The Far Right in the 2006-08 English Local Elections: Is there Spatial Dependence?

Citation for published version (APA):
Ford, R., Goodwin, R., & John, P. C. (2009). The Far Right in the 2006-08 English Local Elections: Is there Spatial Dependence? In *The Annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association 67th Annual National Conference, Chicago, IL.*

Published in:
The Annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association 67th Annual National Conference, Chicago, IL.

The Far Right in the 2006-08 English Local Elections:

Is There Spatial Dependence? [1]

Robert Ford, Matthew J. Goodwin & Peter John

University of Manchester

Abstract

This paper argues that contemporary political science analysis has not adequately taken into account spatial dependence when using aggregate data to determine support for the far right. After reviewing existing aggregate studies of far right support, the paper analyses the vote for the British National Party (BNP) at the ward level in the English local government elections of 2006, 2007 and 2008. The paper presents MORAN'S I statistics that show strong spatial autocorrelation in all elections. LISA cluster maps indicate spatial dependence in the West Midlands, the North West, East London and Essex. The paper draws out the implication for future research.

Introduction

In recent years there has occurred a significant increase of electoral support for parties on the radical right-wing. Parties such as the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Danish People's Party (DFN) and French National Front (FN) have recruited a large and in some cases durable base of support. As others observe, the rise of these challenger parties is one of the most significant changes to have occurred in several postwar European party systems (Van der Brug et al. 2005: 538). Yet not all of these parties have enjoyed as much success as others; while some have joined national governing coalitions others have struggled to enter local government. In contrast to the more electorally successful new radical right, old extreme right-wing parties such as the British National Party (BNP) and National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) have enjoyed less success, finding most of their support confined to a handful of localities or specific regions (e.g. Backes 2006). Nonetheless, all of these parties – which we will loosely refer to as far right - have attracted considerable scholarly interest.[2] There is now a large body of research focused on various aspects of the far right phenomenon; while numerous studies have examined the social characteristics of far right voters (e.g. Lubbers & Scheepers 2000; Lubbers et al. 2000; McGann & Kitschelt 2005; Van der Brug 2003), recent research has devoted more effort to explaining the significant cross-national variation in levels of support for the far right (e.g. Arzheimer & Carter 2006; Carter 2005; Kitschelt 1995; Koopmans et al. 2005; Lubbers et al. 2002; Norris 2005; Van der Brug et al. 2005).

This literature has cast much light on the social bases of support for the contemporary far right and employs increasingly sophisticated methodological techniques. Yet while sharpening our understanding of the dynamics of far right party support there remain problems in terms of how this support is approached. As

suggested by these opening remarks, research on far right support is often based either on individual level data collected in surveys or data aggregated at the national level while few studies undertake spatial analysis using aggregate data in local government or other subnational units or even local election tracts for national elections. The lack of attention to spatial analysis appears particularly striking when we consider that support for these parties appears spatially complex. For example, studies of earlier waves of far right voting (e.g. Husbands 1983) as well as more recent research (e.g. Coffé et al. 2007) suggest that local and/or regional contextual factors assume an important role in explanations of far right support. Indeed, support for this party sub-type often appears heavily concentrated in particular locales, such as support for Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*; VB) in Antwerp or support for the French FN in Toulon, the Rhône valley, 'pied-noir' cities such as Marseille and Nice and parts of the more industrial North. Similarly, in Britain support for the earlier National Front (NF) in the 1970s was traced to specific working class communities in parts of London's inner East End and the West Midlands, with studies pointing toward the importance of a specific local working class culture in these areas (see Husbands 1983; Whiteley 1979). Meanwhile, support for the NF's successor – the British National Party – appears more rooted in parts of outer-east London, England's North West and the West Midlands (see Goodwin et al. 2010). At broad level, it has been noted that while an important source of enduring and influential interactions is physical proximity, 'the concept of "space" – in particular that the behavior of people is somehow related to and affected by the behavior of those who reside in close proximity – has received too little attention in political science' (Cho 2003: 368). This observation is especially salient in respect to the study of far right support which has tended not to examine spatial patterns in the data and, more specifically, the extent to

4

which support for the far right in one locale affects support in neighbouring areas. Such support may well depend much on local imitation, contagion from neighbouring authorities and 'spill-over' effects as a result of campaigning and logistical support. Analysis based only analyzing the aggregate determinants of support will miss out on the dynamic aspects of the process. By understanding the spatial nature of the far right vote, it may be possible to understand some of the causal mechanisms for the expansion of support when the demographics remain constant over successive time periods. This paper is a first step in that direction seeking to find out whether the data is in fact spatially auto-correlated as the precursor to more advanced regression work that can model the impact of space on far-right support.

This paper is organized as follows: first, we provide an overview of the literature on far right support; second, we present an overview of our case study, the British National Party (BNP); third, we discuss our data and methods; fourth, we present our results analysing spatial auto-correlation; finally, we make some concluding remarks and highlight implications of these findings for aggregate studies of far right support.

