

An appeal for a new realism in environmental policy

The Greens will only be needed if they consistently make preserving creation
the starting point of their policies

by Reinhard Loske, Jörg Haas, Sascha Müller-Kraenner,
Ingrid Nestle, Hermann Ott, Boris Palmer and Roland Schaeffer.

Since its beginnings, the modern ecological movement has been accused of a tendency towards alarmism and exaggerating environmental problems. Whether it was Rachel Carson seeing the approach of the “Silent Spring” or the Club of Rome prophesying “The Limits to Growth”, foresters warning of dying forests, biologists of the loss of species, action groups of avalanches of rubbish, water pollution experts of rivers with no life in them or atmosphere researchers of the reduction of the ozone layer, always they were greeted by a chorus singing the same tune: there was no proof, some said; that was the price one had to pay for prosperity, said others. And nearly always there was the assertion that departing from the familiar road would cost money, economic strength and jobs.

Arguably some of the voices heralding environmental catastrophes were at times too shrill. The hands of the clock, after all, cannot always stand at “five minutes to midnight”. The fact is, however, that it has often taken realistic negative forecasts to create the conditions for political action: today ultra-toxic DDT and ozone-killing CFCs are banned, progress has been made on desulphurizing large combustion plants, building purification plants, recycling waste and establishing nature reserves. Certainly many of these measures were and are inadequate, more a case of damage repair and curing symptoms than real prevention, or at least far short of what is needed. Yet much has been achieved environmentally. Above all the highly visible problems associated with short cause-and-effect chains have decreased. These successes would not have been possible without a strong environmental movement, critical research and successful Greens. This should give us confidence in ourselves.

Today, however, we face a paradox: the contours of the really major and potentially catastrophic environmental problems, above all climate change with all its consequences, are becoming clearer all the time. Yet at the same time strategies for more far-reaching ecological structural change, for truly sustainable development, are moving on to the defensive in political terms. Nothing has turned out as badly as was prophesied, “eco-optimists” proclaim to the world, their upbeat words bringing comfort to all those who find ambitious environmental targets irksome. There are those in the political mainstream who claim that in fact much has been done for environmental protection, perhaps even too much, which is why these efforts now have to be scaled back to a “realistic measure” and freed of red tape. Equally it is often claimed that other countries do far less than we do for the environment and that being at the cutting edge is putting us at a very real competitive disadvantage, has even weakened Germany as a business location and therefore needs to be ended.

What is most dangerous for an ambitious policy of ecological structural change is not, it must be said, an open attack on it - this can be countered - but rather the sloppy consensus that has

formed around the definition of sustainable development. “We are all in favour of environmental protection, but it must be properly balanced”. This frequently heard phrase, giving the impression of general agreement, can be a front used to justify the most pernicious political concepts. A glance at the Grand Coalition’s latest policies makes the thrust of this “eco-newspeak” only too clear: environmental legislation must be more effective, it is said, but under federal reform it is knowingly being fragmented and weakened. Farmers, so say government pamphlets, are the custodians of our cultivated landscape, yet the ecological pillar of agricultural policy is being deliberately demolished. Climate protection, it is proclaimed, is a priority area for the government, yet emissions trading, one of the most important instruments in this area, is in fact being configured as a support programme for the construction of new coal-fired power stations. Consumer protection is important, assures the Federal Chancellor, but at the same time she allows her environment minister and Germany’s EU Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry to campaign actively in Brussels against the consumer-friendly chemicals directive. George Orwell would have loved this type of “black is white” language.

... and the Greens?

“Why do we actually still need the Greens if all parties are now embracing ecological goals?” Those who are involved in green politics know this question, frequently asked by journalists but sometimes also by interested parties in politics, only too well. There are, of course, plenty of answers one could provide, particularly given the above gulf between word and deed on the part of the other parties. One could do worse than to argue that the original is always better than a copy. But are the Greens not themselves to blame for the fact that this question is being asked at all? We believe there are also home-made reasons for it: a tendency to make political compromises stemming from the Greens’ own time in government a basis for our future programme; the idea that the Greens’ environmental credentials are not in question and now it is time to tackle other topics; and in general a lack of clarity in analysing ecological problems and of courage in tackling the problems.

