Still talking, but is anyone listening?  
The changing face of constituency campaigning in 
Britain, 1997-2005

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Abstract:
Constituency electioneering has become established as an important element of postmodern political campaigning, allowing parties and candidates to focus effort on targeted seats. A substantial literature has developed, showing the efficacy of such targeting: other things being equal, the harder parties campaign locally, the more votes they win relative to their rivals. However, on the whole, such studies have taken a relatively static view of local campaigning, concentrating on particular elections. Yet there are a priori grounds to expect the efficacy of local campaigns to vary from party to party and from election to election. The paper therefore analyses dynamic trends in constituency campaigning using a pooled data set of British constituency electioneering between 1997 and 2005. The results illustrate important and substantial variations over time and across parties in the impact of local election campaigning.
Message and targeting are central to the post-modern election campaign (Norris, 2000). Party managers try to control how their party, its leaders, candidates and policies are presented in the media. Election messages are carefully targeted at particular strategically important groups of voters. In the 1980s and early 1990s, for instance, the Conservatives appealed to ‘Essex man’, aspirational and newly affluent skilled workers in the South East of England. Similarly, before the 1997 election, one of New Labour’s campaign targets was ‘Worcester woman’, an archetypal middle class, middle England voter disillusioned with the Conservatives but needing reassurance that Labour was no longer the tax and spend party of old.

Targeting campaign messages also had a clear geographical dimension, with a revival of interest in local electioneering. Constituency campaigning is now an integral part of parties’ national strategies. Resources are targeted in key marginal seats while professional call centres conduct telephone canvasses of voters prior to the start of and during the official campaign (Pattie and Johnston, 2003). Constituency campaigning has a positive impact on a party’s support locally. Other things being equal, the more actively parties campaign in a seat, the more votes they win there and the fewer votes their rivals gain (Denver and Hands, 1997; Pattie et al., 1995).

Most previous research has taken a largely static view of this activity (examining individual elections in isolation). But just because local efforts are efficacious in one election this is no guarantee that they will be so in future. Much depends on how rival parties respond to each other’s efforts, and how well a party performs nationally. Even the most efficient constituency campaign is unlikely to compensate for a national collapse in support, while an ineffective local campaign may look good in the context of a strong national performance. In this paper, we examine such dynamic aspects by examining the impact of the main parties’ constituency campaigns at the 1997, 2001 and 2005 British General Elections, investigating the effects of local campaigns under both different governments (Conservative incumbents in 1997; Labour in 2001 and 2005) and different states of party competition (Labour well in the lead over the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, with a significant anti-Conservative tactical vote in 1997 and 2001; serious decline in Labour support, and the beginnings of tactical unwind, in 2005). We thus move beyond previous UK studies which have investigated individual elections in isolation: we look at a sequence of campaigns, developing a comparative approach set in the context of differing expectations according to the electoral situation.

The electoral and campaigning context

The three elections cover a period of substantial change in British politics, with implications for each major party’s campaign strategies. In 1997, the incumbent Conservative government, in office for 18 years, was running out of support and was faced by two newly confident rivals: a revitalised Labour party which benefited from both the Conservatives’ collapse and Tony Blair’s launch of New Labour; and the resurgent Liberal Democrat party which had abandoned its policy of ideological equidistance between Labour and Conservatives to emerge as a clearly left of centre party, and had begun to gain support as part of an informal anti-Conservative tactical vote coalition with New Labour. The election was one of the worst defeats of an incumbent British government in modern times, a sweeping Labour landslide and a substantial third party revival, netting the Liberal Democrats their largest haul of MPs.
since the early 20th century. In many respects, the 2001 result provided a rerun of 1997. The Conservatives did not recover; New Labour’s support barely faltered; and, thanks to effective campaign targeting on winnable seats, the Liberal Democrats increased their Parliamentary representation and improved on their 1997 vote share.

But the 2005 contest was rather different. The Labour government was looking tired, had risked alienating core supporters over its unpopular Iraq policy, and faced growing internal conflict over its leadership succession. The upshot was a substantial drop in support (its vote share fell from 41% in 2001 to 35% in 2005, while its Commons majority slipped from 165 seats to 66). The Conservatives, meanwhile, were unable to benefit substantially from Labour’s problems, finding it hard to shake off the negative image they had gained during their previous period in office and during much of the preceding 8 years in opposition; their vote share rose by only 0.7 percentage points, for a gain of just 32 seats. For the Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, 2005 marked a further advance in both seats won (up from 52 in 2001 to 62 in 2005 – when there were 13 fewer seats overall following the first post-devolution Scottish redistribution), and national vote share (up from 18.3% in 2001 to 22.0% in 2005).

Our three elections give us three different electoral contexts, therefore (table 1). In 1997, the incumbent government was heavily defeated, and both opposition parties made substantial inroads (one forming a government with a substantial majority). In 2001 the government defended its lead successfully, and the main opposition party’s challenge failed. And in 2005, an unpopular government held on to power partly as a result of the limited recovery in support for the largest opposition party. Each contest presented the three main parties with very different campaign imperatives. For the Liberal Democrats, the challenge was the same in all three: to win more votes and seats on very limited resources. The Conservatives’ challenge in 1997 was to hold on to power in the face of declining popularity: in both 2001 and 2005, they had to try and regain power, despite only very limited signs (if any) of public enthusiasm for the party. For Labour, the picture was largely the inverse of that for the Conservatives. While their challenge in 1997 was to win for the first time since 1974, the tide of public opinion was running strongly in the party’s favour. In 2001 and 2005, they had to defend their record in office, but whereas in 2001 they retained much public goodwill, by 2005 that political capital was considerably exhausted.