Theoretical Overview

In recent years the literature on far right party support has become vast, incorporating different disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches (for overviews see Eatwell 2003; Rydgren 2007; Van der Brug and Fennema 2007). In general, support for these parties' is traced to men, voters who are either young or rather old, the less well educated, those in lower social strata and who are motivated primarily by xenophobic feelings and beliefs (see Arzheimer 2009). Examining the nature of this support, numerous studies have utilized data aggregated at the national level (e.g.

5

Kessler & Freeman 2005; Knigge 1998; Swank & Betz 2003). Jackman and Volpert (1996) analyze support for the far right in 103 elections held in 16 countries in the period 1970-1990. By estimating a Tobit model of the far rights' vote share, their study suggests that the far right profits from higher levels of unemployment and a more proportional electoral system but suffers as a result of higher electoral thresholds. Golder (2003) analyzes support for 19 parties in 165 elections in the period 1970-2000, suggesting a positive relationship between support for the far right and higher levels of unemployment and immigration.

More recent studies have voiced criticism over the traditional macro–level focus and the heavy reliance on national level data. As argued by Jesuit et al. (2009), despite the substantial cross-regional variance within countries in both votes for the far right and the major variables that have been employed to explain these votes the literature remains dominated by national-level analyses. Like others (e.g. Eatwell 2003), these scholars call for greater attention to be directed toward the local or subnational context. In similar fashion, Kestilä and Söderlund (2007b: 774) observe that whilst political scientists have long stressed the importance of analyzing data at the level of districts or wards, there remain an abundance of studies of far right support at the aggregate national level yet few which focus on subnational arenas, thereby making it difficult to capture the effects of processes at these lower levels. In an attempt to overcome such problems, some studies have moved toward a multi-dimensional approach, including micro-, meso- and macro-level factors. The study by Arzheimer and Carter (2006), focused on 24 national elections (1984-2001), finds a negative effect of unemployment on far right support and indicates that mainstream right-wing parties that adopt a tough position on immigration may legitimize far right policies.[3] Based on individual level survey data, census data and an expert survey,

Lubbers et al. (2002) suggest that far right voting is not affected by unemployment but is affected by the number of non-EU citizens and far right party-centric factors, such as the presence of a charismatic leader and internal organization. Arzheimer's (2009) multi-level model of the far right vote, spanning the period 1980-2002, confirms earlier findings at the individual level, namely those groups which are more likely to be in competition with immigrants over resources (i.e. manual workers, younger voters and the unemployed), who have exhibited high levels of xenophobia in the past, and who express higher levels of political dissatisfaction are more likely than others to vote far right.[4]

Several studies have also set out to examine support by using data aggregated at the subnational level (Jesuit et al. 2009; Kestilä & Söderlund 2007a, 2007b; also Dülmer and Klein 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers 2002). These studies support that strand of political science literature which argues that 'context matters'. For example, examining support for the Belgian VB at municipal level Coffé et al. (2007) identify a higher average income level and a large proportion of Islamic immigrants as important predictors of far right support (while the presence of other non-Muslim immigrants has no effect). Interestingly, this study also indicates that the VB polls stronger in municipalities that have lower levels of social capital. Jesuit et al. (2009) draw on constituency and regional level data to examine support for the far right in 14 national elections held in eight West European countries. As above, this research suggests that a lack of social capital at regional level promotes support for the far right, albeit indirectly (i.e. levels of social capital appear to mediate the association between immigration and far right support).[5] Kestilä and Söderlund (2007b; though see also Arzheimer & Carter 2010) examine political opportunity structures for the French FN in 94 departments in the regional elections in 2004, finding that higher

turnout and district magnitude have significant negative effects on far right support but that the number of party lists and unemployment have a positive significant effect. Recent studies of support for the far right in Britain have similarly adopted a subnational focus (see below).

While providing important insight into the local and regional drivers of far right support few of these studies have undertaken detailed spatial analysis. The potential usefulness of this approach is aptly demonstrated in research on voting patterns for interwar Nazism. Observing how existing studies hint at a complex geographic patterning, research by O'Loughlin (2002; see also O'Loughlin et al. 1994) employs exploratory spatial data analysis methods to probe more deeply regional and local contextual elements, in the process contending that 'the Nazi party support was a mosaic of locally expressed factors and that no single explanation of the vote is expressed commonly across the country' (Ibid. 218). Such an approach highlights the cartographic complexity of support for the NSDAP, suggesting that the Nazis pushed a variegated appeal which often varied from one area to the next depending on regional appeals and local idiosyncracies.

