventeen.
One of the most telling examples was Kaehler, whose prior inhibitions were arguably the strongest. She voiced her skepticism, but eventually agreed to join because she “wanted to help the party.” Since she had strong concerns about people's reactions, she only documented answers at first and did not actively talk to voters. Soon she realized that most reactions were very different from what she had expected, at which point she also began engaging with voters. “It was always motivating to see how a voter's world view started to change.”

Kaehler had expected negative reactions, but witnessed voters responding in a way that did not fit her preconceived notions. This appears to have been the crucial moment in which her perspective on door-to-door canvassing switched. She suddenly stopped seeing strangers as being opposed to the Green Party by default, and this seemed to give her a great boost in confidence. When I asked her whether she would join future canvassing campaigns, she emphatically confirmed.

Winkler, who was the person most skeptical of canvassing, admitted to feeling “insecure about the idea of knocking on a stranger's door.” But due to a “sense of duty” he eventually agreed to join. He also admitted that his fears were not met by the encouraging reactions of voters. However, unlike Kaehler, he did not attribute this to voters actually having a different opinion of the Green Party or appreciating the presence of political volunteers at their doorstep. To him, voters were simply “too surprised to act negatively.”

64. Kaehler interview.

65. Winkler interview.
Even though Winkler canvassed for eight weeks and despite agreeing to participating again in the future, he did not seem to be as optimistic about using the idea in the future. “Right now, we are still sticking out in a positive way by doing this. But if all parties start canvassing on a large scale, reactions will become negative because Germans do not like politicians at their doorstep.”66 He remained skeptical about voters' perception of the Green Party, and did not exude the same confidence as Kaehler did.

Prior to their experiences, Kaehler and Winkler shared similar doubts about talking to voters at their doorstep. Their subsequent perspectives are exemplary of the development that needs to be fostered among volunteers in future canvassing campaigns if they are supposed to be successful on a broader scale. Kaehler's preconceived notions of how voters feel about her personal convictions and the Green Party's ideals changed fundamentally. Winkler, on the other hand, remained hesitant and uncertain about how he would be received by strangers. This is problematic because canvassers who are not confident about their own convictions will likely struggle to leave what Holzer called “a positive emotional impression.”

Directly communicating with voters was not something that was entirely new to these volunteers. What was new, however, was the deliberate attempt to focus on a concise presentation that lasted only fifteen to thirty seconds. This “service-oriented” approach directly contradicted the way party members had often communicated with voters in the past. Oftentimes they would have lengthy conversations on values and specific policies with individuals coming to their street stands, trying to convince voters of their ideals and, as Kaehler fittingly put it, “feeling the urge to correct false

66. Ibid.
information and wrong opinions.” Simply getting information across to a voter in a brief, neutral, and positive message was new to them.

This is one reason why members of the executive council of the Green Party chapter in the “Mitte” county were interested in door-to-door canvassing. On one hand, they saw it as a useful tool to collect votes, but on the other, it was also a useful vehicle to get party members to learn how to better communicate with people. Council members stated that “(...) many Green Party members have an understanding of campaigning that is idealistic and out of touch with reality.” This problem became apparent in another discussion when an interview partner confessed. “Many Green Party members are either too introverted or too arrogant to directly talk to voters.”

Indeed, interview partners described how they altered their pitch after taking into account the difference in voters reactions. Bergenkamp, for instance, described the process as a learning curve: “We got an idea of how to speak to them: What tone to use, what issue to promote – or no issue at all. We definitely became better at that towards the end.” This underlines the usefulness of door-to-door canvassing in the long run. It goes beyond the mere allocation of votes because it allows a party to improve its campaign communications and strengthens its ties to local communities.

67. Kaehler interview.


69. Ibid.

70. Bergenkamp interview.
3.7 Empirical results

During the eight weeks that most of the door-to-door canvassing took place, the team knocked on 20,055 doors and talked to 7,749 people. Out of the 115 precincts that were part of the experiment, 25 were allocated to the treatment group. 90 constituencies did not receive any door-to-door canvassing.

The documented reactions to door-to-door canvassing do not match some of the rather pessimistic expectations. Out of the group of 7,749 people, 53% showed a positive reaction. 26% were recorded as having a neutral reaction, that is to say they listened to the canvassers and took the leaflet that was offered to them without asking further questions. Surprisingly, only 18% of canvassed voters showed a negative reaction, with few incidents being reported as excessively negative. A couple times voters would slam their doors into canvassers faces, and in a handful of incidents Winkler reported to encountering voters who told him that they were planning on voting for the Green Party, but “would not do so now that they had been harassed at their own door.”

However, as the empirical evidence shows, these were extreme outliers. Three percent of the reactions were not reported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of doors knocked on</th>
<th>20055</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of people who answered</td>
<td>39.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of eligible voters who were reached</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters reached</td>
<td>7749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the precincts of the treatment group with those of the control group, one observation stands out. The Green Party's share of the second vote in 2011 was in fact lower in the treatment group than in the control group. However, these results are in accordance with those of 2006 and 2009. Thus, it is unlikely that door-to-door canvassing would have had a significant negative impact on these numbers. The fact that the canvassing campaign revolved around the candidates to a large extent also strengthens the assumption that there was no negative effect of door-to-door canvassing on the second vote.

Comparing the average share of the first and the second vote in both groups we find that in the treatment group, the Green Party candidate's average share of the first vote is 0.9 percent higher than the Green Party's share of the second vote. In the
control group, the Green Party candidate's average share of the first vote was 0.1 percent lower than the average share of the second vote. This is the first indicator of a possible door-to-door canvassing effect.

Looking only at the first vote, more solid evidence of a canvassing effect can be found. In Gollasch's district the Green Party candidate in 2006 received 10.2 percent. Gollasch was able to collect 19.0 percent. Bergenkamp ran in district number six, where she received 21.9 percent compared to her predecessor's 15.0 percent.\(^{72}\) These gains cannot be solely attributed to door-to-door canvassing. However, in a next step, analysts at the Green Party headquarters conducted a regression analysis that included results of the 2006 state legislature elections as well as of the 2009 national elections. Using the 2006 and 2009 share of the second vote as co-variances and the 2011 first vote results as the dependent variable, they were able to calculate an average increase of the share of the first vote of 3.5 percent. In other words, for every 1,000 contacts that were made an additional 35 votes were created.\(^{73}\)

### 3.8 Summary

Against the background of a difficult statewide race in the city state of Berlin, the door-to-door canvassing experiment conducted in three districts in the “Mitte” county of Berlin has to be considered a success. This is all the more encouraging given the organizational difficulties that arose from a lack of targeting, a small group of canvassers, and

\(^{72}\) Silke Gebel, the third candidate who participated in the experiment, was not included in the analysis because she did not follow the randomized assignment of constituencies. Hence inclusion of the data reported by her would have caused the overall analysis to produce spurious results.

\(^{73}\) Reinkunz, Heinrich, *Berliner Haustuerwahlkampf*.  

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absolutely no experience with comparable face-to-face canvassing projects. Yet, the experiment provides important empirical evidence supporting the assumption that canvassing can also be used in German electoral campaigns to gain votes. This is the quantitative aspect of the experiment. Taking a closer look at the qualitative side of it has allowed for deeper insight into the questions of why and how door-to-door canvassing can work even without targeting and with little resources.

Most participants admitted to having strong inhibitions about visiting voters at home. It became apparent that these concerns were unwarranted, but they were nonetheless very present. Among long-time party members above the age of 40 they were most strongly felt. While there are a number of ways to address these concerns, one of the most promising ways seems to be the grouping of experienced canvassers with newly recruited participants in teams.

It was an unanimous observation that voters’ reactions were most positive when they were greeted by a candidate at their doorstep, as opposed to a volunteer. In many instances recognition of a person who was perceived as a politician led voters to show appreciation and respect. Volunteers who accompanied the candidates described this experience as motivating, and this seemed to also allow the candidates themselves to enjoy this otherwise sometimes strenuous activity. In addition, through interviews it became possible to shed light on the positive side effects of canvassing:

1. An increased presence among constituents is helpful in two ways. It allows candidates and volunteers to develop an in-depth understanding of the issues that are of concern to their potential voters. The longer and the more they do this, the better their connections and networks among their constituents become. It also forces voters to
acknowledge what is, ideally, a genuine attempt to get in touch with them. This way, canvassing can enable voters to develop a closer relationship (or in some cases, any relationship) with the political sphere. While this might not lead to an immediate growth in votes, it is fair to assume that it will improve a candidate's and a party's chances in the future.

(2) Door-to-door canvassing is a very effective vehicle to get long-time party members with strong preconceived notions out of their comfort zone. Most volunteers quickly saw their skepticism disappear after they had started to canvass. They experienced reactions that were more positive than they had anticipated. This almost forced them to readjust their perception of many voters' attitudes towards the Green Party and its ideas. While it is difficult to measure this exactly, the strong interest in participating in future canvassing operations does provide an indicator of how this shift in volunteers' preconceived notions has likely given them more confidence when talking about politics and their ideals with strangers.

(3) It became apparent during interviews as well as through the survey that volunteers perceived canvassing as more enjoyable and motivating than other forms of immediate voter contact. Canvassing was described as exciting and motivating. Receiving positive feedback was certainly one reason for this. It can be safely assumed that if the experimental setup had been replaced by a strategic selection of politically promising precincts, these reactions would have been even more positive. Bernd Lynack, the Social Democratic candidate in the state legislature election in Lower Saxony, even
described door-to-door canvassing as a way to “recharge his batteries in an otherwise exhausting electoral campaign in the middle of wintertime.”

The empirical analysis of the Berlin experiment showed that an increase of 3.5 percent of the Green Party candidate's share of the vote could be attributed to door-to-door canvassing. While an additional 35 votes per 1,000 contacted voters does not sound like a lot, this is in fact a remarkable result. Comparable experiments in the U.S. have shown an increase averaging somewhere between seven and eight percent. However, these are usually experiments conducted with a stronger organizational foundation and an extensive capacity to target voters. Thus, the results support the likelihood that the potential of a more sophisticated door-to-door canvassing operation in Germany could also be higher than 3.5 percent. In addition, the example of Bernd Lynack shows that door-to-door canvassing can easily make the decisive difference in a close race.

4. Door-to-door Canvassing in the U.S.

The tradition of canvassing in the U.S. dates back to the 19th century. It has since been extended and professionalized. In the first half of the 20th century it was heavily used as a tool for voter mobilization, primarily by labor unions. Despite a time period that saw a shift of focus to consultant-based television advertising and direct mail, canvassing reemerged as a crucial campaign tactic in the early 21st century. The number of voters contacted by presidential campaigns prior to election day has risen constantly. In 1992,


75. Green, Gerber, Get out the vote, 24.
25 percent of Americans reported having been contacted. This number grew to 40 percent in 2000 and went up to 50 percent in 2004.\textsuperscript{76}

It is virtually impossible to determine exactly how much money is invested in canvassing efforts. The costs include salaries for field staff, office rent and equipment, direct mail and door hangers, phone calls, and other miscellaneous items. To differentiate these from other costs such as real estate, printing, or salary costs is not feasible.\textsuperscript{77} Still, there are strong indicators suggesting that large amounts of money are being invested in canvassing. Investments in the management and usage of large amounts of data by presidential campaigns have been well-documented, especially the tactics used by the Obama campaign prior to the 2012 presidential elections.\textsuperscript{78} These efforts allow campaigns to fundamentally improve their understanding of who their voters are and how they can reach out to them.

One of the key channels that was widely used in 2012 as well as in prior races is door-to-door canvassing.\textsuperscript{79} The extent to which the successful Obama campaigns of 2008 and 2012 used this tactic testifies to the strategic importance awarded to canvassing in present day U.S. campaigns. “There is simply no evidence that supports the

\textsuperscript{76} Alan Gerber and Donald Green, “Grassroots Mobilization and Voter Turnout in 2004,” \textit{Public Opinion Quarterly} 69, no. 5 (2005), 760.

\textsuperscript{77} Sasha Issenberg, journalist and author of \textit{The Victory Lab}, interview by author, via email, Washington DC, February 11, 2013.

\textsuperscript{78} Issenberg, \textit{The Victory Lab}, 66.

idea of a consistent decline of face-to-face communication in politics in the United States.” In fact, recent research is much more supportive of the assumption that the introduction of new technologies into political campaigns' tool boxes has not replaced canvassing, but revived it as a crucial way to get a message across to voters.

4.1 The rationale for using door-to-door canvassing

The reason why canvassing is used to a large extent is simple: It works. “A good field program can make the difference between one and five percent” is a commonly used rule of thumb in U.S. campaigns, indicating the potential impact canvassing can have on closely contested races in particular. It serves as the single most efficient way to get out the vote and increase voter turnout. In combination with a sophisticated targeting effort it becomes even more effective. “If your program is well-targeted, door-to-door canvassing is the surest way to win votes.” This claim made by two leading researchers is backed up by empirical evidence. Out of 45 experiments that have been conducted on the impact of canvassing since the late 1990s, 36 have shown it to generate votes for the respective campaigns. Based on these experiments the powerful effect of personal communication


81. Ibid., 6.

82. Ibid., 19.

83. Green, Gerber, *Get out the vote*, 43.

84. Ibid., 37.
with voters in U.S. elections is estimated to be an increase in voter turnout of seven to eight percent. As a rule of thumb, Green and Gerber have determined that one additional vote is generated for every fourteen voters that are contacted. These numbers make door-to-door canvassing more effective than phone calls by volunteers, and much more effective than prerecorded phone calls or direct mail pieces. However, it needs to be kept in mind that canvassing, especially when it is done on a personalized basis by volunteers going door to door, is also the most resource-intensive tactic of voter contact. Although research has proven that personalized approaches are more effective than impersonal communication, it has also shown that such personalized efforts are difficult to reproduce on a large scale.