The Greens co-governed Germany for seven years, and as well as the modernization of social policy, there are major environmental successes on the credit side of our participation in government. We can and should be proud of this. Nevertheless, set against the actual challenges, the best one can talk of is of positive beginnings which all too often have to be set alongside enduring mistakes. Expanding renewable energies in the electricity sector was an example of taking the right path. At the same time, however, new lignite-fired power stations, subsidized by the state and forced through by the Social Democratic side of the Coalition, came on line, so that, in the end, carbon emissions were not reduced. The almost inevitable result was that the Federal Government missed its original climate protection target by a long way. No amount of glossy brochures entitled “Germany leads the world in climate protection” could disguise such inconsistencies.

This tendency towards political marketing has certainly not helped to lend credibility to the Greens and their environmental policy. While there is no doubt that in matters of climate protection Germany is one of the few one-eyed men in the kingdom of the blind, it is also unfortunately true that our per capita emissions continue to be the highest among Europe’s major industrialized nations. This is why the Greens need a realistic analysis of their time in government which acknowledges what was achieved and also lays out both what was not achieved and why it was not achieved. We are not, after all, a club dedicated to preserving tradition and conserving the red-green heritage; what we want to do is to prepare seriously for future times when we may share government, and this must include self-critical analysis!

Some Greens believe that the party is already credited with eco competence and that we therefore have to diversify politically in order to escape the image of being a single-issue party. This view is a fundamental misunderstanding. Of course the Greens have to cover the entire spectrum of political issues and indeed they do just that. But an ecological view of the world is something quite different from just environmental policy. When ecology remains shut in the cage of environmental policy, it systematically falls short because it is always another issue, something else to be taken into account, something costing money. It is not environmental policy per se which is important. What matters is integrating ecological principles consistently in all fields of policymaking: from energy, transport, agricultural and research policy right through to budgetary and fiscal policy. In hindsight, therefore, our former foreign minister's pronouncement that there was no green foreign policy only German foreign policy was only true as a political sound bite. In terms of substance, of course questions such as climate protection, fair access to resources, the protection of biodiversity and access to drinking water belong at the heart of "green" foreign policy.

Perhaps the key reason why the Greens have lost political impact and appeal in ecological matters is the fact that periods in government are simply not conducive to relentless analysis and the formulation of radical answers. Even today there is still much that sounds very like pro-establishment mainstream. Environmental measures are consistently lauded according to their effect in stimulating the economy, promoting exports or creating jobs, as though conserving vital natural resources were not altogether a standalone goal, a subject in its own right. Unpopular issues such as ecological tax reform, while successful and authentically "green", are kept quiet about and no longer pursued. By contrast, green economic policy papers contain frequent complaints about poor economic growth or weak consumer demand which supposedly needs to be overcome, as if there were no conflict here with the objectives of energy saving and resource conservation. Questions of lifestyle are given a wide berth for fear we are accused of preaching non-consumption. And under no circumstances must the Greens be accused of doom-mongering or alarmism. Everything has to be very sensible and ultra-rational. We are, after all, no longer children, wet behind the ears.

A "new environmental realpolitik"

The effort not to offend anyone is not only outdated, it also makes the Greens grey. Others are not so cautious. In his new book "An Inconvenient Truth", Al Gore recommends that to prevent climate change, we should consume less, buy long-life products, walk and cycle more and fly less. Are these not statements that should stand right at the top of Green Party programmes? And what about alarmism? Today it comes not from communes and eco-freaks but from mainframe computers, research institutes and reality. If one reads what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says about climate change, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment about the threat to biodiversity or the German Advisory Council on Global Change about the state of the oceans, one has to be very, very alarmed and one should admit it too. If TIME Magazine, talking about climate change, uses the heading: "Be worried, be very worried", no environmentalist and no Green should be afraid of being called a disaster junkie. It is the developments which threaten to happen or are already happening that are the disasters, not the allusion to them or the demand that everything possible be done to prevent them.

If they want to make policy which adequately responds to the ecological challenges, the Greens must revert to stating more clearly how things stand, what could happen if no action is taken and what needs to be done. One might call that re-radicalization because the steps

needed to protect the climate go far beyond what is being discussed today. We prefer to speak of a new realism in eco-policy because the assumptions made up to now have not been realistic.