These changing political contexts clearly placed different demands on party campaign strategies. The Liberal Democrat’s task was the most straightforward: to target winnable seats and defend previous gains (Russell and Fieldhouse, 2005). At the 2005 election, however, they varied this strategy somewhat, targeting not just seats vulnerable to a swing to the party, but also the marginal seats of some leading Conservative shadow cabinet members (including the party leader) for special attention. This ‘decapitation strategy’ enjoyed only partial success. Although the party increased its number of MPs (mainly at the expense of Labour), it unseated only one of the targeted Conservatives (Timothy Collins in Westmorland: Russell, 2005; Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2005).

Labour’s constituency campaigns are of particular interest. Since the advent of New Labour in 1994, the party has been seen as the acme of post-modern campaigning in the UK (Norris, 2000). Constituency campaigning was an important element of this: the party focused its efforts on those marginal seats it needed to win in 1997 to gain
office, and those it needed to defend in 2001 and 2005 to retain power. Little campaign effort was put into seats where either the party’s majority was so large that it was unlikely to lose, or its support was so low that it was unlikely to win. Initial enthusiasm for New Labour in the mid-1990s produced a significant rise in the number of Labour members in the run-up to the 1997 election (after years of decline: Seyd and Whiteley, 2002; Fisher, 2000).

In 1997, Labour’s strategic goal was to win enough seats to ensure a parliamentary majority, so its target seats in 1997 were concentrated on around 100 of the most vulnerable Conservative-held seats. After 1997, Labour’s strategic challenge was to hold its 1997 gains (many unexpected, as the landslide was much larger than anticipated). The target seats strategy for 2001 and 2005 therefore concentrated not on seats the party had to win, but on defending seats where it might lose. The new targets were therefore Labour-held marginals where Labour MPs were released from Parliamentary duties in the run-up to the 2001 election to allow them to campaign in their constituencies (Johnston et al., 2002), and the party’s website was used to communicate ‘good news’ stories about government achievements in each locality of the UK to both voters and local Labour parties who needed copy for campaign materials (Dorling et al., 2002). Similar tactics were followed in the run-up to the 2005 election.

At the same time, however, the party’s grassroots were in increasing trouble. Having grown before 1997, Labour membership fell thereafter, accelerating especially after 2001 (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). Fewer local members means fewer local canvassers, electoral communications deliverers, and so on. Labour’s constituency campaign had been an important and effective part of the party’s 1997 and 2001 landslides. How would it perform with fewer grassroots workers when the electoral tide was running against the party?

The Conservatives’ national campaign has been highly professional for many years. Its 1979 campaign, for instance, was planned with the help of Saatchi and Saatchi, a major advertising agency. But especially after 1992, the Conservatives became embroiled in increasingly public and acrimonious disputes over European policy and the post-Thatcher legacy. At the same time, the party’s grassroots organisation was not well-suited to running effective constituency campaigns. Its members were increasingly elderly: a survey in the early 1990s revealed that over 40% were aged over 65, while only 5% were aged under 35 (Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson, 1994, 43). And, thanks to the party’s structure, its constituency campaigning was much less well co-ordinated than either Labour’s or the Liberal Democrats’. Unlike the constituency branches of the other major parties, local Conservative associations were formally independent of the national party: they were associations of Conservative supporters, not party members (Ball, 1994). As a result, it was very difficult for the Conservatives nationally to co-ordinate local campaigns coherently, since local Associations could ignore the injunctions of party headquarters – even if that meant expending scarce campaign resources on either utterly safe or (more rarely) no-hope seats (Pattie and Johnston, 1996, 1997).

Since the heavy defeat in 1997, the Conservative leadership has gradually reformed the party’s structures. Individuals can now join the party directly, rather than indirectly through local Associations, which themselves have been gradually
incorporated into the national party. But the Conservatives were unable to reverse their long-term membership problems before the 2005 election: the grassroots continued to age and decline in number. At the 1997 election, therefore, the Conservatives needed to target their constituency campaigns in those vulnerable marginals which the party held. In 2001 and 2005, the party had to concentrate primarily on Labour-held marginals to have any chance of reducing Labour’s majority, let alone winning the election. But, thanks to internal disputes, and to the party’s organisation, this was hard to achieve, especially in 2001.

**Comparative geographies of party campaigning, 1997-2005**

The above discussion outlines the changing context within which the parties had to plan and implement constituency campaign strategies between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s. But to what extent did their campaigns meet the strategic challenges and did they deliver over the period? In this section, we look at where parties concentrated their efforts at the 1997, 2001 and 2005 elections.

We lack comprehensive direct measures of campaign intensity which allow coverage for all parties across all constituencies at each election. British Election Study data asking respondents whether they were canvassed by the parties during the elections have been used to show the impact of constituency campaigning (e.g. Clarke et al., 2004; Pattie and Johnston, 2003a, 2003b). But the data do not cover all constituencies (only 128 out of 628 in Great Britain were sampled in 2005, for instance), have small samples in each seat (on average, 35 people per constituency), and suffer from recall effects. Party member surveys provide data direct from the grassroots activists who deliver the constituency campaign (Seyd and Whiteley 1992, 2002; Whiteley and Seyd, 2002; Whiteley, Seyd and Billinghamurst, 2006; Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson, 1994). But those surveys are expensive to mount, are not conducted in every constituency, and do not cover all major parties at each election. Finally, post-election surveys of party election agents have been conducted at each UK election since 1992 (Denver and Hands, 1997; Denver et al., 2003). These talk directly to the individuals who plan and organise the constituency campaign (hence the data are robust), and cover all major parties. However, response rates vary between parties and between elections. In some seats, all major parties respond, while in others, only one or two parties answer, and in yet others there is no response.