Contemporary political campaigns in the U.S. do not primarily rely on traditional party structures. Instead, most campaigns place their trust in a small number of consultants who, in turn, build a campaign infrastructure from the ground up. This shift in campaign paradigms has been dubbed “from membership to management” and describes the fact that national or state parties no longer serve as the primary hub for candidates to get their message across to their audience. This implies that in the U.S., despite a strong degree of professionalization and large investments in campaign infrastructure, the recruitment of a strong basis of volunteers remains a fundamental challenge to each individual candidate and his or her campaign. As Nielsen puts it: “Both allies and

85. Green, Gerber, Nickerson, *Getting out the youth vote*, 27.


87. Ibid., 36.
volunteers remain clearly behind campaign control. The manpower involved [in a political campaign] is still mobilized for each occasion.”

Door-to-door canvassing is, thus, a key part of most electoral campaigns in the U.S., from the presidential level down to local elections. Due to its organizational requirements, the scale on which it is used differs greatly between nationwide campaigns with thousands of volunteers and municipal campaigns in which an individual candidate goes door to door. However, the reason for canvassing remains the same. Using a high-impact form of voter contact to convince voters to cast their ballot for a particular candidate on election day.

4.2 Goals of door-to-door canvassing

Nielsen describes three instrumental purposes for canvassing in the U.S.: “(1) to persuade swing voters, (2) to motivate base voters to turn out, and (3) to gather more information about the electorate for further contacts.” These purposes amount to the single and simple goal of maximizing voter turnout. In most cases, a campaign will use canvassing primarily to mobilize base voters. This is reflected in the service-oriented approach that most U.S. canvassing efforts resemble. Conversations with voters tend to be brief and almost never revolve around actual issues. Instead, canvassers are asked to merely deliver information on the election and the candidate. The claim is also supported by studies

88. Ibid., 61.

89. Ibid., 10.

90. Ibid., 72.
that have compared the degree to which canvassing increases turnout with the extent to which it persuades voters to change their opinions. While slight shifts in opinions may occur, Arcenaux finds that “‘[canvassing can] have strong effects on voting preferences, but these tactics appear to have only weak effects on the actual beliefs that subjects hold with respect to candidates and the degree to which those beliefs affect their preferences.’”

4.3 The function of door-to-door canvassing – how does it work and why?

A large body of research has focused on the question of why door-to-door canvassing has a stronger impact on voting behavior than other forms of communicating with the electorate. From an intuitive perspective the answer is simple. The best way to gain a citizen's vote is to walk up to him and have a conversation with him about the issues that are important to him. It is equally intuitive that most voters react at least respectfully to a real person (as opposed to a prerecorded phone call, a letter in the mail, or an impersonal email), taking the time to come to their door and talk to them. Yet it remains paramount to develop a more thorough understanding of why exactly this is so effective.

To answer this question, research has focused on the tone of different messages and the ethnicity of volunteers as well as their appearance and accent. The most important aspect seems to remain the effect of human interaction on preconceived notions: By using people instead of technology as a medium for political communication, a campaign strips voters of the opportunity to resort to stereotypes or forms of abstract understanding of the political sphere. Being confronted with real people, unpaid

91. Kevin Arcenaux, I'm asking for your support, 1.
volunteers no less, forces those contacted to challenge these preconceived notions within themselves. As empirical evidence shows, this will often lead to voters reconsidering previous decisions. There is little proof that canvassing causes people to re-assess their deeply held convictions. People who have never voted for one party likely will not suddenly start doing so. But canvassing enables them to engage with the polity, which increases the chance of them turning out to vote.  

Door-to-door canvassing gives candidates as well as volunteers a unique opportunity to show voters that their personal convictions and values might not entirely contradict the values of said candidate or party. A letter in the mail or a poster in the street cannot achieve this because they lack the immediate effect of the combination of verbal and non-verbal communication that door-to-door canvassing inevitably provides. Any type of mass-mediated and computer-mediated communications shares this shortcoming. The only other form of political communication that has as a similar degree of live interaction are phone calls conducted by volunteers. But they too lack the aforementioned combination of verbal and non-verbal communication.

There are several ways through which canvassers in the U.S. have succeeded in convincing voters to show up on election day. The simplest is to remind them that election day is coming up, explain to them how they can register to vote, and tell them where they can find their polling station. However, this approach has limitations. It appears to be more promising to present the process of voting as a social event, thereby “making voters feel wanted at the polls.” This is a form of engaging directly with voters, and it can be achieved by stressing the importance of the election or

92. Ibid., 43.
explaining how closely-contested the particular race is. In addition, developing a voter's level of motivation by reaching out to him a second time after he has first been canvassed has shown to increase voting probabilities significantly.⁹⁴

Due to the increasing investments made in paid media and the seemingly ever-present advertising of political campaigns, door-to-door canvassing is seen by some as one of the few remaining ways to get a message through to voters. This is known as “over-saturation,” and the 2012 presidential election was a telling example of this trend. A vast number of outside groups crowded the airwaves with partisan advertisements, leading to an omnipresence of political messaging in highly-contested states. This is not a new phenomenon and has been discussed before.⁹⁵ However, the 2012 presidential elections saw a shattering record of one million television advertisements aired between January and election day.⁹⁶ With these numbers in mind, it is not difficult to imagine campaigns relying on people to get their messages across to voters instead of television, radio, or the internet.

Voter reactions tend to be even more positive if the message is merely one of encouragement to vote in general, and not a partisan attempt.⁹⁷ Canvassing can also

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⁹３. Green, Gerber, Get out the vote, 137.

⁹４. Ibid., 138.


⁹７. Michelson, Bedolla, Mobilizing Inclusion, 86.
have an additional effect on interaction between the political sphere and voters in a democracy: “Door-to-door canvassing, because it includes these additional [non-verbal] cues, may in fact be doing important political work by building social capital above and beyond voter turnout.”98 What was described by canvassers in Berlin as “presence” could also be referred to as social capital. It explains the positive reactions even seldom voters showed to being canvassed. And while a non-partisan message probably will not lead to an immediate increase in turnout for one party, it may well strengthen this party's position in a specific community over time.

4.4 Canvassing in U.S. electoral campaigns – a step by step outline

The following pages lay out the detailed steps of a plan required to organize and successfully execute a door-to-door canvassing campaign in the U.S. While there are obvious differences in terms of scale, budget, and manpower between nationwide campaigns and local races, these key aspects can be regarded as the indispensable skeletal structure of every door-to-door canvassing operation.

4.4.1 Targeting – the legwork done prior to knocking on doors

In order to mount a successful canvassing operation, most of the work is done long before the actual campaign begins. The first step in this process is the attempt to create knowledge about who supporters and likely supporters are. This is described as targeting. In its most simple form targeting means the data-based differentiation of voters who should be contacted from those that should not. There are vastly different levels of how

98. Ibid., 127.
detailed targeting can be. In a local election it can well suffice for a campaign to merely have a broad understanding of where a candidate's or a party's most avid supporters are located. In a larger race such as a statewide election, campaigns will resort to more expansive and expensive ways of developing a targeting capacity. Voter files are publicly available information in most states, but most campaigns will also purchase voter lists to improve their understanding of the electorate.\textsuperscript{99} Purchasing lists allows for detailed intelligence on who the voters to be targeted are and, most significantly, whether the voter voted and in which election or elections. Ideally, these lists also contain contact information for these individuals. This will later become the staple for reaching out to voters during door-to-door canvassing.

Large nationwide races are funded with significantly bigger amounts of money and thus enable campaigns to invest more heavily in their targeting capacities. Both the Democratic Party as well as the Republicans have successfully worked on the creation of national voter files. These files are long-term projects and consist of vast amounts of data. The information that is included goes far beyond voters' names, voting history, and their contact information. Comparable to corporate advertising efforts, the Republicans' "Voter Vault" and the Democrats' "Voter Activation Network" contain information on individuals' reading habits, food preferences, travel plans, and hundreds of other pieces of information. Information like this is either publicly available through government sources or can be legally purchased. This new level of targeting is known as micro-targeting and was first successfully used on the presidential level by George W. Green, Gerber, \textit{Get out the vote}, 28.
Bush's 2004 presidential campaign.\textsuperscript{100} It has since evolved, and the Democratic side in particular has made great strides towards integrating behavioral science and mathematical analytics into their attempts to contact voters. Instead of gathering information about every single voter, some experts have begun to rely “statistical algorithms based on known information about a small set of voters.” This allows them to extrapolate and develop not merely targeting capacities, but also predictive abilities about certain types of voters. In short, they have become able to predict the chance of an individual supporting their candidate without ever contacting this person.\textsuperscript{101}

It should be noted that such sophisticated technology is by no means the norm in U.S. campaigns yet. Many campaigns still operate with voter lists that allow them simply to distinguish their likely supporters from the likely voters of the opposition. Regardless of the technological, organizational, and financial capacities behind the effort, it remains important to understand this fundamental purpose of targeting: Finding out who will support the campaign, who will support the opposition, and who may be undecided and possibly won over.

\textbf{4.4.2 Recruiting canvassers}

Unlike German parties, U.S. campaigns cannot rely on a robust, continuous membership infrastructure. To have the ability to canvass significant partitions of their targeted population, they inevitably need to recruit a large number of individuals willing to canvass for them. These people can either be unpaid volunteers or paid canvassers. It is

\textsuperscript{100} Issenberg, \textit{The Victory Lab}, 131.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 248.
not unusual for larger campaigns in the U.S. to recruit a mixed group. Some campaigns, especially those of long-time incumbents, will have developed a group of devoted, experienced supporters that they can rely on, as well as allied organizations supporting their cause. This is not a given for candidates running for the first time, and these will often rely on young people, interest groups, or civic organizations for recruiting the manpower necessary to conduct door-to-door canvassing. This can, however, lead to loss of control over the campaign's message and strategic impetus, and is therefore not seen as an ideal solution.¹⁰²

What is more, there is solid evidence proving that volunteers who are committed to the party or the candidate yield better results in mobilizing voters than paid canvassers do. This is why U.S. campaigns on all levels will try to recruit as many volunteers as possible to canvass for them and start the recruitment process long before election day. Every opportunity to get contact information from potential supporters is used to build a list of supporters that will eventually become the foundation of the canvassing body. Examples of such opportunities are public events with the candidate, rallies to develop awareness for an issue, or online advertising through social media or email. The importance of a serious long-term effort to establish an organically grown list of supporters cannot be understated. This applies to the smallest race for a local office as well as to presidential campaigns. Oftentimes campaigns will begin to develop their supporter list one year out to ensure that by the final weeks of the race they have the capacities to meet their numeric canvassing goals.

¹⁰² Green, Gerber, *Get out the vote*, 31.
While a large share of supporters in recent nationwide as well as down-ballot races have used the Internet to get in touch with a campaign, much of the eventual volunteer work still takes place offline. David Plouffe, campaign manager of Barack Obama's successful bid for the Presidency in 2008, was quoted saying: “The truth is [that] most of the people who signed up online ended up phone banking and canvassing.” Social media is, of course, used intensely to convey the campaign's message to targeted audiences. The transformation of support gathered online to volunteer work like door-to-door canvassing or phone banking remains one of the tremendous challenges for every campaign.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the canvassing operation every campaign needs to develop concrete benchmark goals ahead of sending its volunteers into the field. This is done to ensure that the campaign keeps an overview over its progress on a daily basis. If goals are not met, this allows for shifting resources and readjusting operations early on. At first, a campaign usually sets numeric goals for the voting population that needs to be canvassed. This is done based on the information gathered about the targeted population as well as general rules for canvassing based on empiric research. For instance, the work done by Green, Gerber, and others has shown that in order to gain one additional vote, a campaign normally needs to successfully contact fourteen voters. Another finding is that, on average, one volunteer will have three


104. Green, Gerber, Get out the vote, 37.
successful contacts per hour.\textsuperscript{105} Due to sophisticated targeting, approximately 30 percent of attempts lead to voter contact.\textsuperscript{106} While these are extrapolated numbers, they allow for calculations to plan out the entire canvassing operation.

A simple example puts this into more concrete terms. A congressional district that is populated by 500,000 citizens sees an average turnout of 50 percent in congressional races. If there is no credible third party challenger, around 130,000 votes are required to clinch a winning majority. If a candidate is polling at 40 percent three months prior to election day, he will thus need to add 30,000 votes to his column. Using the aforementioned empirical averages, this would amount to a total of 360,000 attempted contacts required to carry his or her campaign to victory. If one volunteer can make three successful contacts per hour, it will take 120,000 hours of volunteer work to accomplish this very ambitious goal. Assuming that most of the canvassing will take place within the final four weeks of the campaign, it is estimated that on average, one volunteer can put in 50 hours of canvassing during that time. This would bring the number of volunteers required for this campaign to 2,400.\textsuperscript{107}

This may not seem like a large number compared to the 700,000 volunteers who committed to canvass for Barack Obama's reelection campaign in 2012.\textsuperscript{108} But many

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105] Nielsen, \textit{Ground Wars}, 9.
\item[106] Ibid., 68.
\item[107] These are merely simplified numbers to exemplify a benchmark calculation. They are not based on actual congressional races.
\end{footnotes}
smaller campaigns with less popular candidates cannot rely on such large armies of supporters. That is why, ultimately, almost no campaign recruits enough volunteers to fulfill such ambitious goals. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign is one of the few exceptions to this rule due to its rare combination of an unpopular incumbent, a charismatic candidate, and unique blend of political communication and pop culture. A much more common situation is a shortage of volunteers and time and, with that, the necessity to make strategic decisions on how to put these limited resources to most effective use. There are too many variables involved in the calculation above for it to remain unchanged as the campaign unfolds. Still, to avoid inefficient use of precious resources, it illustrates the requirement for any campaign to develop benchmark goals that are as close to the eventual outcome as possible.