It is unrealistic to want to contain climate change within tolerable limits without drastically cutting back and then, by the second half of the century, ending the burning of fossil fuels. It is unrealistic to seek to secure the future demand for resources for all people if the per capita consumption in the industrialized countries is not reduced rapidly and substantially. It is unrealistic to want to maintain the world's biodiversity if farming and forestry practices are not geared more to the needs of nature conservation.

What is realistic is to accept that the familiar can only remain if everything changes. In this sense there is a fundamental need for a "new environmental realpolitik", whose main political sponsors can be the Greens, if they so desire. Here is not the place to debate whether the alternative, a comforting programme of eco-light products plus a drinks can deposit scheme, really is an alternative. It may be that such a party would be good for "eight per cent plus x", the Greens election target, but it would no longer be a driving force.

Climate change – a hard issue

There is still a prevalent perception among wide sections of our society that ecology is a subject linked to prosperity which can be afforded when the economic situation permits. That is wrong. The free benefits nature bestows on us, a stable climate, productive soil, good water, clean air and biological diversity, form the basis of our existence, the foundation on which our civilization and culture are built. If these footings are eroded, there will be serious consequences for us humans – even a total collapse of the system. This is most effectively illustrated in relation to the threat of climate change.

The greenhouse effect, a man-made phenomenon, mirrors almost all the undesirable developments of modern civilization: the excessive burning of coal, gas and oil in houses, cars, power stations and factories, in other words the conversion of stored carbon into climate-hostile carbon dioxide, the energy-intensive extraction of raw materials and industrialization, the intensification and chemicalization of farming, intensive stock rearing and high meat consumption and the transformation of forests and bush into pastureland and arable land. The looming climate catastrophe roughly amounts therefore to the "sum of all our mistakes". These errors, which were and are committed above all in the industrialized countries, are now being copied by the developing countries, first and foremost China, India and Brazil – with devastating consequences for our planet.

Man-made climate change is no longer an abstract threat in the distant future. It has long since arrived and is occurring faster than scientists were estimating even five years ago. The nine warmest years since records began in 1861 occurred between 1995 and 2005, including every year since 2001. 2005 was the warmest year so far – and a year of many other records: there were 27 tropical storms over the Atlantic, 15 of which were hurricane strength, "Wilma" was the strongest ever measured, "Katrina" caused the greatest ever costs, and "Vince" and "Delta" were the first ever tropical cyclones to reach Europe. 2005 also saw the worst drought for more than sixty years in the Amazon Basin, severe floods in Central Europe and the Alps and forest fires in Southern Europe.

The glaciers of the Andes, the Rocky Mountains, the Himalayas, the Alps and Kilimanjaro have shrunk at an alarming rate in recent years. 85 per cent of all glaciers have already been affected. This will have drastic consequences for major rivers, human water supply and agriculture. Shortage of drinking water will become a major problem, especially in the large metropolises of Asia.

Large areas of Africa are likely to suffer a further decline in rainfall and hence further desertification, a shrinking of freshwater reservoirs and human migrations caused by poverty. This trend will also result in an increase in the number of African refugees arriving on Europe's shores.

There is a long list of the consequences of man-made climate change identified by scientists. It includes the melting of the permafrost in the high northern latitudes, the threat to biological diversity in very many habitats, the spread of heat-loving disease carriers such as mosquitoes, ticks and tsetse flies, the warming of the world's oceans killing coral and causing algal bloom, the breakdown of the ocean pump which still provides western Europe with a mild climate, and the rise in sea level with its devastating consequences for human settlements, coastal infrastructures and agricultural areas. A policy of "going on as before" threatens catastrophic repercussions for the whole world. We have no time to lose.

If global warming passes the two degree Celsius mark in comparison with the pre-industrial temperature level - the level has already risen 0.8 degrees Celsius in the last one hundred years - there is a risk that the polar ice masses in Greenland and the Antarctic could start to melt irreversibly, causing sea levels to rise by several metres, albeit over a lengthy period. This could also wipe out unique ecosystems such as the Amazon rainforest with its unique fauna and flora.

