

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution: Liverpool Hope University</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 19 Politics and International Studies</b>		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Building Effective and Empowering Political Activism		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> January 2014 – May 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Danny Rye Dr Rob Busby	Senior Lecturer Senior Lecturer	Jan 2015-present 1994 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> July 2015 – July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Rye and Busby's research addresses effective, empowering political organisation. Respectively, they identify a) good practice and organisational structures that balance effectiveness and participation; b) effective grassroots recruitment and mobilisation. Via workshops conducted in 2015 and 2017, the research led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing Women's Equality Party Merseyside campaigning priorities and strategy, which prioritised the End Violence Against Women and Girls campaign;</li> <li>• an innovative grassroots networking initiative, 'World Wide Wednesday', supporting the European Movement Merseyside;</li> <li>• helping local activists shape effective, inclusive approaches to activism.</li> <li>• raising regional awareness and understanding (listener reach of 300,000) of how power relations and organisation impact on politics and government.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The research is part of the Politics and International Studies team's political organisation and activism research theme. It addresses the question of what makes political campaigns, organisations, parties and movements powerful: both in terms of articulating and achieving tangible goals and in terms of 'empowering' participants by fostering in them a sense of ownership and effectiveness. This is particularly important for marginalised, voiceless and excluded communities.</p> <p>It recognises an inherent paradox in organised political action. Organisation is essential to the powerless, marginalised and voiceless getting heard and to mobilising political action and engagement in their interests. At the same time, however, the organised pursuit of goals can lead to domination by leaders or organisers, restricting the capacity of marginalised groups to express themselves. This danger, however, is not an inevitability. Organisation is also the way that less-powerful and marginalised groups get heard, make gains, achieve justice. The research therefore is oriented towards identifying and obviating the potential for domination and marginalisation within campaigns, movements and organisations, and strengthening more empowering structures and practices.</p> <p>Dr Danny Rye researches power and political organisation, seeking to apply the theoretical understanding of political power to the actual practice and development of contemporary political organisations. His work focuses on how the structure and organisation of political parties and campaigning groups support (or stymie) citizenship mobilisation and an active sense of political participation, thus providing insights into what makes for an 'empowering' organisation.</p>		

Dr Robert Busby has been conducting research on grass-roots political movements in the United States, particularly on the right, and their impact on mainstream politics. A key part of his work concerns how grassroots movements can learn from one another, emulating the success of related organisations (for example the Tea Party in the United States and the Bonnets Rouges in France).

The research by Rye and Busby has been undertaken since 2010 and is ongoing. It collectively offers the following insights:

- The structure of power relations in a political party is impacted by the pursuit of political power. Even as it becomes more effective in this, the impact it has on those participating in it the organisation is one which engenders an increasing sense of powerlessness and marginalisation on the part of activists (R1).
- An empowering organisation shares resources and knowledge, is based on collaboration (rather than command), is adaptable and open to change. It builds solidarity and 'produces' effective political activists through constructive training and inclusive communications strategies. This supports strong social bonds within movements which helps build trust, intra-group identity and cohesion (R2, R4).
- Community organising (Citizens UK) and online platforms (38 Degrees) provide new models of citizen engagement, cultivating and supporting citizen-led grassroots campaigns, and fills some of the civil society space left by parties (although not the vital citizen-state 'linkage' role parties can provide) (R3).
- The retreat of parties from civil society creates a sense of dislocation from political power (R3) and alienation of members and activists (R1) as they become remote and elitist (R2)
- The emergence of grassroots 'insurgent' movements and new political organisations on the right (R4) and on the left (R5) has disrupted the political landscape and provided alternative models to 'traditional' hierarchical models of political organisation.
- Grass-roots movements can provide mutual support across international boundaries through networks of sharing, learning and copying mobilisation strategies, communications techniques and action repertoires (R4).