4.4.3 Scheduling

Using the benchmarks that have been developed, a campaign needs to break down these numbers into a schedule that can then be filled with shifts for individual volunteers. This is a highly demanding managerial task. It does not simply entail amassing the required number of individuals willing to canvass, although that is a challenging undertaking in itself. To succeed, schedulers need to assign each volunteer to a shift and keep track of “covered turf;” that is to say, the areas that have been canvassed. This is a cumbersome and taxing process. That is why campaigns usually rely on a field director overseeing such efforts and employ a number of staffers managing the details of the GOTV effort.

Building on the information that was gathered through targeting, the first step is to break down this group of targeted voters along regional lines. A common unit
are precincts, which can then be broken down into smaller areas or even single streets or apartment buildings. It is estimated that a volunteer will knock on circa 40 doors per hour. The time frame between 5 PM and 7:30 PM is generally considered the best time for door-to-door canvassing. A rule of thumb for these smaller units would look as follows: A pair of volunteers will knock on 80 doors in one hour. If they sign up for a 2.5 hour shift, they will knock on 200 doors. 200 households would be a manageable size for one walking list. One precinct will be broken down into several walking lists, depending on its size.

The largest challenge schedulers face is to find enough volunteers to fill all their shifts. Most campaigns have enough targeting capacities to assure that their volunteers will almost solely encounter voters sympathetic to their cause. Still, most volunteers are, at first, not very comfortable with the task of talking to strangers. They interpret canvassing as telling someone to behave a certain way (that is to say, to vote for their candidate). This carries the implication that the voter's previous behavior was wrong in the eyes of the canvasser, adding to the feeling of discomfort. To counter this fear, most campaigns develop their schedules so that experienced canvassers (who do not share this inhibition) are paired up with volunteers who signed up recently. That way new volunteers can profit from the experience of others and motivation can be kept higher than when volunteers are allowed to pair up with their peers only.

109. Green, Gerber, Get out the vote, 31.
110. Michelson, Bedolla, Mobilizing Inclusion, 133.
111. Ibid., 132.
Another way to ensure that enough volunteers can be recruited is by beginning canvassing early, prior to the actual get-out-the-vote operations. That way relationships with the volunteer base can be developed in time to allow freshmen canvassers to become experienced assets to the campaign. It also will provide the campaign with a better understanding of how well adjusted its benchmark goals are and enable it to make changes to it. Canvassing at an early stage of an election can also be branded as a democratic service that merely encourages people to take part in the upcoming election, as a voter registration drive for instance. It does not need to be partisan by design. Research has shown that such non-partisan messages are received even better than partisan canvassing. “That a stranger has taken the time to come to a voter's door and deliver a personal invitation to join the polity – simply to vote, not to support any particular candidate, party, or ballot initiative – has a powerful effect […]”  

Finally, a promising way to tackle the problem of potentially low numbers of canvassers is to conduct training. This will be described in the following section.

4.4.4 Training

Training seminars allow canvassers to become comfortable with the idea of knocking on a stranger's door and getting them to have a brief conversation. This is the primary goal of any training held by U.S. campaigns on door-to-door canvassing. However, it also allows the campaign to instill its desired message into voters by providing them with a type of generalized pitch they are supposed to present to voters. This can be a promising attempt to ensure message coherence. But there is also solid evidence showing that

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112. Ibid., 86.
results improve if canvassers deviate from a script composed by the campaign and deliver a personal pitch instead: “[...] an informational style of communicating with potential voters works best. Scripts are necessary to provide guidance and confidence for inexperienced personnel, but the goal is not to create an army of automatons mindlessly parroting the same words.”

Training seminars can be a very helpful device to keep volunteers from making crucial mistakes and enabling them to feel more confident. Oftentimes a brief training session will be held just prior to the actual canvass. In these instances a campaign staffer will explain to canvassers the purpose of their work. Usually canvassers will be instructed on the message that is to be delivered as well as to the area they will be targeting. This is frequently reinforced through lists providing the same information. Such last-minute training sessions will also cover the organizational aspect of canvassing, provide canvassers with walk sheets of the area they will be canvassing, maps, an emergency phone number, and information on where to meet up after their shift. Well-organized campaigns will also stress the importance of gathering data on the voters being canvassed.

If training sessions are held separately from the actual canvassing, they almost always include opportunities for volunteers to actually practice their pitch to voters. Usually this is done under the supervision of experienced canvassers who will provide advice. In addition, canvassers will also be confronted with challenging reactions from voters, such as very negative responses or extremely talkative individuals trying to

113. Green, Gerber, Get out the vote, 33.
get them engaged in a lengthy conversation. This enables them to better deal with unusual situations in the field and will lead to more efficient operations.

4.5 Developing the required infrastructure

In addition to targeting and volunteer management (recruitment and scheduling), the third key aspect that is part of the preparation of a successful canvassing operation is the organizational infrastructure that is needed to avoid inefficiencies and mismanagement. The following pieces make up this infrastructure:

- **Maps:** A simple and yet crucial tool for canvassers are maps of the area they are supposed to canvass. Depending on the campaign’s budget, these can either be printed on paper or distributed online and accessed via smartphones or tablets. In both cases it is essential that the mapping material enables canvassers to clearly locate targeted households. If canvassers can be contacted via email, the campaign can also provide them with the information ahead of time and allow them to become familiar with the territory before they begin to canvass.

- **Walk sheets:** Every volunteer needs to receive a detailed list of the voters they are supposed to contact. Such lists are called walk sheets and ideally contain enough information about each voter to allow volunteers to personalize their pitch. Another function is to enable volunteers to record information they receive from voters. This includes their voting intention as well as whether they ask for additional information, help with registering to vote, or transportation to the polls on election day. All this information will be processed by the campaign and allow it to address these individual needs.
• **Scripts:** As briefly mentioned before, volunteers should receive a script that reminds them of what to ask of voters. While informal, personalized presentations are preferred, canvassers tend to often forget to go beyond their own pitch and gather additional information that might be of importance to the campaign. That is why scripts are needed to ensure that volunteers attempt to obtain the needed information and do not alienate potential voters.\(^{114}\)

• **Volunteer Management:** Door-to-door canvassing can be a tedious, oftentimes exhausting, and frustrating form of volunteer work. Most campaigns are aware of this and stress the need for a strong volunteer management that ensures that their supporters do not abandon them and remain committed to the cause. The most important aspect of this is constant communication with volunteers. By becoming volunteers, these people have already shown that they support the party, the candidate, or the cause. But they also need to receive information on the current status of the campaign, on the impact of their work, and on what lies ahead for them. By providing them with exclusive information and material, they will feel appreciated and included and will be motivated to continue their volunteer work.

A key aspect of any endeavor involving a large number of people are group dynamics. These may be positive as well as negative. When volunteers are faced with many negative reactions from voters because the campaign is in a difficult electoral situation or a candidate has received negative coverage in the press, it is absolutely essential for the campaign to counter these negative sentiments by addressing them head on. This is best achieved by giving

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\(^{114}\) Nielsen, *Ground Wars*, 72.
volunteers the opportunity to gather ahead of a canvass, especially right after they have spent a shift knocking on doors so that they will have the chance to share experiences, deal with negative reactions, and share positive, motivating stories. Ideally, the candidate will participate as often as possible. Such events boost morale among volunteers and will help tackle potentially discouraging dynamics in the group. That is why they need to be part of a well-organized canvassing effort.

- **Security**: Since volunteers will often walk around areas they are unfamiliar with, they will normally canvass in teams of two for security reasons. Having received mapping material will allow them to find their way around the area they are covering. Campaigns also provide their volunteers with a cell phone number they can call in case of an emergency. In addition they will hand out campaign paraphernalia that allows volunteers to identify themselves as official canvassers. Such material can be anything from a sticker or a button to a t-shirt, as long as it makes it obvious to voters that volunteers are visiting them on behalf of a political campaign.115

### 4.6 Execution

Due to the fact that many U.S. campaigns operate with a mixture of volunteers and paid canvassers to meet their targeted contact goals, a number of difficulties may arise once the actual canvassing operation is being executed. Paid canvassers are often supervised to make sure they cannot make false claims. Contact reports can be faked, and when

115. Green, Gerber, *Get out the vote*, 32.
canvassers are being paid for the number of voters they have contacted, this threat looms large. Thus, most campaigns choose to pay hourly wages if they need to rely on paid workers. Still, campaigns cannot be sure that canvassers have, in fact, reached out to the targeted voters. One simple way to tackle fraud is to have canvassers carry yard signs with them and let them ask voters to put up the signs in their yards. This allows the campaign to check if canvassers are actually in compliance with their assigned work. However this is a resource and time-intensive control mechanism and is only used on occasion. Most campaigns try to rely on volunteers for the most part and place their trust in these people.

A lot of people interested in volunteering for a campaign will reach out via the Internet. Once they have signed up to canvass, they will also receive reminders via email to assure that they actually attend their designated shift (not all ever do, but this is done to lower the dropout rate). Reminders are brief and only include the key information of when and where canvassers are meeting. Locations are usually field offices the campaign has set up in the respective area. Ahead of each canvassing shift canvassers should receive a short briefing that reiterates the most important rules they need to follow and underlines the purpose of their task. They also receive the material they need to identify themselves as canvassers, communicate with voters, and record the information they gather.

The actual door-to-door canvassing is done in teams of two. Depending on the area that is covered, canvassers can either go down separate sides of one street or walk adjacent hallways if they canvass in urban apartment buildings. Canvassers are

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116. Ibid., 33.
asked to keep their pitches to voters brief and service-oriented. They are encouraged to
develop a personalized approach, but are told to refrain from engaging lengthy
conversations or discussions of particular issues. In an ideal setting they will consider
their task a civil service and exude a positive attitude. If they are probed by voters about
their candidate or their campaign, they are asked to restrict themselves to their personal
motives for supporting the campaign. If specific questions arise, they are to encourage
voters to contact headquarters to receive more information. This is important because it
makes it easier for canvassers to keep conversations brief, which increases their
efficiency. But it also relieves them from the (falsely perceived) notion that they need to
be knowledgeable about every issue voters might be asking them about. Canvassers need
to understand that, although they are representing the campaign, they are not responsible
for each decision a candidate or a party has made. Providing voters with information and
sharing their own motives if asked is all they need to do.

Once canvassers return to the field office it falls upon staffers to
immediately debrief them. This includes thanking them in person for their support and
asking about problems they encountered. Most importantly, staffers will collect the data
canvassers have recorded and feed it into the campaign's voter file to keep it up to date.
Volunteers will receive either a phone call or an email thanking them again for their help
and encouraging them to continue their efforts by signing up for more volunteer work.

4.7 Feedback and Relationship Management

In order to keep volunteers committed and willing to work for the campaign they need to
feel wanted and have to be convinced that their efforts matter. This cannot work if their
experience in the field does not affect the way the campaign operates. Feedback from volunteers is an important resource that campaigns use to readjust their efforts and fine tune their canvassing operation. To ensure it is properly collected and dealt with, feedback channels need to be established before the actual operations are carried out. One way U.S. campaigns commonly do this is by simply bringing canvassers together at the end of their shift and collecting their feedback, very much comparable to the setting of a focus group.¹¹⁷ This approach has the advantage of tapping into immediate impressions. Second, it assures that feedback is, in fact, provided, since usually only few volunteers will refuse to participate.

Another way of collecting feedback is to ask canvassers about their experience via email. When the campaign sends out thank-you notes through email it will often include a question about what canvassers thought of their task and if they see a way to improve operations. Feedback via email allows canvassers to reflect on their experience for a day or two, but it also means a significant decrease in received information, since only a small portion of volunteers will take the time to type up their experiences.

By evaluating this information and delivering it to the staff overseeing the field effort, campaigns create a feedback loop that empowers their volunteers. “Canvassers who felt heard also felt important and felt that their experiences mattered, which helped to maintain their commitment to the mobilization effort and to the organization itself. As a result, they tended to be more effective at mobilizing voters.”¹¹⁸


¹¹⁸. Ibid., 139.
In addition, feedback loops enable campaigns to detect even small inefficiencies that threaten their goals. “If they listened to canvassers regarding what parts of the script were most effective, what neighborhoods or groups of voters seemed more responsive to mobilization, and what aspects of the logistics worked best, they were better able to target their resources in ways that were likely to have the greatest impact.”

Creating an atmosphere of mutual accountability is beneficial for the campaign as well as for its volunteers. Although it does take a significant amount of effort, it is seen by many U.S. campaigns as a worthwhile effort to improve their door-to-door canvassing operations.

5. Adaptions and improvements found in U.S. Campaigns

The point of an advanced canvassing strategy for German campaigns is not to merely copy the tactics of their U.S. counterparts. It is clear that there are stark differences between get-out-the-vote campaigns in the two countries. The more general distinctions are embedded in the different political systems and differences in the legal framework that dictates how elections are conducted and how campaigns are waged. This chapter is therefore not concerned with duplication but with adaptation. Based on the findings of the Berlin canvassing project and the analysis of standard procedures in U.S. canvassing campaigns, the purpose of this chapter is to examine how successful elements of U.S. canvassing can be adapted to a German campaign.

119. Ibid.
5.1 Key differences: Targeting, financial resources, manpower

Some differences between U.S. and German campaigns are subject to strategic changes decided upon by each campaign. Three of these appear most crucial: (1) targeting capacities, (2) financial resources, and (3) manpower. All of these are pillars of successful canvassing operations in the U.S. and, while the latter two are almost always scarce resources, the degree to which they are available in the U.S. is strikingly different than in Germany.

Targeting is handled differently in the U.S. since the size as well as the heterogeneity of the country make it much more challenging to develop a meaningful targeting capacity. A much less rigid legal framework has enabled commercial vendors and political campaigns to purchase and use data in ways that would be unthinkable in Germany. Data privacy is an issue that is held in considerably higher regard by German civic culture, and it can be found on the agendas of many political parties and individual candidates. German parties will not, in the foreseeable future, be able to build a capacity allowing them to target small sections of the electorate. The amount of data and the level of sophistication that some national campaigns in the U.S. have amassed will remain unparalleled. Still, the need for a certain level of targeting is understood by some professionals within German political parties, and some improvements can possibly be achieved even within the existing legal framework.