Against the background of these developments, it is no longer possible to treat climate change as a soft subject. If we term issues such as economic prosperity and global security as "hard", which is usually the case, then global warming is in fact a very hard subject. It is also probably the subject which will weigh more heavily on humanity in a few decades than any other if we do not finally start to take consistent and resolute action. If one takes the forecasts of climate research seriously, the next ten to fifteen years are crucial if we are to change course. We therefore propose that the Greens as the environmental party place climate protection consistently at the heart of their policymaking and systematically orient all policy fields to this goal.

Climate protection as a moral obligation and economic opportunity

Climate protection is a vital public service in the original sense. It is a moral obligation towards generations to come and poorer parts of the world's population who have hardly, if at all, contributed to the problem but who suffer hugely from the consequences of our failure to protect the climate. Climate protection can also be viewed, however, as a promising strategy of economic and social renewal: those who want to practise climate protection must save energy, use it more efficiently and generate it increasingly from renewable sources, make houses, vehicles and businesses more energy-intelligent, manufacture goods and infrastructure on a more resource-saving basis, turn farming from a consumer of fossil energy to a producer of bioenergy and bio resources, give forestry a new perspective as a supplier of wood and a (paid) carbon sink and provide a "green" base for the craft sector.

One does not have to be a proponent of permanent economic growth to realise that such a strategy for climate protection will generate economic dynamism and create net jobs. We are sure that the vast majority of the population, whether craftspeople or industrial workers, engineers or farmers, teachers or transport planners, householders or tenants, would rather be part of the solution in matters of climate than part of the problem. They are all therefore addressees and potential supporters of a party which consistently puts climate protection at the top of the political agenda.

For Greens, limiting climate change and reducing damaging greenhouse gases urgently must be paramount. But we have already let the problem go so far that even if consistent climate protection measures were to be implemented, there would still be changes to our climate. It is vital, therefore, that we also talk about how to adapt to changed climate conditions in order to contain the damage as far as possible. This applies to coastal protection and equally to rivers which, instead of further canalization, require more room to retreat. It applies to the area of land sealed by construction, asphalt or paving which needs to be substantially limited and wherever possible unsealed to enable the ground to absorb rainwater more effectively. It applies to nature conservation areas which need to be significantly expanded and networked so that species which are suffering stress through climate change can find regeneration areas. And it applies to agriculture which must change over nationwide to nature conservation procedures to reduce soil compaction and rapid drainage.

Adjusting to climate changes, a subject long avoided by environmentalists and Greens because it seemed too much like capitulation, belongs without a shadow of a doubt today to the repertoire of an ambitious climate policy. Anybody looking at the huge cost of adapting to climate change, moving coastal cities like Hamburg further inland for example, should regard the financial expenditure on more climate protection not as a burden but as a good investment.

Binding targets needed

In order to measure the success of a policy of climate protection and ecological structural change, we believe that a set of clear targets are absolutely vital, both nationally and internationally. We propose the following targets:

- **Climate protection worldwide:** In the Kyoto Protocol, the industrialized countries should commit themselves to reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases by an average of 30% of 1990 levels by 2020. At the same time, the newly industrializing and developing countries should be integrated stepwise in the international climate protection process with upper limits for emissions; if this does not happen, the temperature is likely to rise by over two degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level. The aim must be to cut global emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 60 per cent by 2050.
- **Climate protection in the EU:** Emissions of greenhouse gases in the European Union should be cut by 80 per cent by 2050 in order to make an appropriate contribution to reaching global climate protection targets; an interim target of 30 per cent should be set for 2020.
- **Climate protection in Germany:** The German Bundestag has several times formulated the target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the Federal Republic by 80 per cent by 2050. We regard this target as a minimum target. As the world leader in renewable energies, Germany has the potential to phase out the use of fossil energy

sources completely or at least very largely by 2050 and to be carbon-free. This would make us a role model for the energy-hungry developing countries and would also give a boost to our technology-oriented export industry. As an interim target, we propose cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2020. Where climate protection is concerned, we must think bigger!