In the following analyses, therefore, we make use of constituency campaign spending data as a surrogate for campaign intensity. Although constituency spending is an indirect measure, it correlates strongly with the direct measures of campaign intensity discussed above (Pattie et al., 1994; Denver and Hands, 1997, 254; Johnston and Pattie, 2006a, 202). It also has the distinct advantage of universality. All candidates are legally required to file their election expenses and these data are publicly available (originally in a command paper set before Parliament, and now in a report published by the Electoral Commission: Electoral Commission, 2006). We therefore have data on a standardised metric which provides a measure of campaign intensity for every party in every seat at every election.

Constituency campaign spending in the UK is legally capped and the maximum in any constituency is largely a function of its electorate. In what follows, therefore, we standardise for the effect of constituency size by expressing each candidate’s
constituency campaign spending as a percentage of the legal maximum permitted there.

We look first at how stable the geography of constituency campaigning has been in England and Wales over time. The constituencies adopted for the first time in 1997 remained unchanged for the subsequent two elections, allowing cross-temporal comparisons. A principal components analysis of campaign spending at each election for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties produces three components, with each party having its highest loadings on a separate component (table 2). Together, the three components (which each account for a remarkably similar amount of the variance) summarise 83% of the variance in the original spending variables. Where the Conservatives campaigned hard in 1997, they also campaigned hard in both 2001 and 2005, therefore, and where they put little effort into their campaign at one of these elections, they also put in little effort at the others. The story is very similar for Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Over the three elections studied here, therefore, the geography of campaign effort remained strikingly stable.

Two different, plausible, scenarios lead us to anticipate relatively long-term geographies of party competition. In the first, campaign intensity reflects the relative strength of local parties. Those with more resources (members, money, etc.) will campaign harder than those with fewer resources, simply because the former have more of the wherewithal to mount a campaign than the latter. While there are examples of constituencies where a party is very strong electorally but has a virtually moribund local organization (e.g. Hindness, 1967), the general trend is for party membership to be largest where a party’s vote share is greatest (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, 185). Party vote share at the previous election is thus a good indicator of local party strength.

In the second scenario, campaign intensity is related to the closeness of electoral competition. A party should reserve its greatest campaign efforts for its most marginal seats, and should campaign less intensively both in its safe seats and where it stands little chance.

We address both scenarios by examining where parties campaigned hard and where they put in less effort. To model scenario 1, we regress constituency spending by each party at each election against its vote share there at the previous election (table 3).

The results are somewhat mixed. In line with expectations, in every case a party’s spending at a particular election is positively and significantly related to its vote share at the preceding contest. But the strength of the relationship varies substantially. While about two-thirds of the variation in Liberal Democrat spending can be accounted for by the party’s tendency to spend more where it was previously strong than where it was weak, only about a half of the variation in Conservative campaign spending, and less than a quarter of Labour’s can be accounted for by local party strength.

For scenario 2, we measure how close the competition faced by a party in a seat is by taking its vote share at the previous election and subtracting either (where the party won the seat) the vote share of the party in second place or (where the party lost) the vote share of the winning party. The more negative the marginality score, therefore,
the further behind the winner a party is in a seat, and hence the more hopeless its position there; the more positive the score, the further ahead the party is of its nearest local rival; and the closer to zero the marginality score, the more competitive the seat is for the party. Seats were classified into 8 groups running from seats where the party had no real chance of winning (where its marginality was -20% or worse, indicating that it was at least 20 percentage points behind the winning party), through ultra-marginal seats which it either lost narrowly (margins of between -4.9% and 0%), or held narrowly (margins of between 0.1% and 4.9%) at the previous election, through to the safest seats, won with a margin of greater than 20%. Each party’s average campaign expenditure (as a percentage of the legal maximum) in each category at the 1997, 2001 and 2005 elections is in Table 4. We expected curvilinear relationships, with higher expenditure in marginal than in safe or no-hope seats (Johnston and Pattie, 2007a).

The pattern is clearest for the Labour party. In each election year it spent significantly more in the marginals than in seats where it was bound to win or lose. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, spent considerably more in their marginal seats than in seats where they could not win. But for both parties, the tail-off in expenditure from marginals to safe seats was not as pronounced as for Labour. For the Liberal Democrats, this was largely a result of small number effects: it had few safe seats, and hence the estimates of expenditure in those seats are subject to large standard errors. But the same cannot be said of the Conservatives, who hold a sizeable number of very safe constituencies. Yet in both 1997 and 2001, they spent almost as much in their safest seats as they did in their marginals. This reflects the traditionally limited control of Conservative party headquarters over its local associations, discussed above. But there are signs that, by 2005, reform of the party structure had begun to have an impact. Their constituency spending followed a curvilinear pattern, as expenditure in the safest seats began to fall relative to the party’s effort in its marginals.

Overall, Labour still stands out as the party with the most efficient allocation of local campaign effort. But the Conservatives are catching up. And the efficiency of the Liberal Democrats’ local campaign is actually greater than Table 4 suggests: since they have few truly safe seats, the great bulk of their local campaign effort nationally goes into their marginals (Russell and Fieldhouse, 2005).