The empirical approach to campaigns (i.e., using data instead of subjective assumptions) is becoming more relevant in the U.S. This development, while far from being predominant, is gaining influence and will likely also influence future campaigns in Germany as Germans adopt a greater degree of professionalization of political campaigns. In addition, future campaigns will not have to canvass along the lines of randomized assignment of precincts as in the case of the Berlin project. They will be able to focus on more promising parts of their constituency, boosting their effectiveness even without obtaining sophisticated data.

The second crucial difference is the funding available for a canvassing operation. Due to the different integration of political parties in the electoral system in the U.S. and in Germany, it is difficult to compare campaign financing directly. German parties can rely on a steady flow of public funding to sustain their operations regardless of whether it is an election year or not. However, in absolute terms the financial resources available to German parties and campaigns are dwarfed by the expenditures of presidential and even some senatorial campaigns in the U.S. This disparity carries over to canvassing. Although no exact figures are available for the detailed expenditures of presidential campaigns, there is plenty of evidence that indicates the importance of door-to-door canvassing in the strategy of U.S. campaigns.

If the Green Party were to incorporate canvassing in its strategy, specifically in urban settings, it could gain a lot of ground with relatively small investments. As multiple authors have noted, door-to-door canvassing is not particularly expensive in terms of money; it simply requires a strong organization and enough
manpower to mount an operation large enough to achieve the desired outcome. The party's decentralized infrastructure could also prove beneficial. If local chapters can be won over to engage in door-to-door canvassing, some will likely be able to cover a significant part of the costs for executing the operations. This will not translate into a nationwide effort to reach out to large segments of the electorate, but it can certainly spur the building of flagship projects which prove to skeptics that door-to-door canvassing can indeed be a valuable tool for the Green Party in the future.

The German Green Party has approximately 60,000 members nationwide. Only a fraction of this group is, in fact, engaged in campaigns and can be mobilized for campaign activities like canvassing. Thus, amassing a large enough number of canvassers is a considerable challenge. However, the Berlin project indicated that a small number of only twenty volunteers can suffice to reach out to a much larger audience. The interest in new projects like door-to-door canvassing was also particularly high among young people, which leads to the assumption that future canvassing operations could likely rely on a small yet committed group of volunteers to serve as their backbone.

The Green Party's small budget does not allow for large scale investments in paid canvassers, who also tend to be less effective at mobilizing voters, and could easily have negative effects on group dynamics. But the Party could probably recruit and motivate more volunteers to canvass if recruited for flagship projects by charismatic candidates


capable of empowering others to join in, as in the case of Bergenkamp and the volunteers supporting her candidacy through canvassing. In sum, the aspect of manpower appears to be the least problematic of the three for the Green Party to overcome in pursuit of a successful door-to-door canvassing operation.

5.2 Best practices models for adaption

With respect to the details of the process of planning, organizing, and executing a canvassing operation, there are a number of best practices that would likely work for the German Green Party as well as in the U.S. One of the most important first steps is to find ways to increase the number of volunteers available to canvass. Increasing the number of canvassers directly affects the chances of the campaign by significantly increasing the amount of voter contacts that can be realized. But it will also indirectly allow the idea to gain ground over time. Newly recruited volunteers will gather experience, overcome inhibitions, and learn how to conduct a canvassing operation. As revealed by the interviews, the majority of people who participated changed their skeptical opinions on the subject, becoming ardent supporters of the idea.

One caveat unique to Germany will be the need to build the program of volunteer canvassers gradually to avoid a possible conflict with other tactics. That is to say, the party will likely need to allocate its volunteers to a number of different activities in the final stretch of a campaign, and trying to shift volunteers from one place to another could be a challenge. Competing for votes through a canvassing operation as the
campaign nears its climax might not always be the best decision in terms of strategy. To avoid such conflicts, canvassing projects could simply be executed earlier on during an election year. Volunteers could still be trained, but they may need to return to other campaign activities.

The 2011 Berlin project was primarily an experiment. It was not planned the same way regular canvassing operations would have been. Future campaigns could easily spend more time developing realistic benchmarks with respect to voter contact. Using key variables (number of canvassers available, time frame, size of district, desired share of the vote), an overall goal should be calculated as well as milestones, allowing the campaign to check up on its progress along the way. This would also allow for thorough monitoring, enabling the campaign to more easily detect problems as they arise and shift resources if necessary.

To ensure that the available manpower is used most efficiently, scheduling has to be integrated into the canvassing operation as well. Once the campaign knows the number of available canvassers, it can then develop a tool simplifying scheduling by enabling canvassers to communicate their availability via the campaign website. This will provide the advantage of providing the campaign with contact information for all of these canvassers. The campaign can use this information to reach out to the canvassers to remind them of their commitment, ask them to fill in possible vacancies in the canvassing schedule, or encourage them to ask others to join the cause. Key to this is software that

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123. Canvassing projects will mostly take place in districts where the Green Party has a competitive standing and has a better chance of winning the first vote. However, for the overall national outcome, the second vote is still significantly more important to the Green Party. Therefore binding manpower to a single district could easily be considered a threat to the national result and would, in turn, not be welcomed by many.
not only enables volunteers to sign up online, but also feeds the submitted information into a system that allows campaign staff to oversee the completion of the canvassing schedule.

Interviewees from the Berlin canvassing project showed ambivalent reactions to the idea of training ahead of the actual canvass. U.S. campaigns that successfully utilize volunteer canvassers insist on a training program, and it is likely that providing new recruits with at least fundamental knowledge on how to approach voters and what message to deliver can bolster volunteers' confidence. These training sessions do not have to be extensive. It will likely suffice to bring former canvassers in and get them to exchange their experiences with newly signed up volunteers. Training should then provide a quick overview of the campaign's message, describe how to react when engaging voters, and how to collect information from voters. Role playing that enables volunteers to actually practice canvassing could also be added to the schedule, although the point of this exercise is contested among U.S. campaigns.124

Pairing new recruits with experienced canvassers and allowing them to gain first hand knowledge in the field can be even more effective. Integrating digital tools can also help speed up the training process. By distributing training videos that demonstrate the challenges of door-to-door canvassing among volunteers, the campaign could train its volunteers for little cost ahead of the actual canvass. It could also provide canvassers with continuous updates on the overall progress of the canvassing campaign to directly show them the impact of their work. It could serve as platform to collect best

practices and suggestions to improve the pitch canvassers use to approach voters, and boost motivation by introducing competition among volunteers.

The infrastructure canvassers need to orient themselves in the field has to be supplied by the campaign. German campaigns will not be able to develop walk sheets comparable to what their U.S. counterparts can provide their canvassers. But they can certainly assign each canvasser very specific areas and break down precincts into separate streets and large apartment buildings. Combining these tools with maps of the district the campaign can significantly decrease the risk of canvassers getting lost or canvassing the wrong area. Another way to quickly improve canvassers' knowledge of their designated area is to conduct brief “walk-throughs” via Google Street View. This can either be done by canvassers individually or by staffers who show the area to canvassers when they meet up at campaign headquarters prior to their canvass.125

A key aspect of canvassing operations that is not directly connected with the immediate mobilization of voters is the collection of data about voters and their reactions to the process itself. Similar to the information that was gathered by canvassers in the Berlin project, volunteers for U.S. campaigns are asked to record basic information that included:

- The number of doors they knocked on during each shift
- The number of people they reached; and,
- The number of successful interactions that ensued.

125. This idea was, in fact, mentioned by T. Holzer in his interview and should be integrated in future canvassing campaigns.
This data allows the campaign to test its goals and benchmark numbers and adjust them when required. Canvassers can also record every voter's reaction:

- Are they planning on voting, and if so, whom are they supporting?
- What issues are most important to them?
- How do they perceive the Green Party?

Such data is helpful in two ways: It provides the campaign with an extrapolated understanding of the strength of the campaign at that moment; and, it can also serve as empirical evidence to examine the campaign's strategic decisions post-election day. Collecting all this information makes door-to-door canvassing less effective at first, but it significantly elevates the possibilities to re-adjust and improve a campaign's canvassing efforts in the long run.

The final aspect that appears to be of importance for an advanced canvassing strategy is the way volunteers are managed, how their feedback is integrated into the operations, and how motivation can be kept high throughout the hardships of a door-to-door canvassing campaign. Creating robust feedback loops like regular post-canvassing meetings or best practice platforms online is an important part of a successful canvassing campaign, as research has shown that integrating feedback leads to more effective canvassers.126

A simple way of gathering feedback while at the same time allowing canvassers to develop an *esprit de corps* is to make follow-up meetings at the end of each day a regular part of the canvassing effort. This is an easily organized forum for

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canvassers to supply the campaign with positive as well as negative observations that can then be worked on by staffers to ensure an improved experience in the future. Providing volunteers with food and beverages does not only show them appreciation as an easy way to keep morale up, but it can also help to foster group dynamics and create the positive atmosphere required for an *esprit de corps* to flourish.\(^\text{127}\) Many U.S. campaigns also schedule the candidate for a "stop-by" to greet and thank the canvassers as another way to maintain their enthusiasm.

The following chapter will draw upon these insights and provide an outline for an applicable plan for the German Green Party to carry out an advanced door-to-door canvassing operation.

### 6. Advanced Strategy

The research conducted in this thesis has shown that while the circumstances in U.S. and German campaigns are different in many ways, door-to-door canvassing can indeed boost voter turnout in German elections as well. While there are caveats, there are also plenty of opportunities for German parties to not just increase their share of the vote by talking to citizens at their doorsteps, but also motivate their base and bolster the standing of the party among voters. This chapter lays out a step-by-step plan for an advanced door-to-door canvassing operation to be conducted by the German Green Party in a future election.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 140.
This plan is to be used in flagship projects in a small number of districts in Germany. By showing that canvassing can help the Green Party win over new voters and gain additional seats, canvassing can be seen as a promising tactic that should be adapted on a broad scale. The data used to flesh out this plan is based on actual information provided by the Green Party. Thus, the plan becomes a realistic and applicable blueprint for a canvassing campaign that is created in the spirit of applied politics.

6.1 Fundamentals

**Goal:** The goal to be accomplished by this canvassing operation is to increase turnout for the Green Party in one particular district, allowing the Party's candidate to win the district. This is to be realized through canvassing carried out by the candidate as well as by a group of volunteers.

**Location:** The first question that needs to be answered is which district should be chosen for this flagship project. The experiment conducted in Berlin proved that door-to-door canvassing primarily increases the support for an individual candidate, not necessarily for the party. The project should hence focus on carrying a candidate to victory, not on increasing the Green Party's share of the vote. Only one victorious candidate is needed for the flagship project to be considered a success. To increase the chances of a victory the project should take place in a district that has proven to be promising turf for the Green Party in the past. Thanks to data indicating the electoral potential of the Green Party, this question can be answered easily. Based on this information a short list of possible districts can be assembled:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>First vote in 2009</th>
<th>Second vote in 2009</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin-Schoeneberg (#82)</td>
<td>44506 (25.74%)</td>
<td>36630 (21.56%)</td>
<td>49.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiburg (#281)</td>
<td>33878 (21.80%)</td>
<td>35536 (22.83%)</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich West (#221)</td>
<td>24967 (14.6%)</td>
<td>33340 (19.34%)</td>
<td>44.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen I (#55)</td>
<td>31564 (17.00%)</td>
<td>32556 (17.49%)</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuttgart I (#258)</td>
<td>42116 (29.90%)</td>
<td>31076 (22.00%)</td>
<td>40.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The election officials of the states of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bayern, Berlin, and Bremen; the German Green Party

Based only on this data it would seem logical to pick the district with the highest potential (district 82). However, other aspects that need to be taken into account are the institutional strength of the party in the district, the influence of the candidate, and his or her appeal to voters.

The candidate: As seen by the examples of Bergenkamp and Gollasch, a candidate committed to the idea of a labor-intensive, often stressful canvassing operation is indispensable. A person who is willing to spend hour after hour knocking on doors is a great source of motivation for volunteers to make the same commitment. An ideal candidate will have a genuine interest in people, as described by Alinsky. The reactions shown by voters in Berlin also hinted that name recognition can allow candidates to

receive voters' respect and thus make it easier for the candidate to win over voters. In short, a famous face opens doors.

Taking these aspects into account district number 258 (Stuttgart I) is a promising target. Cem Oezdemir, the Green Party's co-chairman, is running in this district for the second time after a close race in 2009. He has strong name-recognition and broad party support in his home state, Baden-Wuerttemberg. In addition, Baden-Wuerttemberg has been governed by a coalition led by the Green Party since 2011, which means that its governor Kretschmann would be very supportive. The Green Party also won the 2012 mayoral election in Stuttgart, when now-mayor Fritz Kuhn defeated a conservative challenger. This institutional support in combination with Oezdemir's national name recognition can serve as a strong foundation for a successful canvassing operation.

6.2 Preparation

A door-to-door canvassing campaign is like an iceberg. The majority of the work that goes into a succeeding campaign will take place ahead of the actual execution of it and most of it will not be detected by the public, much like the larger part of an iceberg remaining underwater.

The first thing to be decided upon is a detailed and realistic schedule. Such a schedule has to include every task that needs to be completed before the canvassing campaign is executed. A common rule of thumb for canvassing as a GOTV effort is that everything needs to be in place 30 days prior to election day.\textsuperscript{130} Since manpower and


\textsuperscript{130} Faucheux, \textit{Winning Elections}, 624.
resources will likely not permit meeting benchmarks within a few days before election day (as is often done in U.S. campaigns), this deadline should be extended to 45 days.