- **Renewable energies and energy efficiency:** In order to raise the proportion of renewable energies in primary energy demand rapidly and by relevant amounts, we need to cut consumption by using energy more intelligently. We want to increase the proportion of renewable energies in the electricity and heat sector to 25 per cent by 2020. To achieve this while at the same time phasing out nuclear energy, significantly cutting coal use and cutting oil demand, energy efficiency in the overall economy must be improved by three to four per cent per year.
- **Better cars:** To cut the emissions of gases which are damaging the climate in the area of transport, we are pleading for upper limits for fleet consumption. Since the voluntary limits adopted by industry, although modest, have not been met, the only way forward now is for sensible regulation at European level. We consider a target value of 70g of CO₂ emissions per km in 2020 to be necessary and feasible. Both car manufacturers and the petroleum industry must be reminded of their responsibilities here.
- **Better houses:** In no other area is so much energy wasted today as in the building sector. On average, 15 litres of heating oil per square metre per year are still burned here. We propose that for new buildings in future an annualised value for heating energy consumption of one litre heating oil per square metre per year be imposed as standard. For old buildings we propose that, through a mixture of regulatory requirements and prohibitions and grants, the permissible limit on heating energy consumption be cut by 2020 to a maximum of five litres heating oil per square metre per year. This corresponds to the current standard for low-energy houses.
- **Less sealing of land and fragmentation:** We want to substantially limit land consumption and fragmentation, not least to stop the loss of biodiversity. We want to see land consumption cut from the current level of 100 hectares per day to a maximum of 20 hectares by 2030. Further fragmentation should be avoided by a widespread halt to road building and reorientation to make better use of the existing road network.
- **More and better nature conservation:** A central goal for us is to ensure that farming over the entire cultivated area adopts environmentally sustainable practices. This would arguably make the greatest contribution to nature conservation, as well as a relevant contribution to climate protection. Additionally, however, we want to set aside at least 10 per cent of land area permanently for nature conservation and maintain it at a high standard. We want to see the creation of a network of biotopes which allows species to migrate more easily. This entails managing forests and grassland sustainably and must be harmonized with tourism and regional development projects.
- **Less noise:** By 2030 we want to ensure that at least eighty per cent of the population can enjoy a quiet, calm living environment with high-quality areas of nature for rest, recreation and leisure. Quality of life is Germany's most important location factor and must not be reserved only for high-income groups of the population.

Projects to engage the public

However important quantitative reduction or growth targets may be for climate protection, they do not on their own engage people or generate positive energy encouraging people to take action. This is why it is necessary to have practical proposals which show what direction should be taken without people having to know every detail.

When the Greens were campaigning for the election in 1998, they had ecological projects which everybody, every campaigner and every voter, knew about, projects which provoked a great deal of debate: phasing out nuclear power, ecological tax reform, the promotion of renewable energies. If one were to ask people today what three projects were at the heart of green politics, there would probably be a dozen or more different answers. There is therefore still work to be done to hone and convert basic ideas into political projects which appeal to the public. We are campaigning for the following projects:

Priority for energy saving: A great deal was achieved in the field of renewable energies between 1998 and 2005. Progress on exploiting the huge potential for energy saving, on the other hand, has been totally inadequate – although the eco-tax and old building refurbishment programme were first steps. Energy saving is in every respect an important building block for climate protection. Those who consume no energy do not contribute to climate change. Those who save energy, also save money, which, in times of exploding oil, gas and electricity prices, is no small argument, particularly for low-income population groups who face energy poverty. And the faster energy consumption overall declines, the easier it will be to significantly increase the share of renewable energies.

Energy saving also has enormous benefits for the economy as a whole. It means in effect replacing expensive oil and gas imports with engineering expertise, craftsmanship and industrial production. The fact that energy saving also makes the country less vulnerable in foreign policy terms clinches the argument. Much more thinking and talking needs to happen to decide how priority for energy saving can be presented in a politically convincing way.

Most of the measures involved in energy saving and climate protection benefit the craft sector and small and medium-sized businesses: building refurbishment, modernization of heating systems, solar collectors and photovoltaic systems. We are therefore arguing in favour of a campaign to highlight the green foundations of the craft sector which will systematically examine the huge importance of this sector for ecological structural change.