Table 4 also reveals that both Labour and the Conservatives tailored their campaigns over time to suit the different demands of government and opposition. When they were in opposition, both spent most in the ultra-marginals where they lost at the previous election. Oppositions need to win such seats if they are to have any chance of forming the next government. When each was the incumbent government seeking re-election, however, they faced different challenges. Incumbents need to defend vulnerable seats which they already hold, and generally have little expectation that they will win new seats. At the 1997 election, therefore, the Conservatives recorded their highest average campaign expenditure in marginal seats with sitting Conservative MPs. Similarly, Labour’s most intense local campaigns in 2001 and 2005 were fought in marginals with Labour incumbents. Strikingly, however, when they were the incumbent government, both parties focused their most intense local campaign efforts not in their ultra-marginal seats, but in seats which they had held previously with margins of between 5% and 9.9%. The ultra-marginals were not
ignored: campaigns there were more intense than in most other constituencies. But both parties seem to have employed a ‘defence in depth’ strategy aimed at protecting themselves from sudden and catastrophic losses of large numbers of apparently less vulnerable marginals (exactly the fate which, ironically, befell the Conservatives in 1997).

The three major parties have not radically changed their constituency campaign strategies over recent elections, therefore. The seats in which they have either worked hard or have made only a token effort have remained the same. And they all tend to concentrate effort into marginal rather than hopeless or safe seats (the Liberal Democrats largely by virtue of having few safe seats). But they varied in the efficiency with which they concentrated resources on marginals: Labour consistently ran more focussed campaigns than the Conservatives (with the Liberal Democrats achieving a close focus on its marginals once again partly by default). Labour is a more efficient expender of constituency campaign resources than the Conservatives.

The impact of constituency campaigning: a changing scene?

If the underlying geography of constituency campaigning in the UK remained unchanged between 1997 and 2005, however, the same cannot be said about the electoral impact of that campaigning. Since the early 1990s, a new orthodoxy has emerged in the research literature (e.g. Cutts, 2006; Cutts and Shrayne, 2006; Denver and Hands, 1997; Johnston, 1987; Pattie and Johnston, 2003b), to the effect that constituency campaigns influence vote shares in British elections. Other things being equal, the harder a party campaigns in a seat, the greater its vote share and the smaller its rivals’. This new orthodoxy is now beginning to harden around some firm conclusions. First, Labour and Liberal Democrat campaigns tend to be more effective than Conservative campaigns, partly because the latter party expends considerable resources on its safe seats, where there is little to gain (Johnston and Pattie, 1997: Johnston and Pattie, 2007a, show that where the Conservatives spent large sums on their local campaigns in marginal seats in 2005, the electoral benefit was substantial). Second, parties tend to benefit more from their campaigns in seats where they are challengers hoping to win than where they are incumbents, defending their position (Johnston and Pattie, 2006b; Jacobson, 1978).

These conclusions are based on empirical associations, not a priori logical necessity. There is no reason why particular parties should always be more or less effective constituency campaigners than others. Changes in the wider political environment may enhance or reduce the effectiveness of a party’s constituency campaigning. In particular, as discussed above, shifts over time may have had an impact on the effectiveness of New Labour’s constituency campaign machine, as the party moved from being the hero of the 1997 election to the decidedly lukewarm winner of the 2005 contest. In 1997 (and to a lesser extent in 2001), Labour’s constituency campaign efforts were running with the rising tide of the party’s popularity: in 2005, the popularity tide was running against the party, and its constituency campaign was working against the flow. What effect did this have on the electoral impact of Labour’s local activism?

To answer this question, we analyse constituency data on voting and local campaigning for the 1997, 2001 and 2005 elections. The most frequent means of
assessing constituency campaign effects in the literature is to fit a series of OLS regressions, one for the vote share of each party of interest (e.g. Pattie and Johnston, 2003b). However, the assumptions of OLS regression are violated when party vote shares in multi-party elections are analysed. This occurs because vote shares are related to each other by definition: if one party’s vote share increases, the overall share of all other parties must decrease. Hence the error terms for the OLS regressions will be correlated. Furthermore, when the dependent variable is percentage vote share, problems can arise as real data are bounded between 0 and 100, while model predictions can extend beyond these bounds. For both these reasons, OLS models can lead to potential biases in the parameters being estimated.

An alternative estimation strategy is therefore desirable to deal with the multi-party nature of electoral competition. Katz and King (1999) propose a method which achieves this in part by employing a multinomial logit transform, but their method is statistically demanding. An alternative and more accessible approach which has been adopted by several authors in recent work combines the multinomial logit transform with Zellner’s (1962) seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) approach (for more detailed expositions, see Tomz et al., 2002; Jackson, 2002, Cutts and Shrayne, 2006). We deploy this SUR approach in the following analyses.

The dependent variables for our SUR models are logistic transforms of constituency vote share ratios. Here, we define three dependent variables for each election, one for the Conservative: Labour vote share ratio, one for the Liberal Democrat: Labour ratio, and one for the other parties: Labour ratio.7 The dependent variables take the form:

\[
\begin{align*}
C-L_t &= \ln(\text{Conservative \% vote share/Labour \% vote share}) \\
LD-L_t &= \ln(\text{Liberal Democrat \% vote share/Labour \% vote share}) \\
Oth-L_t &= \ln(\text{Other parties’ \% vote share/Labour \% vote share})
\end{align*}
\]