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

**R1** Rye, Danny (2014) *Political Parties and Power: A Theoretical Framework* (Basingstoke: Palgrave). ISBN: 978-1-137-33160-1 / DOI: 10.1057/9781137331601

**Evidence of quality:** high quality international publisher, peer review process, reviews and acclaim from top academics

**R2** Rye, Danny (2015) The Concept of Power in the Analysis of Organisations with Social and Political Goals. *Journal of Political Power*, 8 (3). pp. 301-320. ISSN 1754-0291 doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2015.1095846

**Evidence of quality:** rigorous peer review process, high quality international journal

**R3** Dommett, Katharine and Rye, Danny (2018) Taking up the baton? New campaigning organisations and the enactment of representative functions. *Politics* 38 (4), 411-427. ISSN 0263-3957 doi.org/10.1177/0263395717725934

**Evidence of quality:** rigorous peer review process, high quality journal

**R4** Busby, Robert and Hoey, Paddy (2018) Le Tea Party Français: the Bonnets Rouges, the Tea Party and mirror movements of grassroots protest. *Journal of Comparative Politics*. 11(1) ISSN 1338-1385 www.jofcp.org/assets/jcp/JCP-January-2018.pdf

**Evidence of quality:** rigorous peer review process, high quality journal

**R5** Muldoon, J. and Rye D. (2020) Conceptualising Party Driven Movements British Journal of Politics and International Relations Published online May 20 2020  
doi.org/10.1177/2F1369148120919744

**Evidence of quality:** rigorous peer review process, high quality journal

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

Key beneficiaries and impacts can be summarised as:

**(I1) Women's Equality Party Liverpool:** helped develop campaigning priorities and strategy, leading to a region-wide strategy to tackle violence against women and girls.

**(I2) 'WorldWide Wednesday' (European Movement Merseyside):** provided stimulus for the foundation of this innovative grassroots networking initiative.

**(I3) Local activists:** inspired local activists to develop their approaches to activism.

**(I4) General regional audiences:** enhancing public understanding of the impact of power relations and organisation on politics.

**I1, I2 and I3** were facilitated by two workshops held in Liverpool based on the research insights:

- **'Colloquium on Activism'** on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2015 (organisers: Dr Rye, Dr Stefanie Kappler).  
*Key topics:* recruitment and mobilisation (R1, R3), balancing participation and effective campaigns (R1, R2), effective social media campaigning (R4, R2), strategies and action repertoires (R4, R5, R2).
- **'Exploring Effective Activism'** workshop on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017 (organiser: Dr Rye).  
*Key topics:* participation and empowerment (R1, R2), interfacing with politicians and parties (R3), ensuring 'ownership' by beneficiary communities (R2), conflict versus consensus-building in action strategies (R4, R5).

The workshops were designed to:

- establish dialogue between local activists and academics;
- share learning from research and practice;
- inform effective, inclusive strategies and techniques for mobilisation, campaigning and related activities.

Forty-eight people in total attended the two workshops including: representatives of twenty-two local groups supporting refugees, migrants, pensioners, workers and women; people engaged in community health, mental health, community engagement and regeneration; independent organisers, activists, politicians and academics.

#### Impacts I1-I4

##### **(I1) Women's Equality Party (WE)**

WE, a feminist political party founded in 2015, promotes and campaigns for policies on women's equality. There are 65 local branches. WE claimed 65,000 members by 2017 (6).

Following attendance at the 2017 workshop, WE Liverpool's Branch Chair (and Metro-Mayor candidate), Tabitha Morton, invited Rye to lead a members' meeting focusing on WE campaigning priorities and strategies for the year ahead, for which he devised some particular bespoke themes:

- **Mobilisation, thinking as ‘activists’:** Many members had “not been involved in politics or campaigning before joining WE” (1) and “Danny was able to help them to get thinking about what activism is, what it means to them and make it more tangible and a lot less scary!” (2).
- **Identifying locally relevant issues reflecting WE values:** WE were “looking for ... a wider pool of ideas on how we can make a difference in the Liverpool City Region” (1).
- **Identifying effective actions based on resources and talents:** “we talked about different actions for creating change” (4) “and achieving WE’s goals in the Liverpool City Region.” (2), including the balance between protest and engagement with decision-makers.

It was “a most productive evening” with “some very interesting campaigns agreed upon” (3) and “we got some exciting plans for the future underway!” (4). Further comment included: “Out of this session, we developed ideas for our future campaigning that really helped us in getting our message across and in helping to bring about positive change in Merseyside” (2)

Key outcomes:

- decision made to continue the *End Violence Against Women and Girls* campaign (2)
- initiated “a Liverpool City Region summit” with Metro-Mayor, Steve Rotheram and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Emily Spurrell (2).
- result was a region-wide strategy to address the significant problem of domestic violence in the region (5).

### **(I2) WorldWide Wednesday (WWW) / European Movement Merseyside (EMM)**

WWW is an innovative monthly networking event with an internationalist outlook which acts as “the main outreach exercise” for EMM (7).