Knowing the district: The first step is to obtain as much data on the district as possible. This becomes the base level of knowledge and is needed for every forthcoming decision regarding canvassing in district 258:

- The number of people eligible to vote: 184,454
- Number of votes cast: 143,652 in 2005, 140,977 in 2009
- Turnout in last elections: 81.0% in 2005, 77.3% in 2009
- The number of votes for the Green Party candidates in past elections: 14,870 (2005); 42,116 (2009)
- The number of precincts: 11\(^{131}\)
- The number of votes needed to likely win the district: 50,000\(^{132}\)
- The number of party members in the district: 940 members in the city, 200 of which are active and likely engaged in campaign work\(^{133}\)
- The votes for the Green Party broken down to the precinct-level:

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132. This number is an estimate based on average turnout and average share of the vote of the winners of the 2005 and 2009 national elections in the district.

133. These numbers were provided by the Green Party chapter in Stuttgart via email on February 28, 2013. Appendix Eight.
These numbers indicate the Green Party's strong standing in inner-city precincts (Mitte, West, Sued, and Nord). A comparison between the Green Party's 2005 and 2009 results can only be undertaken to a very limited extent. In 2005, the party's candidate was a rather unknown government employee by the name of Peter-Stefan Siller. Oezdemir decided to run in 2009, and although he had just become party chairman in 2008, he had already been a member of the Bundestag from 1994 until 2002 and a member of the European Parliament from 2004 until 2009. In addition, the Green Party was struggling to gain traction nationally in the 2005 elections, suffering from poor public support after seven years in power. The circumstances of the 2009 campaign were more favorable to

the party and hence the candidate. Yet with respect to the Green Party's potential support, it remains remarkable that the number of votes nearly tripled in some precincts from 2005 until 2009.

Targeting: This is the crucial next step in developing a detailed understanding of the district. Going beyond anecdotal information, targeting means the data-based differentiation of voters who should be contacted from those that should not be. Because campaigns cannot legally target individual voters in Germany, this will primarily mean the analysis of precinct-level voting behavior. On the assumption that door-to-door canvassing should focus on likely voters sympathizing with the party and its values, the operation would concentrate its efforts on the precincts with the highest turnout rates in past elections. In the case of Stuttgart these are the center precincts Mitte, West, Sued and Nord, which make up 56% of the 2009 share of the vote for the Green Party's candidate. This map of the distribution of the first vote support in the 2005 elections is a helpful visualization of this process:
Data Management: There are two sets of data that the campaign needs to focus on. The first is its member base. All party members are listed with the Green Party on the national level and the local chapters will also have a list of their members with contact information attached to it, primarily postal addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. However, these are often outdated and do not include additional information like the issues individual members care about. Improving this set of data by keeping it up to date and adding information is one task that needs to be completed prior to the

canvassing campaign. As in U.S. campaigns, this is the critical first step to solidify the base.

The second set of data is concerned with all voters in the district. Beyond subjective experience there is little information about voters. This complicates outreach and makes it much harder for the campaign to target its efforts. Canvassing can gradually fill this void. If canvassers succeed in asking voters about their top concerns and can get interested individuals to submit contact information, then the Green Party will eventually be able to better understand its voters and can improve its targeting efforts and messages in future campaigns. Asking voters about their preferences can also serve as a real-time focus group to test the campaign's message. The most important point is to look at data management not as a short-term tool, but as a long-term foundation for data-driven campaigns. Obtained data should therefore be stored, updated, and passed on to assure that efforts are not lost.

**Benchmarks:** Setting benchmarks prior to the execution of the canvassing campaign means declaring the campaigns goals in clear numbers. These goals are based on the overall number of votes cast in past elections, the Green Party's share of these votes, and the resources available to the campaign for canvassing. Following is an example of what this calculation could look like in the 2013 national elections.

The average number of votes cast in the district in 2005 and 2009 was 142,324. In 2009, Cem Özdemir received 42,116 of these votes. His main opponent obtained 48,518 votes, which implies that by adding 8,000 votes to his tally, Özdemir would likely win the district. The question then becomes how much canvassing will be needed to get to 50,000 votes. A rule of thumb that U.S. campaigns rely on says that
around 30% of knocks result in actual voter contact. In the Berlin project, this number was significantly lower at a mere 14.4%. However, this was likely due to the experimental character of the campaign, and it seems reasonable to assume a slightly less conservative estimate of 20%. This means that if a canvasser can knock on 200 doors during one shift they will procure 40 contacts on average. Using another established rule of thumb – one additional vote through fourteen successful contacts – will result in 5.6 additional votes collected per shift. Considering that 8,000 additional votes will be needed to win the district, 1,430 shifts will have to be filled. This seems like a very large number, but if these shifts are stretched out over a period of five weeks, they can be carried out by only 60 volunteers (120 if they canvass in teams of two). Summing up these benchmarks the following goals are key to the campaign's success:

- Recruit at least 60, ideally 120, committed canvassers. Considering that most volunteers will not be available every day, both numbers should be higher and account for possible turnover.
- Have volunteers canvass over the course of five weeks in shifts of two hours. If manpower allows for it, volunteers should campaign in teams of two.
- Ask them to knock on 200 doors per shift. Results need to always be documented.
- Set milestones: If 60 canvassers knock on 200 doors per shift, they will reach out to 60,000 households per week. This is a large number, and it should be broken down to the respective precincts. Based on the precincts' voter potential,
canvassers should focus on the most promising targets at first and gradually move towards the less promising precincts as the campaign continues.

- Applaud successes, listen and absorb challenges, seek the opinions of all, and, if possible, make the candidate available to thank everyone.

Resources: Door-to-door canvassing is significantly less expensive than other campaign tactics.\textsuperscript{136} The difference between canvassing and classical forms of voter outreach through advertising becomes much more stark when a campaign relies entirely on volunteers and thus carries no additional costs beyond its core staffers. There are obvious costs related to canvassing. Staffers need to be paid and the infrastructure they develop has to be covered as well. This includes database management, development and management of an online-platform serving as the campaign's scheduling tool, and production of walk sheets, maps, and campaign paraphernalia.\textsuperscript{137}

Recruiting: As of February 2013, the Green Party chapter in Stuttgart had 940 members. According to the local chapter itself, around 200 of these people are active in campaigns and are generally willing to volunteer for the party.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, the necessary manpower exists, but volunteers need to be won over first. It will be important for the

\textsuperscript{136} Green Gerber, \textit{Get out the vote}, 42.

\textsuperscript{137} The detailed costs will be quantified upon application of this campaign plan. It can, however, be safely assumed that the costs of such a canvassing campaign will not exceed the financial capacities of chapters of the Green Party in larger cities. These chapters tend to have more members and larger numbers of representatives in local parliaments. These members usually donate most of their salaries to the party. These donations together with member fees make for a modest but steady financial basis.

\textsuperscript{138} This number was provided by the Green Party chapter in Stuttgart via email on February 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2013. Appendix Eight.
project to reach out to these members early on and get them engaged. They should not simply be presented with the ready-made idea of a new tactic they are supposed to use from now on. Rather, it will fall upon organizers to get party members to see the advantages of canvassing compared to other ideas. This can be achieved, for instance, by asking party members about negative experiences they had handing out leaflets. The key is to not force the idea upon them, but to guide them towards it. This way they will be more engaged right from the start and much more committed to the project's ultimate success.

Once party members are interested, they should be asked to sign up for training and provide organizers with their contact information. This can be kept brief, usually an email address and a cell phone number suffice to facilitate communication between volunteers and the campaign. Volunteers who are willing to go a step further should be asked to become precinct captains responsible for organizing the canvass in their area and keeping others involved. Since each of the eleven precincts in question already has a board of directors, these captains could be recruited from the boards. However, if there are other individuals eager to take on responsibility, that should be encouraged by organizers.

**Scheduling:** The canvassing schedule should be set for the final five weeks before election day. The Berlin project has shown that canvassing on weeknights is more promising than on weekends. Unless benchmarks cannot be met, the campaign should avoid canvassing on Saturdays since many voters are not home over the weekend. In an ideal scenario 60 volunteers will have to be assigned a canvassing shift over the course of 25 days. Each targeted district will be assigned a number of shifts depending on its
potential. The most promising areas will be canvassed first. To ensure that each volunteer knows where and when they are supposed to canvass, they will be able to sign up for shifts through the organizing platform on the campaign's website.

**Training:** Training will be made available for volunteers ahead of canvassing. The prime goal of training is to minimize inhibitions and fears volunteers may have and to allow them to become familiar with the approach, the message, and potential obstacles. Sessions can be conducted on weekends or directly prior to canvassing, preferably the latter each day. Ideally, experienced canvassers can be recruited to help. These people could either be volunteers involved in the Berlin project or individuals with experience in U.S. canvassing campaigns. The key to successful training will be to not look at it as a hierarchical project. Rather, training should be seen as an opportunity to develop a bond among participants as a group with a common mission. By sharing experiences and expectations, the group should try to foster an *esprit de corps* that can boost its morale over the course of the campaign.

**Production of paraphernalia:** Prior to the actual canvass, the campaign needs to produce and print maps, walk sheets, and data collection sheets. If feasible, these things can also be digitized. In addition, shirts or buttons should be produced and handed out to canvassers. They should explicitly be asked to wear them.

### 6.3 Execution

**The schedule:** Election day is September 22\(^{nd}\) 2013. To achieve the set benchmarks canvassing should begin Monday, August 19\(^{th}\). All training sessions should be concluded
prior to this date. In order to minimize misunderstandings, a trial canvass could even be held in the week before kick-off of the actual canvassing campaign.

Getting volunteers together: Canvassers should meet with the entire team once at the beginning of every week for a briefing. The purpose of such briefings is to discuss weekly goals, distribute material (walk sheets, maps, data collection sheets), and get volunteers motivated for the task that lies ahead of them. Ideally, the candidate will be present and give a brief pep-talk to spur motivation. In each precinct canvassers ought to be rallied by the respective precinct captains before and after each shift. That way they can be informed about specifics regarding the scheduled area and provide the campaign with feedback on how the canvassing is being received.

The canvass: Based on their training and the assigned shifts, volunteers will canvass for two hours every night between 5 and 7. This is the most promising time to reach voters. For safety reasons volunteers should not canvass after dark. If a voter does not answer the door, volunteers should leave a short note. This can be a postcard produced by the campaign presenting information about the election and the candidate. It should also contain a personalized feature that shows voters that a canvasser did in fact try to speak to them in person.

The candidate: The candidate should be involved in canvassing as often as his schedule permits. Research as well as the experience of the Berlin project shows that the presence of a candidate makes canvassing a much more powerful tool. As Ron Faucheux, a former state representative who canvassed himself when he ran for the first time, says: “Nothing beats candidate canvassing.”

139. Faucheux, “Candidate Canvassing”, 52.
Monitoring progress: Especially during the first two weeks of the operation, it is paramount that the campaign monitors its progress as precisely as possible. If significant deviations from the original goals are detected, then there will still be time to re-adjust the plan and shift resources. Information about how much progress is being made is also helpful because it can be passed along to volunteers to keep them motivated. This can be visualized through interactive material that is shared with volunteers through the campaign's website or via email. Such material can be videos or pictures from the field, reports from volunteers or simply visualized data.

Use of collected data: The information collected by canvassers needs to be processed by organizers immediately. This includes insights on which precincts are most receptive to the canvass. If required, the campaign can then shift resources away from a precinct that does not seem to be home to many likely voters and increase its efforts in other, more promising areas. Canvassers should also ask voters about what issues are most important to them. This information can be used to adjust the candidate's message as the campaign unfolds.

6.4 Final stretch

Sticking to the plan: As election day draws closer, people involved in campaigns tend to get more and more nervous. Events beyond their control like polls, media coverage, or candidate gaffes can contribute to a feeling of anxiety and lead to reactions fueled by panic instead of sound strategy. It falls upon organizers to keep everyone involved focused on the goals that were set in the beginning. Positive developments are, of course, easier to deal with, but discouraging polling data or incoherent messaging can be very
troubling. It helps to constantly remind volunteers of what their goal is and how they can reach it. This message is best delivered by the candidate himself. If he can credibly convey his faith in volunteers, they are more likely to respond in kind and remain focused.

**Shifts in messaging:** In the first few weeks the canvassers' pitch should be on the informative side, advertising briefly for the candidate. However, in the final days of the campaign this tone will switch to a decisive push to ask people to actually go out and vote. This pitch should still remain brief, concise, and informative, but it should take into account the proximity of election day.

**Candidate involvement:** Especially in the final days the candidate should be out in the field on a daily basis. Despite other involvements, the candidate's two hours of canvassing every day will certainly be rewarded not just by voters, but probably also by media coverage. If a candidate asks a voter to cast her vote for him, this will certainly be more powerful than if a volunteer does so.

### 6.5 Post-Election day assessment

The key question in assessing the canvassing operation appears to be whether or not the candidate won. This will certainly be the prime criterion in the eyes of the public, most members of the party, and especially volunteers. However, there are other aspects that should be taken into account when deciding whether door-to-door canvassing was a success or not.

It is important to look at the benchmarks that were set. If they were not met, research needs to determine why this was not the case. Regarding the prospect of
future canvassing operations, it is of fundamental importance to understand whether goals were simply unrealistic or whether assumptions regarding the impact of canvassing were wrong.

The data collected by canvassers will also have to be thoroughly assessed, regardless of the outcome of the election. Even if the candidate won, and even if this victory were to be credited to the use of door-to-door canvassing, there would still be plenty of room for improvement for future campaigns.

A key factor in the long term success of canvassing is the management of relationships with volunteers. The campaign should never stop communicating with its volunteers after election day. A volunteer who participated in a losing campaign who is still involved in communication even after their campaign is over will certainly be more motivated to come back for another campaign than a volunteer who saw her candidate win but did not hear from that candidate after election day. That is why the campaign needs to make sure that it engages with volunteers permanently, not just when an election is coming up. If these aspects are taken into account, there is a solid chance of door-to-door canvassing becoming a powerful asset in the German Green Party's electoral campaign tool set.

