

Institution: King's College London
Unit of Assessment: 28
Title of case study: The Rise of Unofficial Politics
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Wolfreys' research has had impact in areas of public discourse and civil society. His analysis of the contemporary extreme right has had practical implications for 'unofficial' networks in combating far-right penetration of mainstream political structures and civil society and has contributed to the development of grass-roots anti-fascist campaigns in the UK. Related research on marketisation and neoliberalism in public institutions highlights the scope for mobilisation in defence of higher education and has contributed to the establishment and development of networks mobilising in defence of public education. The beneficiaries of the impact have included anti-fascist organisations and 'unofficial' networks of activists in the UK public sector.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research was completed between 1992 and 2013 by Jim Wolfreys while a Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in French and European Studies at King's College London. Wolfreys contributed the majority of material for the expanded and updated 2003 edition of <i>The Politics of Racism and France</i> (3.6), with Peter Fysh contributing half the chapters to the original 1999 edition. The book sets out the following arguments: 1) the French Front National is the product of a reshaping of the heritage of inter-war fascism to contemporary conditions involving a recalibration of core themes of fascist ideology and propaganda, notably a shift in emphasis from racial to cultural exclusion and the courting of electoral respectability in order to attract a wide periphery to the far-right, whose aim was to expand its own hard-core of fascist activists. 2) the consensus view among French commentators and historians, that the FN was a 'national-populist' form of muscular conservatism, masked the threat posed by the organisation and obscured the need for mobilisations to isolate it and prevent it from operating in public space. 3) French Republican attitudes to questions of race and ethnicity act as a barrier to the creation of a united campaign focused on opposition to the FN. Such campaigns would need to generalise across Europe beyond the electoral arena if the rise of the far-right is to be stemmed. 4) The rise of social movements hostile to neoliberalism from the mid-1990s was symptomatic of a crisis of 'official' politics and heralded the emergence of 'unofficial' networks as a potential challenge to the established mediating structures of mainstream politics and civil society.</p> <p>This fourth element has formed part of the analytical core of several other articles by Wolfreys (3.1, 3.4, 3.5). These identify neoliberal managerialism as a defining feature of contemporary public life, characterised, paradoxically, by a lack of positive affiliation to its values. This opens up spaces for contestation and heterodoxy. The steady erosion of active affiliation to mainstream political institutions implies that this contestation has more chance of success if framed and shaped by unofficial networks and grass-roots associations, working alongside 'official' bodies. The relative success of anti-fascism in Britain, forging broad unity to isolate far-right groups, is therefore instructive with regard to France, where affiliation to Republican values has inhibited mobilisations uniting activist milieux with Muslim youth. Conversely, the experience of unofficial coordination committees in France, working in parallel to official structures, and the subsequent establishment of a national network of local committees (notably during the 2005 EU referendum and 2006 protests against the 'CPE' (the <i>contrat première embauche</i>, instituting the casualization of youth labour) grouping together trade unionists, members of grass roots associations and political activists from diverse organisations, provides a model of successful 'unofficial' mobilisation capable of offering an alternative leadership to that provided by traditional labour movement organisations.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Peer-reviewed outputs:</p> <p>3.1 'Neoliberalism in the workplace', <i>International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy</i> (6, 4, December 2012), pp.228-41.</p>

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3.2 'The European Extreme Right in Comparative Perspective' in Mammone, Godin and Jenkins, *Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), pp.19-37.

3.3 'Making racism respectable: Islamophobia in Sarkozy's France', *Global Social Justice Journal* (01,01, June 2013).

3.4 'Regroupment and retrenchment on the radical left in France', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (16,1, April 2008), pp. 69-82.

3.5 'France in revolt: 1995 - 2005', *International Socialism* (109, Winter 2006), pp.3-29.

3.6 *The Politics of Racism in France* (revised and updated second edition, with P. Fysh) (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

a) Understanding and Challenging the Far-Right

The conclusions of the research described above have been integrated into a variety of fora, and have focused on two areas. Firstly, Wolfreys has raised public awareness of how the success of the contemporary extreme-right in France is the result of its modernisation of a 'classic' fascist tradition. Secondly, and more specifically, his work and activity have led to an enhanced awareness of the importance of 'unofficial' networks and grass roots organizations in building broad-based campaigns targeting the far-right with the aim of preventing its entry into mainstream politics. Thus, academic research on the history of fascism and of the Front National, as well as analyses of its contemporary form and of the responses to it in France and across Europe, have impacted on the political consciousness of individuals and groups actively engaged in anti-fascist and anti-racist politics.