We then use SUR to model three equations jointly, one for each of the above dependent variables:

\[
\begin{align*}
C-L_t &= b_0 + b_1C-L_{t-1} + b_2S_{Ct} + b_3S_{Lt} + b_4S_{LDt} \quad (1) \\
LD-L_t &= b_0 + b_1LD-L_{t-1} + b_2S_{Ct} + b_3S_{Lt} + b_4S_{LDt} \quad (2) \\
Oth-L_t &= b_0 + b_1Oth-L_{t-1} + b_2S_{Ct} + b_3S_{Lt} + b_4S_{LDt} \quad (3)
\end{align*}
\]

where

\[
\begin{align*}
C-L_t & \text{ is the logged Conservative:Labour constituency vote share ratio at election } t; \\
LD-L_t & \text{ is the logged Liberal Democrat:Labour constituency vote share ratio at election } t; \\
Oth-L_t & \text{ is the logged other parties:Labour constituency vote share ratio at election } t; \\
C-L_{t-1} & \text{ is the logged Conservative:Labour constituency vote share at the preceding election } t-1; \\
LD-L_{t-1} & \text{ is the logged Liberal Democrat:Labour constituency vote share at the preceding election } t-1; \\
Oth-L_{t-1} & \text{ is the logged other party:Labour constituency vote share at the preceding election } t-1; \\
S_{Ct} & \text{ is the Conservative constituency campaign expenditure at election } t; \\
S_{Lt} & \text{ is the Labour constituency campaign expenditure at election } t; \text{ and } \\
S_{LDt} & \text{ is the Liberal Democrat constituency campaign expenditure at election } t.
\end{align*}
\]
Controlling for the appropriate lagged vote ratio at the preceding general election takes into account other long-term influences on the geography of party support (similar lagged designs are employed by: Tomz et al., 2002; and Cutts and Shrayne, 2006). Controlling for the lagged dependent variable means that the coefficients for the spending variables reflect the change in the logged two-party vote ratio from the first election to the second.

All the campaign expenditure variables are expressed as a percentage of the legal maximum permitted in each seat. If local campaign spending has an impact on vote shares, we would expect that the more a party spends on its campaign in a seat, other things being equal, the higher its vote share should be. But the more its rivals spend on their local campaign, the lower its vote share should become. Translating this into the logged vote ratios employed here is straightforward when we remember that Labour is the denominator. Negative logged vote ratios therefore indicate contests where Labour performs better than the other party in the ratio, while positive values indicate seats where Labour does worse. Therefore, other things being equal, we would expect that the harder Labour campaigns locally, the better it should do, and hence the more negative the logged vote ratio should become. If Labour’s campaign has an effect, then we should see significant negative coefficients for Labour spending in all equations.

A similar, though slightly more convoluted, logic applies to expectations regarding the other parties’ campaign efforts. Where a party is the numerator of the vote ratio being modelled, then, other things being equal, we expect a positive relationship between that party’s vote share and the dependent variable (since the harder the party campaigns, the more votes it should gain, and hence the more positive the logged vote ratio should be). So we expect Conservative spending to have a positive effect in the Conservative:Labour ratio equations, and Liberal Democrat spending to have a similarly positive effect in the Liberal Democrat:Labour models. But where the logged vote ratio is between another party and Labour, expectations about the impact of campaigning are not so obvious in these models. For instance, we would expect that the harder the Liberal Democrats campaign in a seat, other things being equal, the more damage they should do to both the Labour and the Conservative vote shares: there is therefore no obvious implication for the direction of change in the logged Conservative:Labour vote ratio, since both the numerator and the denominator are expected to be reduced by Liberal Democrat campaigning. We therefore expect that a party’s campaign should have no net effect on vote ratios between other parties. Specifically, we expect Liberal Democrat spending to have no impact on the Conservative:Labour ratio, and Conservative spending to have no impact on the Liberal Democrat:Labour ratio.

SUR models for the three elections under consideration are reported in table 5. Overall, the models confirm the expectations outlined above. Unsurprisingly, constituency vote ratios at each election are strongly positively related to the equivalent ratios at the preceding election: parties tend to do well where they have done well in the past, and poorly where they previously struggled. And the new orthodoxy on constituency campaigning is confirmed. The more a party spends on its constituency campaign at each election, the better it does, and the worse its rivals do, even when we control for previous party strength. The expectations outlined in the preceding paragraph are amply confirmed. The more the Conservatives spent on their
campaign in a constituency at each election, the better they did there relative to Labour (as indicated by the significant positive coefficients in the Conservative:Labour models). Similarly, the coefficients for Liberal Democrat spending are consistently significant and positive in all three Liberal Democrat:Labour models, indicating that more active local campaigning by the Liberal Democrats improved their performance relative to Labour’s. And the coefficients for Labour spending are significant and negative in every Conservative:Labour and Liberal Democrat:Labour model (and in the 1997 other parties:Labour model), indicating that the harder Labour campaigned locally, the better the party did relative to its rivals.

Evidence in support of our expectation that a party’s campaigning would not affect vote ratios between its rivals is mixed. As expected, Liberal Democrat spending had no effect on the Conservative:Labour ratio in 1997, or on the other parties:Labour ratio in 2005, while Conservative spending had no impact on the 1997 and 2001 Liberal Democrat:Labour ratios or on the 1997 and 2005 other party:Labour ratios. However, more unexpectedly, the models reveal that the harder the Liberal Democrats campaigned in 1997 and 2001, the better minor parties (and, in 2001, the Conservatives) fared compared to Labour (possibly because tactical voting between Labour and Liberal Democrats diminished the Labour vote in seats the Liberal Democrats were most likely to win: Evans et al., 1998; Fisher, 2004). Also somewhat surprisingly, the harder the Conservatives campaigned in a seat in 2001, the better Labour did relative to the minor parties, while the stronger the local Conservative campaign was in 2003, the better the Liberal Democrats did compared to Labour.

While the analyses in table 5 generally confirm past research, however, they cannot show whether the effectiveness of each party’s campaign has remained constant or changed over time. As the dependent variables are log odds ratios, the coefficients of the equations are not as intuitively interpretable as the coefficients of conventional vote share OLS regressions. Not only are they logarithmic, but the ratios can be affected by changes in the numerator or denominator. For instance, the negative coefficients for Labour spending in the Conservative:Labour equations show that as the party campaigns harder, the ratio gets smaller. But this can happen in three different ways: the Conservative vote may stay static while the Labour vote rises; the Conservative vote may fall while the Labour vote stays static; or the Conservative vote may fall while the Labour vote increases. We cannot differentiate between these scenarios – each of which has quite distinctive implications for how local campaigning might work – just by looking at the coefficients in the SUR models.