7. Conclusion

Electoral campaigns in the U.S. and Germany work differently in many ways. Yet there are similarities that allow for adaptation of tried-and-tested tactics. Door-to-door canvassing is among the most widely used, tested, and proven tactics in the U.S. As the
Berlin experiment showed, it can also be implemented successfully in German campaigns. Contrary to popular assumptions, German voters showed mainly positive reactions to canvassing. This is of significance considering the lack of targeting capacities German campaigns are forced to operate with. One finding based upon the research of this thesis is that the Green Party needs to focus its canvassing efforts on precincts with a record of strong support in order to mobilize even more votes in future canvassing efforts.

Not only does canvassing help to collect votes, it also serves as powerful way of getting party members involved and engaged in direct communication with voters and their respective communities. This is especially important for the Green Party, because its members tend to have a siege mentality that sometimes keeps them from being comfortable with approaching voters. The research shows that, despite a strong sense of skepticism towards the concept of canvassing, every Green Party member who participated in the experiment had a predominantly positive experience. All participants indicated that they were willing to canvass again in the future. This is a crucial shift in perception because it leads to more confident volunteers that will eventually create much stronger campaigns.

Just like in the U.S., canvassing works best when done by candidates themselves. The presence of a prominent figure simplifies outreach to voters and increases the chance of successful interaction. This should be taken into account when developing a canvassing strategy, and flagship projects trying to prove the feasibility and efficacy of canvassing in Germany should only be carried out if the candidates involved are committed to both the ideas of having volunteers canvass and doing so themselves.
One problem that needs to be mentioned is the number of volunteers that can be mobilized for canvassing. The Berlin project was carried out by a small group of volunteers and it remains to be seen if enough party members can be convinced to commit to the stressful work that is involved in a door-to-door canvassing operation. Without a large enough number of volunteers, canvassing can certainly miss the scale of voter contact required to sway a closely-contested election in favor of the Green Party. But, even here, using and tracking the success of those who do volunteer should prove beneficial towards supporting and enlarging future efforts.

Another problem that remains to be solved is the lack of sophisticated targeting capacities. Strict legal limitations inhibit the development of a more detailed understanding of the electorate. This significantly undermines the effectiveness of any canvassing operation and jeopardizes the motivation of volunteers who are sent to knock on doors of people unwilling to ever support the Green Party. Yet, such information can be applied successfully to the creation of a realistic, advanced canvassing plan. This plan can be used to carry out canvassing in future campaigns of the German Green Party and can thus serve as a blueprint for future testing of the findings collected in this thesis.

There are many questions related to canvassing that deserve additional research. Future work will need to solidify the empirical basis of the field, which in German political science remains thin at best. This includes focusing on the specific messages that are delivered by canvassers, the technological organization of the canvass and the comparison of canvassing and other forms of direct voter contact. Canvassing in rural areas is another aspect that has not yet been looked at. The results of this thesis,
however, should encourage all those who are trying to develop a better and more empirically sound understanding of campaign tactics and voter contact.
Appendices

- Appendix One: Core data from the 2011 canvassing project in Berlin
- Appendix Two: Presentation by Sebastian Reinkunz at a Green Party convention on the results of the 2011 canvassing project
- Appendix Three: Results and key findings of interviews conducted with participants of the 2011 canvassing project
- Appendix Four: Results of the supporting online survey
- Appendix Five: Interview with Bernd Lynack, Member of the State Legislature of the State of Lower Saxony
- Appendix Six: List of do's and don'ts handed out to canvassers in Berlin
- Appendix Seven: Flyer handed out by A. Bergenkamp, Green Party candidate in Berlin
- Appendix Eight: Email correspondence with Philipp Franke, board member of the Green Party chapter of Stuttgart on party infrastructure
Appendix One: Core data from the 2011 canvassing project in Berlin

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Appendix Two: Presentation by Sebastian Reinkunz at a Green Party convention on the results of the 2011 canvassing project
QUELLEN / LITERATUR.

- Video von Anna BESKOVA (2012)
- Donald P. COHEN & Ari C. CODNER (2008), "How to Get Out the Vote: How to increase Voter Turnout in Washington D.C.

CANVASSING WIRKT.

- Zahlreiche experimentelle Studien in USA zur Mobilisierung: Mittlerer Effekt um 7 Prozentpunkte
- Waidkirch '09-Studie: Im Mittel 7 Prozentpunkte gestiegene Mobilisierung von Wählerinnen
- Abgeordnetenwahlkampf in Berlin: Signifikanter Einbrünneneffekt der Kandidaten-Kampagnen (aber schwierig zu quantifizieren)

TURNOUT EFFECTS.

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Appendix Three: Results & Key Findings from Interviews with participants of canvassing project in Berlin 2011

This is a summary of the findings collected by Torben Hennigs during his interviews conducted in pursuit of his master thesis research. The interviews were conducted in German and were not transcribed. However, they were recorded and notes were taken. The following pages are based on this documentation and will serve as one pillar of the empirical foundation of the master thesis.

Disclaimer:

The interviews were conducted between December 17th and December 20th of 2012 and between January 2nd and January 4th of 2013 in Berlin. All interview partners were in some way involved in the 2011 state elections in Berlin and were either party officials, candidates themselves or party members who worked as canvassers. They participated voluntarily and did not receive any compensation in return.

Setup of the 2011 canvassing experiment:

The experiment focused on three electoral districts in the state assembly election of Berlin in 2011. Each of these districts consisted of around 30 precincts. The three districts were split in half with a randomized selection. One half of the precincts in each district received the “standard treatment” (meaning established campaign efforts like putting up posters and handing out leaflets). While the other half also saw these established efforts, voters in this half were also exposed to canvassing efforts by the respective Green Party
candidates and their volunteers. Even though manpower and time did not allow the
participants to cover the entirety of the selected precincts in each district, data indicated a
significant increase in the Green Party share of the first vote, raising the Green Party
share by 3.5 percent compared to the previous state assembly election.

Summary:
There are a number of findings that came up a number of times that are deemed essential
for the development of an improved canvassing plan for future campaigns:

- **Voters do not hate you, and they do not hate politicians:** Most interview partners
  had negative expectations of voters' reactions to them showing up at their
doorteps. Most people were certain canvassing would not work. They were afraid
to not get through to voters or even get yelled at. However, most voters showed a
neutral or positive reaction and were impressed by the efforts made by volunteers
and candidates alike. Greens ran their heels off, and they gained votes. This may
sound simple, but if this lesson gets through to more people within the party,
campaigns will likely become much more successful.

- **The candidate factor:** Voters were impressed by the presence of a candidate at
  their doorstep. This was an observation that the majority of interview partners
  made, and it correlates directly with the electoral outcome where a significant
  increase in the candidate vote was seen. If canvassing only helps to get a
candidate across the finish line but does not increase overall support for a party,
this brings up the question how canvassing efforts should be used by the Green Party in terms of strategy.

- **Presence:** Since the project was done in a mainly low-income district, it is not representative of the disconnect between citizens and politics. Yet, it was staggering to document the surprised reactions that people showed when someone involved in politics actually came to their door. Canvassing alone won't bridge this divide, but it hints at the opportunity of strengthening the Green Party's electoral footing in the long run by getting more involved in local communities.

- **Inhibition threshold:** On the side of the volunteers, there was an omnipresent skepticism that people felt when they were introduced to canvassing. Apparently this feeling of inhibition was stronger the older a volunteer was. Some canvassers indicated that they were able to surpass the threshold quickly, others took longer. It will be important to develop a better understanding of how to accelerate this process.

- **Getting Greens out of their comfort zone:** As indicated by a number of canvassers as well by party leadership, many Green Party members are not strong communicators. They tend to be condescending or introverted. They either want to explain everything to a voter, or they have a rigid worldview that assumes a vague type of “default hostility” towards Green ideas on the part of many voters. Canvassing has shown to be a helpful tool in trying to shake up this mixture of idealism and introversion. It forces volunteers to challenge themselves as well as
voters. A canvassing plan ought to focus on how to keep this process going, while carefully ensuring that we do not ask too much from our volunteers.

- **Making the sale:** It was telling to hear that even the canvassers who had done extensive reading on the topic still had a lot of trouble finding the right pitch in the beginning. They did what most Green Party members do in campaigns and talked about issues – without being asked. It was not until they realized that they were not getting through to people at all that they switched to a brief, informative, twenty second version. This very first moment is the key window of opportunity to leave a positive impression on a voter and it can be improved by providing guidelines for newly recruited canvassers.

- **Learning by doing – and keeping veterans on board:** The lack of targeting requires spontaneity in the approach of voters. Getting a feeling for how to make the right pitch to the right person takes time. Not taking a negative reaction personally can be learned. These are all findings that indicate the importance of cultivating a canvassing culture among the party base and making sure that those who have already canvassed are documented for future campaigns. They are crucial as multipliers and teachers for inexperienced canvassers.

**Participants:**

- Alessa Bergekamp
- Daniel Gollasch
- Tilmann Holzer
Alessa Bergekamp:

Bergenkamp was the first person that was interviewed. She was asked a lot of general questions about the project at first. I had already collected this information from the data, but she confirmed that the experiment had shown a 7.9% increase in the share of the first vote in her district. According to Bergenkamp, the team consisted of a total of 15 – 20 people, which was later confirmed by other interview partners. These people were party members but also friends of hers who supported her candidacy and wanted to help her out.

Bergenkamp was the Green Party candidate for the state assembly in the Wedding/Gesundbrunnen district. She did a lot of canvassing herself, but she was usually accompanied by at least one volunteer, if not two. They did not merely look at canvassing as a GOTV tool, they were trying to increase their presence in the district. This was their reasoning to begin canvassing early on, more than two months prior to election day (September 18, 2011), in early July. Usually, they went in teams of two people between 5 PM and 8 PM. They went out on weeknights only, only occasionally did they canvass on the weekend. Early on, they experimented with this time frame but quickly came to
realize that earlier attempts as well as knocking on someone's door later than 8 PM was not met with a lot of success. Either people were not home (still at work), or they had already taken their children to bed etc. In any event, the 5 – 8 PM time frame proved to be the most promising one.

When Bergenkamp was first introduced to the idea of canvassing in her precinct, she was not thrilled. She knew that the Green Party had not been strong in past elections here, and she felt that many voters would not be happy about politicians knocking on their doors and harassing them. Yet she quickly found herself enjoying the direct contact with voters, especially because reactions were more positive than anticipated. Although Bergenkamp and her team kept conversations very brief (hardly ever did they spend more than one minute at one door), “many times local issues came up in the interaction, people were interested in my take on a particular problem that concerned their neighborhood.” Over the course of about nine weeks, Bergenkamp and her team knocked on approximately 10,000 doors in her precinct. She noted that a lot of people recognized her from posters and signs the party had placed in the district. That made it much easier to get through to people, she told me. She also felt that a significant number of voters were very surprised to see a politician coming to their doorstep, and they showed a positive attitude towards her because of this. “They appreciated the effort of us coming to them, and informing them about the elections. They definitely did not expect that.”

Other findings were a strong learning-by-doing effect, competition among volunteers, and a strong resistance against the project among party elites, especially those
who had been with the party for more than ten years. These inhibitions mostly dissipated when these party members actually participated.

Since there is almost no publicly available voter information, targeting can only be done on a very broad scale. In this particular experiment, targeting was deliberately ignored in order to get enable the proper measurement of the influence of canvassing on voter turnout. That is why canvassers had almost no idea who they were talking to until a door was opened. This meant that they had to adapt their sales pitch within a split-second, and Bergenkamp described this as a difficult challenge that became easier as they went along. “We got an idea of how to speak to them: What tone to use, what issue to promote – or no issue at all. We definitely became better at that towards the end.” There was also competition among volunteers as they tried to out-compete each other. Whenever it was possible, the team met up after each shift to share their experiences and prepare for the next day. This seemed to help establish a group dynamic, helped individuals to deal with disappointment and allowed them to re-energize their motivation.

**Daniel Gollasch (29 years old):**

Gollasch was another candidate in one of the three Wedding districts. Unlike Bergenkamp or Silke Gebel, Gollasch did most of his canvassing by himself. He was directly approached by the staffers of the national party organizing the experiment and said that he was intrigued by the new approach to campaigning. Like the others, he was a bit nervous talking to strangers at their doorsteps at first, but said that “after about ten doors or so, I started getting excited about the idea.” The main reason for this, Gollasch
said, was the respect people demonstrated towards him for making the effort of coming to them in person. His precinct was in a low-income area which usually do not make for Green Party strongholds. According to Gollasch, even voters who indicated that they were not intending to vote Green considered supporting him: “One person said to me: I have never voted for the Green Party, but I will support you because I feel that you really want it.”

Gollasch stressed multiple times that his experience was much better when he canvassed by himself as opposed to being accompanied by volunteers. Although he admitted to having some security concerns he was convinced that his role as a candidate helped him to approach voters and show them his dedication. People recognized him from posters, and they felt special when “a politician” came to them in person to inform them about the upcoming election. “When volunteers came in my stead, the reactions were not always that positive.” Apparently voters did not feel the same respect or awe when they were ‘merely’ met by volunteers. That is not to say that voters did not have positive reactions to volunteers, they just were much more eager to interact with a candidate they actually recognized.

Gollasch attended a meeting to prepare him for canvassing. Role plays were conducted to simulate specific situations, like extremely negative reactions or ongoing conversations. He and his supporters were given a list of do's and dont's. Overall, he canvassed for eight weeks, predominantly on weeknights from 5 PM to 8 PM. He tried canvassing on the weekends a few times, but especially when the weather was good (most of the canvassing took place in August and early September) few people were actually home.
During this time frame, he knocked on 3,646 doors and got a response rate of 34%. Over time he and his team witnessed a very clear gender bias. When at least one woman (or two women, or a man and a woman) knocked on a door, voters were much more likely to open their door than when they saw an all male group of canvassers.

His pitch was usually a very short, informative introduction. It almost never lasted for more than a minute, instead it was closer to a thirty second presentation. With obvious alterations depending on the people he encountered, it went something like this: “Hello, my name is Daniel Gollasch, I am your candidate for the State House of Representatives. Elections will be held on September 18th, and I just wanted to stop by to inform you about this. Also, here is some additional information.” At this point he would hand the voter a leaflet. If the person had questions, Gollasch would answer them to the best of his knowledge, but he tried to avoid lengthy conversations. He also made it an effort to keep his language on a straight-forward, simple level. This appears to have helped him get his message across especially in a district that is home to many low-income voters.