The arguments developed and proposed in the publications listed above have been presented at various fora over the past decade and sought to influence not just debate but also activity. In particular, Wolfreys has written five prominent blog pieces analysing contemporary political issues for the Guardian Online (5.1). For example, in 2009 he wrote a piece contributing to the extensive media debate on Nick Griffin's appearance on Question Time with a comparison of Le Pen and the Front National's use of the media in France. This led to a discussion among readers with 139 comments. And in 2010 Wolfreys' research on the FN fed into his Guardian Online analysis of the BNP's election manifesto, arguing that it exhibited an adaptation of fascism to contemporary conditions. The discussion that followed involved 383 comments. Other fora where Wolfreys has reached large audiences include an interview conducted with him by Adam Boulton on Sky News (3/5/12), which dealt with the French presidential election, the relationship between mainstream parties and the Front National and the consequences of making concessions to racist arguments; and an interview with Wolfreys on French radio (Europe 1, 18/2/13) explaining why mobilisations were taking place in Cambridge to contest the public platform given to Marine Le Pen in February 2013 by the Cambridge Union (5.2)

As well as contributing to public debate and understanding, Wolfreys' research has also informed activists involved in debates and campaigns over denying political legitimacy to the BNP (particularly following its success in the 2009 European elections). According to former Unite Against Fascism press officer Anindya Bhattacharyya: 'UAF campaigned with the public and lobbied journalists to persuade them that the BNP was an unrepentant fascist group despite its attempts to appear respectable. This culminated with a battle of opinion over BNP leader Nick Griffin's invitation onto the BBC's Question Time... Throughout this period Jim Wolfreys's articles and research provided useful ammunition for those of us arguing that the BNP had not changed its core politics and that it remained a fascist organisation with strong Nazi sympathies. Jim's comparisons with the Front National in France were particularly useful, both in terms of explaining the BNP's ruses and in terms of warning what might happen if they were treated as a legitimate populist organisation rather than as fascists and pariahs. Here is a message we sent out on Twitter at the time highlighting one of Jim's Guardian articles: *the Guardian has a must-read piece from Jim Wolfreys re BNP on QT : Nick Griffin follows Le Pen's lead <http://bit.ly/1odzcv> #bbcqt*. In summary I'd say Jim's research played an important role in helping anti-racists win the argument against the BNP at a crucial point when the fascists were on the cusp of unprecedented mainstream success. This kind of academic research plays an invaluable role in complementing

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and bolstering the work of campaigners and activists against racism and fascism.’ Wolfreys’ work also impacted on campaigners during the Barking election in 2010. According to one of the organisers of the 2010 mass canvassing campaign in Barking, where the BNP held twelve council seats and were hoping to elect Nick Griffin to parliament: ‘Jim’s work positively spurred our campaign, by providing a clear and steadfast analysis of the rise of the BNP locally. His contributions filtered into conversations on the doorsteps, helping us to invert the BNPs attempted logic and reverse their historic and singular electoral victory’ (5.7). Wolfreys’ arguments were also used by the UAF on its website in calls for a demonstration against Marine Le Pen’s invitation to the Cambridge Union in 2013 (5.3).

b) Unofficial Networks: the EAN

Wolfreys’ research on neoliberalism and its critics has led to the development of a threefold critique of neoliberalism in relation to i) mainstream political parties; ii) new managerialism in the workplace and iii) the marketization of the public sector. His research on the role of French social movements in contesting this agenda, notably with regard to the role of unofficial coordination committees in supplementing the work of official labour movement organisations, contributed to the formation and development of the Education Activist Network (EAN) from 2009. This body, established during a 400-strong conference at King’s College London, became a national organisation uniting students, university staff and local communities in defence of public education. Mark Bergfeld (NUS Executive Officer 2010-12, EAN activist and a prominent figure in the student demonstrations of 2010), describes the importance of Wolfreys’ research in the development of the EAN: ‘The Education Activist Network is ... at one and the same time a social movement and an organisation. During the process of contestation and mobilisation (i.e. the 2010 UK student movement, labour disputes) it moved between these two poles stretching traditional notions of “organisation” and “organising”. It drew on concepts of social movement unionism and formulated a novel form of organising. This makes it unique in today’s British social movement environment. Dr Jim Wolfreys helped to develop this model of social movement organisation.’ (5.8)