Former European Parliament Official, Tim Beyer Helm, attended the 2017 workshop hoping to “listen and learn from grassroots campaigners, activists and academics about how communities can improve citizen participation.” Following the 2016 Brexit vote, he was looking for ideas to encourage pro-Europeans to “focus on the challenges of and opportunities for empowering people at the grassroots level.” (7)

He affirmed that the workshop “fully met my expectations, providing an invaluable opportunity to shape my thinking ... about how to involve members of the local community in shaping the pro-European debate” locally. Sessions on mobilisation, participation and political engagement “helped inform my approach to local engagement, **giving me the necessary foundation and stimulus for the Liverpool launch ... of WorldWide Wednesday.**” (7)

Thus, the work of Busby and Rye had a direct impact on the establishment of WWW. It was further reported that, to date, “WWW has been involved in organising more than forty events, gatherings and seminars with over 135 speakers reaching over two thousand individuals plus tens of thousands more via our social media and dedicated YouTube channel” (7). WWW has 700 subscribers and over 100,000 views on YouTube (8), and over 3,700 Twitter followers.

Post-Brexit, the mission of WWW was articulated as now “to encourage people living in our area to think local and act global whilst also thinking globally, acting locally. I firmly believe local community action and projects can make a difference well beyond our immediate locales by creating a spirit of solidarity that reaches across borders.” (7)

**(I3) Local Activists**

Feedback suggests the workshops influenced attitudes and approaches of activists attending. His participation led Jonathon O'Brien of the Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission to "focus much more on the concept of non-violence as an organising principle for my work (and) ... persuade my fellow commissioners of the importance of building links with other activist groups." (9)

Further (anonymous) feedback on the workshops suggested that they provided (10):

- "an opportunity to ... make my own campaigning more effective and inclusive";
- "well facilitated discussions" that brought "insight" and a "greater understanding" of activism;
- useful "insights from other activists and groups";
- stimulus to "organise partnerships" with other activists and academics.

**(I4) General Audiences**

Based on his research on the internal workings of political parties, in particular the Labour Party [R1, R5], and on empowerment [R2], Rye made media appearances providing insight into Labour leadership elections, mayoral selection processes and conferences, thereby contributing to shaping public attitudes and debate, and enhancing public awareness and understanding of Labour Party politics:

- 2015 National Public Radio, United States (weekly audience 30 million (11)).
- 2016 BBC TV The Sunday Politics North West
- 2016 BBC Radio Merseyside's peak-time Breakfast, Drivetime and lunchtime shows (318,000 listeners p/week (12)).
- 2017 Liverpool TV 'Liverpool Today' (up to 55,000 viewers (13)).

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

- (1) Tabitha Morton e-mail to Danny Rye 19 Sept 2017
- (2) Tabitha Morton e-mail to Dr Danny Rye 17 July 2020
- (3) Tabitha Morton Tweet 21 September 2017
- (4) Women's Equality Party Liverpool Facebook page 21 September 2017
- (5) LCR Press Release 8 March 2018 (<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/liverpool-city-region-leaders-release-new-mission-statement-in-fight-against-violence-against-women-and-girls/>)
- (6) Interview with Tabitha Morton in *the Guardian* March 13 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/shortcuts/2017/mar/13/mayor-northern-powerhouse-womens-equality-party-tabitha-morton-liverpool>)
- (7) Tim Beyer Helm e-mail to Danny Rye 7 December 2020
- (8) WorldWide Wednesday YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfnjylVgsb1tJXGwWNLjmEQ>)
- (9) Email to Dr Danny Rye from Dr Jonathon O'Brien 27 October 2020
- (10) Feedback from 'Exploring Effective Activism' Workshop 13 July 2017
- (11) Nielsen Audio Ratings ([http://www.insideradio.com/free/npr-shatters-its-ratings-record/article\\_1ac83616-0a10-11e7-a460-4b24c0471d8b.html](http://www.insideradio.com/free/npr-shatters-its-ratings-record/article_1ac83616-0a10-11e7-a460-4b24c0471d8b.html))
- (12) BBC Radio Merseyside Listening Figures (See: <https://media.info/radio/stations/bbc-radio-merseyside/listening-figures>)
- (13) Liverpool TV Viewing Figures (2019 figures): (<https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/news/broadcasting-news/2019/07/local-tv-issues-challenge-newspapers-it-reaches-5-million-viewers>)