Gollasch’s presence in his district was seen as highly unusual by voters. According to him this was due to two reasons: First, most citizens in this area did not have a close relationship (or any relationship) to politics and politicians. They are dissociated from the world of politics and the people involved in it. In addition to that the Green Party is primarily perceived as a party for highly-educated, well-off people concerned with issues such as environmental protection, quality of life, or public transportation. They are sometimes dubbed the “party of academics” which, while not completely accurate, describes the perception among many voters pretty well. This
combination explains the extent to which voters in the Wedding district were surprised to see a candidate like Daniel Gollasch making the rounds and talking to them at their doorsteps. As one citizen said: “Really, I think you should win this. Nobody has ever been as present around here as you have been.” The key word in this quote seems to be “present.” It was mentioned many times in a number of interviews. In a district that does not see a lot of political activism “being present” seems to be an easy way to improve one’s electoral position. Another voter was quoted saying, “I've never voted for the Green Party before, but I will vote for you – because I can tell that you really want this.”

Gollasch is planning on joining future canvassing projects with the Green Party. He is convinced that canvassing is more useful than traditional methods of GOTV in German electoral campaigns.

**Tilmann Holzer & Dorina Kunzweiler (early 30s):**

The Holzers were among the pioneers of the canvassing project in the Wedding district. Wanting to support their local candidate (Alessa Bergenkamp), they started volunteering for the Green Party in their district. They helped out in a number of different ways, and it was not until a few months into the campaign that canvassing became part of their work. Bergenkamp was not expected to win her district, so they were open to trying out new ways of campaigning and having fun in the process.

Holzer started reading up on US-canvassing literature and eventually pitched the idea to Bergenkamp. They were then approached by operatives from the Green Party's national headquarters who joined the project and turned it into a field trial. The empirical approach made it more difficult for Holzer and the others to get the project off the ground because they had to get all volunteers on board with respect to
randomizing the precincts, documenting their results & providing proper feedback. Still, they enjoyed using this new tool to directly talk to voters and introduce their candidate to them.

The Holzers and their supporters started to canvass in July. In the beginning, they experimented a lot since they had not received any specific training. Just like most Green Party members, they talked too much at first. “We blabbed too much. We tried to inform people about our policy goals, and we could tell that we overwhelmed them and did not get through to them. So we adapted our pitch and made it shorter and more service-oriented.” Instead of trying to talk about a specific issue, they tried to just inform voters about the election and “leave a positive emotional impression”. Just like Daniel Gollasch, they experienced better results when they were accompanied by their candidate, Alessa Bergenkamp. Voters’ reactions were similar to the ones described by Gollasch, indicating that a type of “prominent politician” factor may at least be partially responsible for this. Holzer described the impact of the candidate's presence as “enormous.” However, the Holzers also openly admitted that, especially among male voters, Bergenkamp's appearance as a good-looking woman may have played a part as well.

They usually canvassed in teams of two, with one person doing the talking and one documenting the results on a clipboard. This passive role was an ideal fit for new volunteers who had no experience with canvassing and were skeptical at first. Sometimes they would be joined by a third person and then split up to faster go through one apartment building.
The lack of available information on voters in Germany makes for an almost complete lack of targeting efforts. This means that Bergenkamp and her volunteers had no idea who would answer the door and had to then adapt their pitch very quickly. According to Holzer this was something they became better at rather soon as they started to get a feel for how to approach specific types of people. This is one of many indicators showing that experienced canvassers become extremely valuable over time, which means that it will be important to keep in touch with volunteers from past campaigns and make sure they come back for future activities.

One thing that kept coming up during our conversation was the presence of two emotions: curiosity and fear. Many voters showed a mixture of the two, with one side prevailing. For instance, some people would not open their door until the canvassers had talked to their neighbors. (They could watch this happening through a commonly installed spyhole in apartment doors in Berlin) This emotional mix was one that Holzer and other volunteers encountered time and time again, but they were also able to overcome it if they had gotten the opportunity to talk to people.

With respect to the Green Party members involved in the project, a few rather clear observations were made. According to the Holzers, mostly younger and well-educated party members were willing to participate. The idea of trying something new was appealing to them, and the inhibition threshold for them seemed to be significantly lower.

Older party members on the other hand looked at canvassing very differently. As confirmed in other interviews, they brought with them years of campaign experience and thus preconceived notions. “We have always done it this way, why should we change anything?” was a sentence that was uttered in variations many times. While
they were willing to volunteer and help the Green Party campaign, their inhibition threshold was apparently much higher. “Their world views tend to be very rigid.” With this rigidness comes the notion of most voters having a hostile sentiment towards the Green Party, and that appears to be a reason for a fear of directly approaching these voters. “Many Green Party members are either introverted or too arrogant to directly talk to voters.” This quote by Holzer is a drastic, yet likely fitting description of a crucial problem with respect to the use of canvassing as a key tool in future Green Party campaigns. Green Party members tend to think of themselves as very well informed (they often times are) and thus being “right” (falsely equating being in the right objectively and being in the right politically). This could potentially become a large problem if canvassing were to become a more widely-used tool in future campaigns and it needs to be addressed. Holzer described this as a big problem, saying that “Green Party members generally aren't that good at talking to voters in a way that is adequate for the given situation.” For example, some volunteers apparently stressed the high ratio of party members and elected officials with college degrees among the Green Party. However, they chose to do so in a district that was, as was mentioned, a low-income district where higher education was not necessarily something that a lot of voters looked up to.

Thus the main goal with respect to volunteers according to the Holzers was always to “overcome the inhibition threshold and to find the spark of enthusiasm.” Again, they stressed that this was more difficult to accomplish with older volunteers who were not as eager to communicate with voters. They also mentioned a strong gender bias. “Women are generally received very well, period.” A sad but rather interesting observation was the involvement of volunteers with an immigrant background. “I want to
stress how courageous some of these people were in their involvement. Despite the fact that they often times got very negative reactions and even insults, they never stopped their engagement in the canvassing project.” Both of these observations need to be considered in the future given the composition of the Green Party's electorate (heavy on women, strong among immigrants).

Whenever it was possible, the group met before and after each day of canvassing. Since they lacked official campaign headquarters, the Holzers' apartment became their go-to place for briefings as well as debriefings. They both indicated that especially debriefs were important for volunteers to share their experiences, get over negative reactions and keep motivation on a high level.

When I asked them about their ideas regarding preparation of volunteers, both opted for the coaching of “multipliers”, e.g., experienced volunteers who would take new recruits along with them and provide them with training on the job. They did not think that practice seminars would be overly useful, even though they did say that it would help to give new canvassers suggestions of what to say to voters. That is to say, they should be informed that they aren't supposed to convince voters about Green Party positions on issues, but merely inform about the elections & the candidate.

Since the canvassing project took place in the middle of the summer, physical fitness was definitely a factor. Especially older volunteers were sometimes struggling with the many stairways in the typical Berlin apartment building. Kunzweiler-Holzer stressed that this was a factor they underestimated at first, but ended up hurting their volunteer numbers on warm days especially.
Appearance was also an issue, with Holzer stating that they asked volunteers “not to dress like squatters, but also not to appear overdressed.” They handed out green campaign shirts and asked volunteers to wear them, which worked most of the time. In combination with a blazer this was an adequate combination according to Holzer.

Heike Kaehler (47 years old):
Kaehler is a member of the executive council of the Green Party in the “Mitte” district. In this position she had already gained extensive campaign experience prior to the project in 2011. Kaehler is 47 years old which puts her in the column of (relatively) older party members. When she first heard about the idea of going door to door, she admitted to having been very skeptical. “I did not want to be yelled at like Jehova's witnesses.” Still, she felt committed to helping the party's campaign efforts and was eventually convinced to try canvassing. At first, she was the person documenting reactions and did not actively talk to voters. But fairly soon she realized that most reactions were very different from what she had expected. “We did not get that many negative reactions. A lot of people were neutral, but respectful. And we got more positive responses than I expected. The reactions were generally better than the ones we get when we hand out leaflets.”

She did not receive any training prior to the beginning of her engagement. But she also said that “whether or not a training seminar is helpful or not depends entirely on the personality of the volunteer. I am more of an introvert, and I don't believe that such a training would have given me much of a secure feeling.” She did, however, say that guidelines about how to address voters could be useful for volunteers. “Still, everybody needs to find their own voice.” For her it was more important to have a personal
relationship with the candidate to be able to feel comfortable advocating for that person. “It was extremely motivating to see Alessa (the candidate in Kaehler's precinct) go out and talk to these people. It literally helped us to get a foot in the door.”

Kaehler's way of addressing voters was “rather formal, informative, and short.” Few conversations lasted more than a minute, and oftentimes no conversation developed at all. She did however admit to feeling the urge to correct what she called “false information and wrong opinions”.

Like others, she also stressed the importance of “presence” in local communities, saying that this was something the Green Party needed to improve dramatically compared to other parties.

When asked about negative experiences, Kaehler stated the areas of her precinct that were strongly supportive of the Social Democratic Party (It should be mentioned that these areas were targeted due to the randomizing requirements of the experiment, not because they looked like promising targets). Kaehler suggested that in future canvassing campaigns, these areas ought to be avoided, especially by newly engaged volunteers. They should be sent into areas with stronger support for the Green Party to avoid high drop-out rates due to frustration.

Kaehler did not describe a specific situation that was extremely positive, but she did say that it was always motivating to see how a voter's “world view started to change.” When I probed about this she said that sometimes she expected negative reactions, but instead they were positive. While this explanation does not seem to indicate that a voter actually changed his mind because of the canvassing, it does show the change in perception on the volunteers' part. This is important for reasons mentioned above.
I asked her how she felt about canvassing compared to other ways of approaching voters. She stressed that handing out leaflets on busy downtown streets (which is a very common way of campaigning in Germany) is important because it “shows voters that we are present in their community.” Still, she admitted that canvassing was more motivating than handing out leaflets and confirmed that she would definitely join canvassing efforts in the future.

Despite the fact that she did not attend many debriefing meetings, Kaehler said that she did not find it difficult to put negative reactions behind her. She did not take insults personally and stated that the “learning curve rose pretty quickly” as the project went on. “We did not get a lot of extremely negative feedback, so that was not a big problem for me.”

**Nico Winkler (early 30s):**

When I asked Winkler about his motivation to participate in the project, he used a word that I had not heard in the other interviews: “Duty.” Apparently he saw the duty to help despite the fact that he “felt insecure about the idea of knocking on a stranger's door.” Together with Holzer, he participated in a trial run which allowed him to quickly overcome this feeling of insecurity. When I asked him what he liked about canvassing, he said that “at their doorstep, people are too surprised to react negatively.” He compared canvassing to handing out leaflets and described the handing out as “the campaign equivalent of a lightning rod,” meaning that this way volunteers would mostly be approached by unlikely voters who felt negatively about the Green Party and wanted to “blow off some steam.”
Winkler's standard way of addressing people was a short informative pitch of 20 – 30 seconds. His goal was to “only convey the main info.” This was something that he and other volunteers experimented a lot on and it was entirely based on trial and error. “Preparation or guidelines for this would have been helpful.” There was an order not to start lengthy conversations, but that did not come up all that often anyway. Most people were more interested in national issues than local ones.

Unlike others, Winkler admitted that insults got to him personally, especially when they were very abstract and general. Men were more likely to react negatively than women.

Winkler canvassed in a team of two for eight weeks. Mostly the teams consisted of one experienced volunteer and one new person. Confirming prior statements by other interview partners, the presence of a candidate (Alessa Bergenkamp) made a “strong difference.” “Without Alessa, people's reactions were not quite as positive.”

When I asked him if he would help in a canvassing project in the future, he said that he would, but he also said that his motivation would be higher if he were not bound by the requirements of a study like the one done in 2011. An additional net negative for Winkler was the Green Party candidate for mayor of Berlin, Renate Kuenast, whose campaign had suffered from a number of unforced errors. Following up on this question, Winkler claimed that “right now, we are still sticking out in a positive way by doing this. But if all parties start canvassing on a large scale, reactions will become negative because Germans do not like politicians at their doorstep.”

When I asked him how this fit with his earlier assessment of Alessa Bergenkamp as an asset for canvassers he was not able to resolve the disparity and
merely repeated his claim adding that in 2011, a “surprise effect” helped in receiving such positive reactions.

Winkler also confirmed earlier assessments that the presence of politicians in parochial neighborhoods was something that facilitated positive reactions. “One man said that to him, politicians live in a different world.” The best way to describe this emotional response is probably respect. According to Winkler: “If you can prove to voters that you respect them, they will begin respecting themselves.”

Tilo Fuchs & Marc Urbatsch (ages n/a):

Fuchs and Urbatsch are also members of the executive council of the Green Party in the “Mitte” district. Unlike Kaehler, they did not canvass themselves, but had a function that was more comparable to oversight of the overall campaign in the Berlin-Mitte district.

Fuchs and Urbatsch agreed that many Green Party members have a tendency to be very self-centered when it comes to campaigning. This is why they feel that while the 2011 project was not an astonishing success, it certainly helped to decrease this mentality of reserve and introversion (“Wagenburgmentalitaet”). When Green Party members see themselves as above the fray and more sophisticated than the “average Joe,” they become incapable of finding the right approach to talk directly to people. Fuchs and Urbatsch also both stated that canvassing was more motivating for volunteers than commonly-used leafleting. However, they were cautious when asked about the potential of using canvassing on a broader scale. “It really depends a lot on the candidate. If you don’t have a prominent candidate, forget it.”
Like other interviewees, they stressed the positive effect of a strong presence in the communities exuded by canvassing. They saw it as a vehicle for a more pragmatic and less idealistic approach to campaigning, something they felt was desperately needed within the Green Party in future campaigns. “Many Green Party members have an understanding of campaigning that is idealistic and is out of touch with reality.”