Kyoto plus: The Kyoto Protocol, which finally came into force in February 2005, is under pressure today from two sides: from those who torpedo any type of climate protection and would prefer to copy US President Bush, who has declared the Kyoto Protocol dead; and from those for whom the body of rules and regulations is too lax because its initial targets are too moderate and it leaves too many loopholes. This pincer movement presents problems for the Greens because, as a party which believes in multilateral solutions, we have always fought for implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. We are also aware, however, that it represents only a first, extremely diffident step. To overcome this dilemma, what is needed is an offensive strategy which uses the “Kyoto” brand but fills it

with more ambitious substance. “Kyoto Plus” should retain the architecture of the Protocol and develop it further, above all with regard to the setting of mandatory targets to cut greenhouse gases; it should also be opened up for technological offensives which focus on energy saving, energy efficiency and renewable energies. Why not a generously funded EU climate programme which attempts something really big, on the scale of the Americans’ moon mission: the solving of the man-made climate problem? If we don’t do it, maybe the Americans will do it after 2009 or sooner or later the Chinese. We cannot count on retaining our leading position in environmental technologies automatically and for ever if we do not keep demonstrating it anew.

Fair access to resources for all: While it is true that China, India and Brazil have been industrializing for some time and at a breathtaking rate, the main responsibility for climate change continues to rest with the western industrialized countries. They release three, four or even ten times as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere per head of population as the densely populated developing countries. This asymmetry has to be tackled politically: if the industrialized countries want to prevent the developing countries abusing the climate in the same way as they themselves are doing, there are two things that need to happen. Firstly, the primary responsibility to change rests with the industrialized countries themselves who must scale back the pressure they place on the global environment. Secondly, the industrialized nations should meet their moral obligations within the framework of environmental agreements, trade agreements, development cooperation and the international financial institutions, giving equal support to the fight against poverty and environmental protection. If they do not do so, climate change threatens to nullify all the successes of development assistance. The Greens need to give a political voice to this insistence on global justice.

Bioenergy yes, but green please: There is a great deal of hype at present surrounding bioenergies: from biodiesel and cold-pressed plant oils to the much prized BTL fuel (Biomass to Liquid) of the future. We believe it makes sense that, in addition to the electricity and heat market, bioenergies should in future also become much more important in the transport sector, an area where we see huge potential, particularly in terms of regional generation and processing. In combination with more economical vehicles, this strategy can help to make the transport sector more environmentally compatible. We can also, however, see problems arising from a large-scale changeover to the cultivation of energy crops. It is vital to avoid a situation where the increased use of biofuels leads to an increase in the use of pesticides and mineral fertilizers and an expansion of monocultures. In this event, the overall effect on the environment would be negative. The planting of energy crops must be combined with soil improvement measures and nature conservation.

There is a danger in tropical countries that the planting of energy crops will lead to massive clearance of primary rainforest. This is already happening today in part in such countries as Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia. In these cases, plantations of energy crops often destroy the means of livelihood of parts of the rural population. We are fooling ourselves if we call this bioenergy green energy. It is not.

We believe the sustainable use of bioenergy, above all in regional networks, is a sensible idea for us and for the countries of the South. A certification system needs to be developed for internationally traded bioenergy based on ecological criteria, to ensure that our car use does not become one of the main causes of the destruction of the rainforest – just as today

our high meat consumption is already one of the main causes of the permanent expansion of soya cultivation in tropical countries like Brazil.

Green infrastructure for all: In the coming two decades, there will be a gigantic wave of investment in Germany in network infrastructures: power stations, water supply and sewage disposal and rail networks. We want to use this window of opportunity for an ecological investment offensive. If this does not happen, the structures will be cemented in place until the middle of the century and will not be able to make any contribution to climate protection and sustainable development. Above all in the electricity sector we want to ensure that the large number of power stations connected to the grid is replaced by environmentally compatible alternatives: by electricity savings and measures to render power stations redundant, by renewable energies, modern highly efficient power stations, cogeneration of heat and power, district heating plants and fuel cells. Climate compatibility and decentralization are crucial criteria for the energy supply of the future.

Fair access is, for us, the key to social participation. This applies not only to education but also to public infrastructures. We want to guarantee access to energy, water and mobility for all at fair and ecologically viable prices.