Between February 2009 and October 2012 EAN organised public meetings, protests, conferences, teach-ins and co-ordinations which involved several thousand people. EAN fora were held in scores of schools, FE colleges and universities. EAN was one of the principal contacts for news and comment pieces on the tuition fee debate, with subscribers to its email list including The Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Financial Times, The Washington Post, The Sun and The Mirror, along with TV stations including BBC News, Channel 4, Sky News and Al Jazeera. Messages of support and requests for information were received from hundreds of individuals worldwide (5.4). At the grass-roots level, the EAN involved 12 decentralised local groups and also 30 affiliate groups which included the National Union of Students. The reach of the network is shown by its email subscription list (over 7000 subscribers), its facebook organising group (over 2500 members) and its twitter account (over 5000 followers; for social media statistics, see Bergfeld’s statement, 5.8). EAN also produced a series of educational materials, disseminated through local groups and affiliated bodies, geared towards the elaboration and dissemination of practical tools for resisting neo-liberal ideas and policies in the public sector, notably in the form of the 2011 HE White Paper. Wolfreys’ briefing on the White Paper, ‘Universities for Hire’, sold between 2000 and 3000 copies, with orders and invitations to speak on it received from dozens of universities.

Bergfeld has described the importance of Wolfreys’ research to the EAN: ‘From the initial meetings onwards, Dr Wolfreys drew upon his extensive academic knowledge of the organisation of the French public sector work stoppages against the Juppé government in 1995 and the anti-CPE protests against precarity. This knowledge was an invaluable resource for younger activists and less experienced social movement participants [...] Dr Wolfreys acted as a facilitator and helped to oversee this new project from its formation onwards. His arguments and insights allowed the network to be maintained as open as possible without collapsing into a traditional organisation. [...] Wolfreys enabled the network to stand in its own right within social movements and several labour disputes at the time. The fact that a number of organisations such as the Campaign for the Public University and OUCHE! (Oxford University Campaign for Higher Education) modelled themselves on this example is further testimony to Wolfreys innovative and intellectual quality.’ (5.8)

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Wolfreys' research in this area also impacted on the University and College Union (UCU). According to senior trade union official Michael MacNeil, UCU's National Head of Higher Education, 'Between 2010 and 2012 there were major debates within the University and College Union about ... union policy in response to the Government's neo-liberal reforms...The positions adopted were the result of real tensions within the union and Dr. Wolfreys' work, was influential on significant groupings of activists and members within the University and College Union. He was instrumental in the development of the Education Activists' Network, which seemed to exemplify a practical application of his academic analysis.' (5.8)

Other fora where Wolfreys' research in this field reached a wide audience include interviews with Europe 1 (17/11/11), on the relationship between mobilisations in defence of public education and the strikes by public sector trade unions over pension reform, and with French radio station France Culture (30/11/10, 4/5/11) on the relationship between students and education workers and their potential to unite in defence of universal access to higher education. The latter interviews focused specifically on Wolfreys' role as a researcher on social movements and participant in them (5.6).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Guardian Online articles:

'Nick Griffin follows Le Pen's lead,' 22 October 2009

'Sarkoy's Tough Talk on French Identity,' 6 November 2009

'Did Sarkozy boost the Front National?' 24 March 2010

'BNP can't count on Barking breakthrough', 24 April 2010

'BNP manifesto seeks more than votes,' 29 April 2010

Articles and ensuing discussions archived at: <http://www.theguardian.com/profile/jim-wolfreys>

5.2 Interview with Adam Boulton on French elections, Sky News, 3/5/12

(<https://twitter.com/SkyNewsPR/status/198014620315824129>); interview with Europe 1 on anti-FN mobilisation, Cambridge, 18/2/13.

5.3. UAF website, <http://uaf.org.uk/2013/02/never-again-no-to-le-pen/> (written by Wolfreys).

5.4 EAN: <http://educationactivistnetwork.wordpress.com/>. Email correspondence to EAN is held by Wolfreys and includes statements of activity and support (including support from Argentina and the US).

5.5. 'Universities for Hire: the Higher Education White Paper and the marketisation of academia', Education Activist Network briefing (hard copy available on request).

5.6. Radio interview, Europe 1 (17/11/11), on social movements, higher education and opposition to pension reform; radio interview, France Culture (3/11/10 and 4/5/11) on the relationship between his research on social movements and participation in networks contesting the marketization of higher education. For recordings see:

<http://www.franceculture.fr/emission-questions-d-epoque-regard-sur-les-revoltes-etudiantes-en-angleterre-les-violences-a-l%E2%80%99ecole>

<http://www.franceculture.fr/personne-jim-wolfreys.html>

Corroborating statements from individuals who can attest to impact within particular organisations and campaigns:

5.7 Testimonies relating to impact on anti-fascism from former UAF press officer and Barking anti-BNP organiser.

5.8 Testimonies relating to impact on defence of public education from National Head of Higher Education, UCU, and from Former Executive Officer, UCU.