To investigate the effectiveness of each party’s local campaign at each election, therefore, the models in table 5 were used to estimate vote shares in a hypothetical seat in which Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats each gained 32% of the vote at the preceding election (with the remainder of the vote going to minor parties). Taking each party in turn, estimates were made of what its vote share would have been in this constituency had it spent nothing at all on its local campaign (the no campaign scenario), and had it spent up to the legal maximum there (the total campaign scenario), assuming in both cases that the other two major parties spent nothing on their local campaign (in effect giving the party of interest a free run in the constituency). Table 6 presents the differences between each party’s vote share had it not campaigned locally given the above scenario and its vote share had it campaigned...
to the full extent possible. The ranges between the vote shares for the ‘no campaign’ and the ‘total campaign’ scenarios give an indication of the impact of each party’s local campaign on its support. Given the wide range of other factors which contribute to party support such as long term loyalties, valence evaluations of party performance nationally, and so on, we would not expect massive local campaign effects. However, the effects revealed in table 6 are not negligible. For instance, in 1997, had Labour faced a constituency contest like the one set up in our scenario, its vote share would have 7.5 percentage points higher had it spent up to the local campaign limit than had it not campaigned at all. The impact of Conservative campaigning on that party’s vote share would have been of the same magnitude. By far the biggest potential winners from local campaigning, however, would have been the Liberal Democrats, whose vote share would have jumped by almost 14 percentage points by moving from no campaign to a full campaign locally. Given that the Liberal Democrats do not enjoy the same level of national media attention as the other two main parties, it is hardly surprising that they have most to gain from campaign efforts, since their campaigns can do more to push them into the public eye.

More striking, however, is the variation across parties in how these campaign effects change over time. As is evident from table 6, there is little change across the three elections studied here in the effectiveness of either the Conservative or the Liberal Democrat local campaigns. In our hypothetical contest, the difference in vote share for each between no campaign and a maximum effort campaign is roughly the same in 2005 as it was in 1997. But there is clear evidence that Labour’s local campaign became much less effective over time: the range halved in size between 1997 and 2001, and fell even further to roughly a third of its 1997 size by 2005. At the latter election, Labour’s vote share would have risen by only 2.7 percentage points had it moved from no campaign locally to spending at the maximum level possible.

As shown above, Labour’s constituency campaign in 2005 was as targeted on key battleground seats as it had been at the two preceding elections. But unlike 1997, this targeted effort had only limited beneficial impact on Labour’s constituency vote in 2005, and failed to help the party fight off challenges from the Liberal Democrats. Rather like the Conservatives in 1997, then, Labour in 2005 was an unpopular government fighting a rearguard action, to little positive effect.

Labour’s much-vaunted campaign machine seems to have misfired in 2005, therefore. One possible explanation could be that oppositions are more likely to benefit from campaigns than governments. After all, the latter are constantly in the public eye through the daily practice of governing, while the former do not have such a clear means of raising their profiles outside election periods. If true, this argument applies more strongly for smaller opposition parties like the Liberal Democrats than for the largest party of opposition – Labour in 1997 or the Conservatives in 2001 and 2005 – who get some media attention outside elections thanks to the platform afforded them as official Parliamentary opposition. But even for the official opposition, campaigns provide a chance to raise public awareness of what the party stands for which is not so easily achieved at other times. There is evidence in table 6 consistent with this argument: the Liberal Democrats clearly benefited from their campaigns to much the same extent in each of the three election years analysed, as did the Labour opposition in 1997 and the Conservative opposition in 2001 and 2005.
That said, this explanation is not ultimately satisfying. Governments can still obtain a positive advantage from their constituency campaigns: Labour still enjoyed a net benefit from its local campaign in 2001, even though the size of that benefit had diminished since 1997.

An alternative explanation might be found in the specific circumstances of different elections. Labour’s 2005 campaign took place against a very different background to its 1997 and 2001 campaigns. By 2005, the party had lost much of the public goodwill which sustained it at the two previous contests, and its national vote share was very low for a winning party. Labour’s two strongest advantages in 2005 were that the Conservative opposition had barely recovered from its 1997 mauling and the electoral system was increasingly biased in Labour’s favour (Johnston et al., 2001; Johnston, Rossiter and Pattie, 2006a). Even though its efforts remained focussed on the marginals, therefore, the party’s campaign faced much more of an uphill struggle with the electorate in 2005 than at previous elections. It seems the campaign was not up to the task.

Mobilising the electorate?

The analyses reported in tables 5 and 6 utilise vote share ratios as their dependent variables. As such, they give insight into the ability of each party’s constituency campaign to win over those who have decided to vote. However, converting voters is only one function of campaigns. Arguably more important is their role in mobilising electors: a good constituency campaign will identify those who support a party and will make sure as many of them as possible actually turn out on polling day. As a consequence, some analysts argue that electorate share is a better dependent variable for campaign models than vote share, since the former captures not only conversion but also mobilisation effects (Denver and Hands, 1997). The final set of models reported here therefore repeat the analyses of table 5 for share of the electorate (table 7). As before, the SUR models fit 3 linked equations for each election. The dependent variables for the electorate models are:

\[
\begin{align*}
C-L_{et} &= \ln(\text{Conservative \% electorate share}/\text{Labour \% electorate share}) \\
LD-L_{et} &= \ln(\text{Liberal Democrat \% electorate share}/\text{Labour \% electorate share}) \\
OthNV-L_{et} &= \ln(\text{Other parties and abstentions \% electorate share}/\text{Labour \% electorate share})
\end{align*}
\]

As before, each equation contains the lagged dependent variable and campaign spending variables for the three main parties.