Ecomobile: Transport in Germany “consumes” 80 per cent of oil and 45 per cent of the land for settlement. It is therefore one of the biggest environmental problems of all. In order to respond to the requirements of climate protection, the shortage of crude oil and the fact that there is only a finite area of undeveloped land, the amount of oil required for mobility has to be drastically cut and at least 20 per cent of car traffic switched within the next fifteen years to more environmentally friendly means of transport. In order to cut energy consumption, we propose binding upper limits on fleet consumption, the use of biofuels supplied by environmentally compatible farming methods and a general speed limit of 130 km/h on motorways. Given lighter vehicles with new drive systems, the combination of these measures would level the market and at last steer the innovativeness of one of the most important branches of industry in an environmentally compatible direction.

The road network in Germany is so dense that, apart from some minor exceptions, no new building is needed. As far as roads are concerned, the focus should shift from new building to maintaining and improving what is already there in order to guarantee the quality of the existing network.

Public transport must be dramatically improved over the next fifteen years. The examples of London and Stockholm show that introducing road pricing is by far the most successful way of rapidly shifting car transport to buses and trains. We therefore propose creating the appropriate federal legislation to provide the legal basis for introducing city toll models, with the stipulation that the net income from a toll be used to improve public transport. An alternative is to impose a charge on local traffic in polycentric conurbations. This would involve levying a poll tax to be used to fund local transport, in return for which the inhabitants of the particular traffic area would receive a personal voucher for use on public transport which would expire at the end of the year. This would create new incentives to use public transport.

If these measures are flanked by an intelligent mobility policy combining intermodality, new ways of using cars, the promotion of cycling and walking with a settlement policy

limiting traffic, it will be possible, unlike in the past, to meet environmental targets in the transport area too.

More wilderness: We are calling for at least 10 per cent of land in Germany to be designated as nature conservation land and for these areas to be networked together. Areas farmed on a sustainable basis will account for a large portion of this figure. But we also want more wilderness. We are delighted that the lynx, wild cat, wolf and brown bear are returning to Germany and we welcome them. We want to see humans and animals co-existing in peace, but this requires setting aside areas to which the wild animals can retreat. Instead of spreading panic about problem bears, we want education and, where necessary, damage control. Peaceful co-existence is good for us and for our children, because it helps us to understand that we are not alone in this world. But it is also necessary if we are to be able to intercede credibly at international level for better protection for different species. How can we expect the people in densely populated Bangladesh to protect the tiger if at home every bear which gets into a rabbit hutch is immediately shot?

The Greens need a debate on the future of environmental policy

The projects we are proposing are possible projects but not the only ones. Perhaps there are better ideas. We are amazed that within the Green Party we discuss and argue heatedly about all manner of things, but virtually never about environmental policy. Here again this seems to be a case of misplaced self-certainty: "Oh yes, we all agree on this and people believe we know what we're doing." This attitude is questionable in two respects. Firstly, it is boring to always be declaiming rather than debating. This is not the way to tempt anyone or enthuse them for politics. Secondly, it is also wrong. There are a plethora of questions which are in truth highly controversial but which are buried today under a mantle of seeming harmony: are permanent economic growth, globalization and climate protection at all reconcilable? Do we not need a far more fundamental change in our culture and lifestyle than the comfortable language of environmental modernization suggests? Or do we not instead need a new technological optimism that seizes the ecological challenge as a fascinating opportunity to modernize society? Do we really always set ourselves the right priorities or are some things not also symbolic politics, ultimately innocuous? How should we deal with internally conflicting environmental targets: the conflict for instance between bioenergy and biodiversity, between preservation of the countryside and wind power, between recycling and the build-up of toxic substances? What is our attitude to technologies which do not correspond with our ideals but which could potentially contribute to climate protection - carbon separation in coal-fired power stations, for example? How do we want to link ecological and social goals in such a way that they strengthen each other? There are many questions that need to be talked about. To hush them up would be contrary to all that the Greens stand for.

The Greens need to tackle the questions of climate protection, environmental structural change and sustainable development systematically and permanently in a forum. A party which claims to be the party of climate protection must also have a culture of discussion within which to express this. Within the next two years, we need to review and re-define the role of the environment with respect to the Greens. This is the only way we can remain credible and work to counter the pessimistic attitude that nothing can be done any longer to prevent climate change. What we are pleading for is a new and radical realism in environmental policy.