Fuchs also provided me with some information about party structure in the district. There are currently 743 party members in Berlin-Mitte, but only a fraction can be activated for campaign work. He assumed that this number was somewhere around 120, but cautioned that “this heavily depends on the candidate.” He was also the person I asked to send out my online survey to all Green Party members in the district, to which he agreed.
Appendix Four: Results of the online survey

Time period: January 8th of 2013 until February 20th of 2013

Software: Survey Monkey

Sample group: Members of the Green Party chapter in Berlin “Mitte”

Sample size: 743

Number of respondents: 30 (4.04%)  
Number of questions: 23

Question one: How long have you been a member of the Green Party?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of Party Membership (in years)</th>
<th># of party members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question two: How old are you?
**Question three: If a trusted person were to ask you: Why did you join the Green Party?**

*(Multiple answers possible)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I was attracted by the issues the party championed.”</td>
<td>25 (83.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wanted to be engaged in society.”</td>
<td>21 (70.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wanted to fight to solve a local problem.”</td>
<td>7 (23.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Individual leaders motivated me to join.”</td>
<td>2 (6.70 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wanted to run for office.”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other reasons”</td>
<td>3 (10.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question four: Were you involved in the 2009 national campaign?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (46.70 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16 (53.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question five: Follow up question to number four: If not: Why not? (Multiple answers possible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I wasn't a member yet.”</td>
<td>10 (62.50 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had no time.”</td>
<td>6 (37.50 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was not interested.”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was unhappy with the candidates.”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There were no campaign activities in my community.”</td>
<td>1 (6.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wasn't asked.”</td>
<td>3 (18.80 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other reasons.”</td>
<td>3 (18.80 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question six: If you were involved, in what ways did you campaign? (Multiple answers possible)
### Question seven: Are you planning on campaigning in the 2013 national elections?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26 (86.70 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 (13.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question eight: Follow up question to number seven: If not: Why not? (Multiple answers possible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I will not have time.”</td>
<td>4 (100.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am not interested.”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am unhappy with the candidates.”</td>
<td>1 (25.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am unhappy with how the issues are handled.”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have not been asked.”</td>
<td>3 (75.00 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Answer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Street stands”</td>
<td>11 (78.60 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Placing signs / yard signs”</td>
<td>10 (71.40 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Organizing block parties”</td>
<td>5 (35.70 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Organizing private events”</td>
<td>2 (14.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Talking to voters on the phone”</td>
<td>3 (21.40 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Door-to-door canvassing”</td>
<td>2 (14.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other ways”</td>
<td>2 (14.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question nine: People have different opinions on what ways of communicating work best in political campaigns. Some say talking to voters in person is how elections are won, others say mass media and the Internet are key in modern campaigns. Assuming you have to choose one, which of the following statements would you agree with the most?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Personally talking to voters wins elections.”</td>
<td>12 (40.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Modern campaigns are won through the mass media.”</td>
<td>4 (13.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Social media and the internet have to be number one nowadays.”</td>
<td>6 (20.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am not sure.”</td>
<td>7 (23.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other ways.”</td>
<td>1 (3.30 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question ten: Do you have an easy time speaking to voters in person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Strong yes”</td>
<td>11 (36.70 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Leaning yes”</td>
<td>15 (50.00 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question eleven: Follow up question to number ten: If not: Why not? (Multiple answers possible)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I do not like talking to strangers.”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel that most voters do not share my values.”</td>
<td>2 (28.60 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think it is impolite to confront people directly with politics.”</td>
<td>3 (42.90 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I do not want to be yelled at and don't want to justify myself for decisions the Green Party has made in the past.”</td>
<td>5 (71.40 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other reasons.”</td>
<td>2 (28.60 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of respondents** 30

**Question twelve: Follow up question to number ten: If yes, what do you like about it?**

*(Individual answers)*:

- “Being in a personal situation”
- “Getting personal feedback”
“Builds trust and convinces because a personal bond is established”

“Direct contact and personal dialogue”

“Opportunities to explain to people Green ideas. You also get unfiltered feedback and an idea of what is on people's minds”

“Getting to know people and their problems, that I would not be in touch with otherwise”

“You learn a lot from personal contact”

“You can get rid of people's stereotypes and get them excited through your personal engagement”

“It is fun to reach out to people”

“Open, friendly exchange with voters”

“Unfiltered opinions”

“It is interesting and important to listen. That way you get a feel for voters' emotions. Mostly you can then find a point of contact to our issues. If Greens are seen as a party close to the people afterwards, that is very motivating.”

“The chance to ask what is really on people's minds and to engage with them and their concerns”

“The chance to directly respond to questions and to explain to voters our issues in easy ways”

“The voter is seen as a real individual and has the chance to experience politics as something that is not 'above' him or her”

“Human contact, dialogue, and discussion”

“Conversations tell voters that we are interested in what their concerns are. Unfortunately most of us only try to get something across, instead of actually listening to what voters have to say”

“Meeting new people, finding out about their lives and concerns”

“Meeting people with a positive attitude and showing them that 'Green' does not mean
grim and ideological but pragmatic and future-oriented”
“Contact with people”
“To realize how people perceive society and their community”
“Changing topics and conservationists, the chance to respond directly”
“Listening to the other person, learning from them, argue with them and maybe even convince them of something. To live democracy.”
“Searching for possible solutions to voters' problems immediately, getting unfiltered feedback on the party and the candidate”

**Question thirteen: Did you participate in the 2011 canvassing project in Berlin?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12 (40.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18 (60.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question fourteen: Follow up question to number thirteen: If yes: Were you skeptical about the idea when you first heard about it?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (50.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (50.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question fifteen: Follow up question to number fourteen: If yes: In hindsight, do you feel that your skepticism was justified?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9 (100.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question sixteen: If you participated, would you describe your overall experience as positive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (100.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question seventeen: If you participated, would you do it again?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (100.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question eighteen: If you did not participate in the 2011 Berlin canvassing project, could you picture yourself doing so in a future campaign?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13 (68.40 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (31.60 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question nineteen: Follow up question to number eighteen: If not: Why not? (Multiple answers possible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Parties should not talk to voters at their own doorsteps”</td>
<td>3 (60.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t want to get yelled at”</td>
<td>2 (40.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would feel uncomfortable”</td>
<td>2 (40.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not sure”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question twenty: Would you generally be more inclined to do canvassing if you knew that you were mainly reaching out to voters sympathizing with the Green Party?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15 (55.60 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 (44.40 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Total number of respondents**

27

**Question twenty one:** Would you generally be more inclined to do canvassing if you had participated in a training seminar preparing you for the situation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18 (69.20 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (30.80 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of respondents**

27

**Question twenty two:** Would you generally be more inclined to do canvassing if you were canvassing alongside others who had experience doing so?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21 (77.80 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (22.20 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of respondents**

27

**Question twenty three:** Which one of the three previously mentioned factors (talking to sympathetic voters, receiving training, canvassing with experienced volunteers) would be most important to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Mainly contact with sympathetic voters”</td>
<td>1 (4.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>Count (Percentage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Preparing training seminars”</td>
<td>5 (20.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Being accompanied by experienced canvassers”</td>
<td>19 (76.00 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other factors”</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Five: Interview with Bernd Lynack, Member of the State Legislature of Lower Saxony, conducted via email on February 7th, 2013.

**Question 1:** What was your motivation to do door-to-door canvassing? Did you only try to introduce yourself to voters or was canvassing part of a larger strategic approach to mobilize voters?

**Lynack:** I wanted to introduce myself to voters, but I also wanted to be open to their ideas and feedback. I found out a lot of things during these conversations – many of which I will take with me into my new position in the State Legislature.

My main opponent had a large advantage in an eleven year long political career as a representative, which meant that he was very well known in the district. He also had a large presence in the local media. Unfortunately, the Social Democrats do not always receive a lot of attention from the press here. I was at the distinct disadvantage of not being well-known in the district. I have been a member of the Social Democratic Party since 1998, but I've only been a member of the city council of Hildesheim since 2011.

With a few exceptions my canvassing was received very well by voters. It was especially positive because most people did not expect it, although my predecessor, Jutta Ruebke, had done the same. By the way, I mostly canvassed entire blocks. When no one was home, I left a handwritten note: 'Sorry I missed you today. Best greetings, your candidate
Bernd Lynack! Some voters contacted me because of these notes via telephone or email afterwards. I never received any negative feedback to these notes.

**Question 2:** Prior to canvassing: Were you skeptical about voters' reactions to your visit? If you were, do you think in hindsight that these concerns were justified?

**Lynack:** I was not skeptical. In the 2011 local elections I had already gathered some positive experience with canvassing in my precinct Himmelsthuer. Sure, this time I spoke to many more people, but the interactions were the same. Some voters told me right away they would not vote for a Social Democrat. Very few people were actually rude though. Quite the opposite: There were people who introduced themselves as Conservatives but told me they wished their candidate would also do canvassing.

**Question 3:** How many voters did you talk to?

**Lynack:** That is difficult to calculate in hindsight. Looking at the information material I handed out I can estimate that it must have been somewhere between 2,800 and 3,000 people.

**Question 4:** Did you document the number of doors you knocked on and the number of people who actually responded?

**Lynack:** No, there was no documentation. I met most people at their homes. Together with my team of volunteers I thought up a plan ahead of time that guided me to specific
areas at specific times. In the suburbs I often canvassed early in the day, because that is where a lot of elderly voters live as well as families with young children. Hence often at least one person would be home. In regular areas I canvassed between 4pm and 6pm. When it got dark around 6pm I stopped.

**Question 5:** For how long did you canvass?

**Lynack:** I canvassed from early November until two days prior to election day [January 20th]. A week before Christmas and on New Years we did not campaign at all.

**Question 6:** Did you only canvass by yourself or were you supported by volunteers as well?

**Lynack:** Planned canvassing always took place with one volunteer supporting me. These were usually people from the respective precinct who knew the area well and could inform me on particular local issues. That made it much easier to get a conversation going with voters.

Every once in a while I also canvassed by myself, especially in the last few weeks, whenever I had an hour to spare and felt the urge to do something. Due to the overwhelmingly positive experiences I often used canvassing as a way to keep my motivation high in the final stretch of the campaign.
Question 7: When you were accompanied by volunteers: Did you have the feeling that reactions were different when other people were with you or canvassed in your stead?

Lynack: Canvassing or street stands etc. never took place without me. We wanted to grant voters the right to personally get to know their candidate. You can only do that through personal contact. Supporting volunteers made it easier for me to get into a conversation, though.

Question 8: Were reactions to your visits predominantly positive?

Lynack: As I mentioned before, I got very few negative reactions. There was pushback sometimes, but I faced that and listened to what people had to say. That impressed them. I think that they valued that I stayed and listened to their criticism instead of just walking away.

Question 9: Do you think you won the election because you canvassed?

Lynack: Since I won the district by a margin of only 334 votes, I think canvassing contributed decisively to my victory.

Question 10: Do you think that canvassing should be used more often in German campaigns?
Lynack: Absolutely. Many people told me that it made the campaign much more personal for them. Knowing the candidate makes it much easier to reach out to them when people in fact do have an issue they want to see addressed.

I also got a lot out of canvassing. I always told my family and my staff that when my 'batteries' were empty I could recharge them through canvassing and get motivated for a strenuous campaign.
Appendix Six: List of do's and don'ts handed out to canvassers in Berlin, provided by Alessa Bergenkamp

**10 tips for canvassing in Berlin**

1. **How to get into apartments?** Ring the front door bell downstairs and briefly explain that you want to deliver information on the elections. Say “Information, thank you!” or “Information about the elections!” Once you are inside, ring one door bell after another, take a step back and wait for the voter to open their door.

2. **Adapt your body language.** For instance, when you encounter a confident man who looks you straight into the eyes, respond in kind. Speak clearly and firmly in this case. If you are facing a young mother with a child, lower your voice.

3. **The right pitch:** “Hello (hand over flyer), this is …, your candidate for…, this is some information for you. Do you have any questions? Thank you, have a good night!” “We are from the Green Party” does not work well as an opening line!

4. **The core message:** If a conversation ensues, try to always convey the core message: The Greens in Berlin stand for / want … (see: core message).

5. **Fill out your data sheets correctly.** Write down the street name etc. so that other canvassers know where to continue during the next shift. Important: Stick to your precincts in accordance with the map that is being provided. Most important: Always fill out the response column.
6. **Do not waste time!** The more people we reach out to, the larger the effect of canvassing. If people argue with you or insult you, simply say goodbye in a polite way and leave.

7. **Safety:** Do not canvass by yourself, always carry a cellphone. Do not enter people's apartments.

8. **Don't:** Let people provoke you. It is not personal if they don't like the Green Party. Don't keep knocking or ringing the door bell if nobody answers.

9. **Do:** If no one is home, leave a flyer with a little note at the doorstep. Women should always canvass in a team of two. Candidates should always knock themselves.

10. **Mobilization:** Form teams, ask your friends and other party members that you know. Canvassing is by far the most fun and adventurous type of voter contact there is!
Appendix Seven: Flyer handed out by A. Bergenkamp, Green Party candidate in Berlin

Front:

![Flyer Front]

Back:

![Flyer Back]
Hallo Torben,

da derzeit alle Mitarbeiter krank sind, antworte ich kurz selbst.


(940 active party members)

2. Davon sind ca. 200 im Wahlkampf (sehr) aktiv.

(200 of those can easily be mobilized during campaign season)

Dir viel Erfolg für Deine Abschlussarbeit, die ich gerne nach Abgabe lesen würde.

Viele Grüße in die Staaten

Philipp

--

Philipp Franke
Kreisvorsitzender

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, KV Stuttgart
Mobil: 0178-848.1387
Mail: philipp.franke@gruene-stuttgart.de
Web: www.gruene-stuttgart.de
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