On the whole, the results in table 7 are very similar to those in table 5. They differ in only a few places. The harder parties campaign, the greater their own share of the electorate, and the smaller the share won by other parties. As before, a direct interpretation of the equations is not easy, so we once again employ a hypothetical scenario in order to estimate each party’s predicted electorate share given different local campaign conditions. This time, our scenario involves a seat where the three main parties each won the support of 20\% of the electorate at the first election of a pair (with the remainder of the electorate either voting for minor parties or abstaining).
Once again, we assume that two of the major parties do not campaign locally, while the remaining party either does not campaign either, or spends up to the local limit. When we look at the range in electorate shares under these scenarios, the basic story remains unchanged (table 8). Whether we look at vote share or electorate share, Labour’s local campaign became less effective after 1997, while the Conservative and Liberal Democrat campaigns held up. Whether in terms of its ability to influence those who do vote, or in terms of its ability to mobilise the electorate, Labour’s grassroots campaign organisation has become noticeably less effective since New Labour’s *annus mirabilis* in 1997. The party faces problems.

**Conclusions**

The above analyses reveal significant long-term stability in the geography of local campaigning by British parties, therefore. Labour and the Liberal Democrats continue to concentrate most on marginal seats, while the Conservatives still split their efforts more evenly between their safe seats and their marginals. Incumbent governments, meanwhile, concentrate campaign efforts more on marginals they currently hold and need to defend (as the Conservatives did in 1997 and Labour in 2001 and 2005), while opposition parties tend to focus more on marginals where they are the main challengers (as Labour did in 1997, and the Conservatives have done since).

The picture is not entirely static, however. Most notably, at the 2005 election, the Conservatives targeted marginal seats more effectively than before (Johnston and Pattie, 2007a, 2007b). Overall, however, analyses of the geography of local campaign spending since 1997 suggest that the parties have been and remain relatively rational allocators of their efforts and of their scarce resources.

More interestingly, however, the analyses reported here reveal striking new evidence of changes over time in the effectiveness of the parties’ local campaigns. The Liberal Democrats remain effective local campaigners, and there is little evidence that they have suffered any setbacks or advances in this area. However, the same is not so for their two larger rivals. After their 1997 disaster, it took two further elections for the Conservatives to begin to benefit from their local campaign efforts. But by 2005, they were beginning to do so, especially in the marginals they needed to win. The party was still underperforming overall (despite Labour’s weakness, the Conservatives’ overall national vote share hardly recovered from the lows of 1997 and 2001), but it was beginning to do better where it needed to. The constituency campaign revolution had reached the Tories.

But the most striking story concerns the Labour party. Since the rise of New Labour, the party has enjoyed a reputation for the ruthless efficiency and effectiveness of its campaign management. However, the evidence from the party’s local campaigns is that Labour’s campaign machine has begun to run into serious problems of diminishing returns. Highly effective when the tide of public opinion was running in the party’s favour, it has proved much less so when the tide began to turn. Faced with growing public disillusion with New Labour by 2005, the party’s campaign proved ineffective at shifting votes for the first time in recent elections. The campaign remained efficient (it was still targeted at the marginals), but it was no longer effective. Labour was still talking via its local campaigns in 2005, but the British electorate were no longer listening.
Notes

1 Our thanks to Paul Webb and the journal’s anonymous referees for their helpful and insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and to David Cutts for advice and assistance on SUR.

2 In part, this is because many constituency parties now share an agent rather than employ their own.

3 In fact, data coverage is not quite as comprehensive as this suggests. Although filing a return is a legal requirement, a few candidates – mainly from minor parties and independents – fail to do so, at least in time for inclusion in the official report. However, coverage for the main parties is virtually 100%.

4 In practice, the picture is slightly more complicated, as the law also differentiates between the costs of campaigning in more and less urban areas. The limits for candidates in urban areas (so-called borough constituencies) are lower, other things being equal, than for their counterparts in less urban areas (the county constituencies), supposedly reflecting the greater costs of campaigning in the latter than the former areas. In 2005, the maximum permitted spending in a borough constituency was £5,483 plus 4.6p for each elector on the constituency register, while in county constituencies it was £5,483 plus 6.2p per elector. The limits change slightly from election to election to take into account the effects of inflation.

5 Scotland is excluded from the analysis reported in table 2, as constituency boundaries there were changed radically prior to the 2005 election to take into account the establishment of a devolved Scottish Parliament. The number of MPs for Scottish seats in Westminster dropped from 72 to 59.

6 The 1997 election was fought in new constituencies which were introduced after the previous, 1992, election. The models for 1997 expenditure therefore measure each party’s electoral strength at the previous (1992) election using estimated values of the 1992 votes had that contest been fought in the 1997 seats (Rallings and Thrasher, 1995).

7 In seats where no other parties contested the election apart from Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, we have allocated a notional 0.1% vote share to ‘other parties’ to enable us to calculate the log odds ratio.
Bibliography


Johnston, R.J., 1987, Money and Votes: Constituency Campaign Spending and Election Results, London: Croom Helm.


Johnston, R.J. and Pattie, C.J., 2006a, Putting Voters in their Place: Geography and Elections in Great Britain, Oxford: Oxford University Press.


Table 1 Changing electoral contexts in Great Britain, 1997-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Liberal Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>status</td>
<td>incumbent</td>
<td>main challenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenge:</td>
<td>maintain support</td>
<td>gain support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>context</td>
<td>Failure: lose seats, lose power</td>
<td>Success: gain seats, gain power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>status</td>
<td>main challenger</td>
<td>incumbent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>gain support</td>
<td>maintain support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>context</td>
<td>Failure: no gains</td>
<td>Success: hold position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>status</td>
<td>main challenger</td>
<td>incumbent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>gain support</td>
<td>maintain support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>context</td>
<td>Failure: limited gains</td>
<td>Mixed: lose seats, hold power</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Stable geographies of constituency campaigning in England and Wales, 1997-2005: Principal components analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative campaign</th>
<th>Components Liberal Democrat campaign</th>
<th>Labour campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative % spend 2001</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative % spend 1997</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative % spend 2005</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem % spend 2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem % spend 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem % spend 1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour % spend 2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour % spend 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour % spend 1997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| % variance accounted for     | 28.56                 | 27.93                                 | 26.76
Table 3: Accounting for the geography of campaign spending, 1997, 2001 and 2005: party strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% vote_{t-1}</th>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>R^2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative campaign spending:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1.404**</td>
<td>14.407</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1.886**</td>
<td>12.456</td>
<td>0.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.507**</td>
<td>16.693</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour campaign spending:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.441**</td>
<td>56.551</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.767**</td>
<td>29.140</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.967**</td>
<td>17.132</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat campaign spending:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2.562**</td>
<td>-9.985</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2.196**</td>
<td>-4.310</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.094**</td>
<td>-3.717</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at p = 0.05
** significant at p = 0.01
Table 4: Marginality and the geography of campaign spending, 1997, - 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats % spend 1997</th>
<th>Seats % spend 2001</th>
<th>Seats % spend 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative % spend</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour % spend</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat %</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seat marginality, t</th>
<th>-100%</th>
<th>-19.9%</th>
<th>-9.9%</th>
<th>-4.9%</th>
<th>0.1%</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t-1</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
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<td>to</td>
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<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>-19.9%</td>
<td>-9.9%</td>
<td>-4.9%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>203.32</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>92.32</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>92.34</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| NB Margin refers to constituency marginality for individual parties at previous election.
Table 5: constituency campaign effectiveness and vote share logits, 1997-2005 – the impact of time: SUR regressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logged vote share ratio_{t-1}</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Con/Lab</td>
<td>0.8658**</td>
<td>0.9088**</td>
<td>0.9432**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD/Lab</td>
<td>0.7117**</td>
<td>0.6676**</td>
<td>0.6546**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Lab</td>
<td>0.3752**</td>
<td>0.7147**</td>
<td>0.4648**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constituency campaign spend:
- Conservative % spend: 
  - 0.0029** -0.0005 -0.0014
  - 0.0018** -0.0004 -0.0052**
  - 0.0033** 0.0007* 0.0007
- Labour % spend: 
  - -0.0012** -0.0045** -0.0076**
  - -0.0017** -0.0037** -0.0024
  - -0.0012** -0.0025** -0.0024
- Lib Dem % spend: 
  - 0.000 0.0072** 0.0046**
  - 0.0007* 0.0075** 0.0049**
  - -0.0006* 0.0061** 0.0017

Constant:
- -0.7505 -0.4929 -0.4609
- -0.0260 -0.1738 -0.4544
- 0.0002 -0.0270 -0.6380

R^2: 0.964 0.928 0.432 0.960 0.926 0.413 0.971 0.939 0.381
N: 637 637 637 637 637 637 625 625 625

* Significant at p=0.05
** Significant at p=0.001
Table 6: Range of predicted vote shares for different campaign spending scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predicted ranges:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour predicted range</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative predicted range</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat predicted range</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ All predictions assume the following scenario: a constituency in which, at the previous election, Labour, the Conservatives, and the liberal Democrats each gained 32% of the vote (with the rest going to minor parties), and where, at the current election, the other two parties spend nothing on their local campaigns. The range is the difference between each party’s predicted vote share when, in the above scenario, it spends nothing on its local campaign, and when it spends up to the legal limit.
Table 7: constituency campaign effectiveness and electorate share logits, 1997-2005 – the impact of time: SUR regressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Con/Lab</td>
<td>LD/Lab</td>
<td>OtherNV/Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged electorate share ratio, t-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con/Lab</td>
<td>0.8782**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD/Lab</td>
<td>0.7245*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other &amp; NV/Lab</td>
<td>0.7171**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituency campaign spend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative % spend</td>
<td>0.0027**</td>
<td>-0.0006</td>
<td>-0.0014**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour % spend</td>
<td>-0.0010**</td>
<td>-0.0043**</td>
<td>-0.0020**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem % spend</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0070**</td>
<td>0.0012**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.7433</td>
<td>-0.4782</td>
<td>0.2866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²                           | 0.964    | 0.928  | 0.874       | 0.960    | 0.926  | 0.881       | 0.971    | 0.939  | 0.888       |
N                             | 637      | 637    | 637         | 637      | 637    | 637         | 625      | 625    | 625         |

* Significant at p=0.05
** Significant at p=0.001
Table 8: Range of predicted electorate shares for different campaign spending scenarios^  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicted ranges:</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour predicted range</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative predicted range</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat predicted range</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^ All predictions assume the following scenario: a constituency in which, at the previous election, Labour, the Conservatives, and the Liberal Democrats each gained 20% of the electorate (with the rest going to minor parties or abstention), and where, at the current election, the other two parties spend nothing on their local campaigns. The range is the difference between each party’s predicted vote share when, in the above scenario, it spends nothing on its local campaign, and when it spends up to the legal limit.