The Far Right in Britain

As a result of a lack of data at the individual level the study of far right support in Britain has relied heavily on analysis at the aggregate level to infer support for parties such as the National Front (NF) in the 1970s and, more recently, the British National Party (BNP). Though founded in 1982, for much of the next two decades the BNP languished in the electoral ghetto. While its European counterparts were ascending to impressive electoral heights, between the years 1982-2001 the BNP elected just a single local councillor, a former school bus driver who was elected in Tower Hamlets

in September 1993. While this success was short-lived, the BNP continued to perform well in areas of outer-London, as in a parliamentary by-election in Dagenham in 1994 in which the BNP candidate polled seven per cent (becoming the first extreme right candidate to retain his deposit since the earlier NF polled 16 per cent in a West Bromwich by-election in 1973).

Yet with the new millennium arrived a new party strategy that led the BNP to shift its focus away from traditional bastions of support such as London's inner East End toward deindustrializing districts in England's North West. This change of strategy was soon reflected in the party's electoral returns. In the general election in 2001 BNP candidates recruited a significant level of support in North West constituencies such as Burnley (11.3 per cent), Oldham West and Royton (16.4 per cent) and Oldham East and Saddleworth (11.2 per cent). Support in the region was underlined in local elections the following year in which three BNP councillors were elected onto Burnley Borough Council. Shortly afterward, and drafting in activists from nearby branches, the BNP contested two local by-elections in nearby Blackburn and Halifax, electing two additional councillors after what the party described as its 'most sophisticated election campaign in our history'.[6] In local elections the following year, the party fielded 220 candidates, more than three times the number stood the previous year. The party continued to perform well in parts of the North West, becoming the official opposition on Burnley Borough Council with eight seats and also polled well in parts of the West Midlands such as Dudley, Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent and areas of outer-London. In terms of the latter, the election of a former NF activist in Broxbourne was cited by the BNP leadership as evidence that the 'white flight ring around London' was 'intensely fertile' for the party.[7]

In elections to the European Parliament in 2004, the number of citizens voting BNP increased more than seven-fold on the result in 1999 to over 808,000, with the party again performing strongest in the North West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber.[8] In the General Election in 2005, the BNP fielded 119 candidates (out of 646 constituencies), more than a three-fold increase on the number stood in 2001. Party strategists instructed local branches to select and canvass one target constituency, with the aim of strengthening the party's grassroots presence and using the contest as a springboard to success in local elections the following year.[9] While nationally the BNP only polled 0.7 per cent of votes cast, in the seats they contested BNP candidates averaged 4.3 per cent and in 31 constituencies surpassed the 5 per cent threshold required to retain the parliamentary deposit. Moreover, in a further three seats BNP candidates received over 10 per cent of the vote, most noticeably in Barking where the BNP saw its level of support increase by over 10 points to 16.9 per cent, the best result for a far right parliamentary candidate in British history. The party retained a more targeted focus in local elections in 2006 in which it fielded 356 candidates and took its tally of local councillors to 53. In Barking and Dagenham, 11 of the 13 BNP candidates were elected onto the local council. Buoyed by such gains, in local elections held in 2007 the party stood over 740 candidates, fielding over 100 candidates in its 'core' regions; the North West, West Midlands and Yorkshire. While the party's electoral returns did not match its ambitions, in elections to the Greater London Assembly (GLA) held in May 2008 the party attracted national publicity after gaining one seat on the Assembly. The party invested heavily in the campaign, claiming to have devoted £75,000, more than three times the amount spent on elections in London in 2000.[10] As part of the BNP's community-based strategy, organizers drafted in activists from branches nationwide to help distribute 900,000

copies of the party's election pamphlet and 300,000 calling cards.[11] Prior to polling day, the party claimed that over 150 activists had been drafted in to deliver election material primarily in Barking and Dagenham, Bexley and Redbridge.[12] In the local elections held in 2008, the BNP performed less well, fielding 608 candidates across 90 local authorities and polling 234,527 votes (see Table 1).

Voting BNP: Existing Research

Support for the contemporary far right in Britain has been the focus of only a few studies, all of which have relied on aggregate-level data and focused only on one or two sets of local elections. In earlier years, aggregate level analysis of support for the National Front (NF) in Greater London (Whiteley 1979) suggested that the party polled strongest in areas with large numbers of manual workers, though particularly in London's East End where the Front appeared to profit from a longer tradition of racial exclusionism (see Husbands 1983). In more recent years, analysis of ward level aggregate data suggests that the BNP performs strongest in deprived urban areas and where there are higher proportions of skilled manual workers and individuals with no qualifications (Borisyuk et al. 2007; JRRT 2005). The study by John et al. (2006) similarly finds that the BNP performs stronger in wards with large numbers of less educated individuals, those who are middle-aged and at the council level where there is a noticeable Asian population, though in particular Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (while no significant relationship is found for the presence of Indian Asian groups). Focusing on the local elections in 2002-03, Bowyer (2008) draws on district and ward-level data, finding that the BNP performs strongest in urban, deprived areas and in ethnically diverse districts though in particular districts with a large Muslim presence (though at ward level the party's support appears to stem from ethnically

homogeneous 'white enclaves'). There have also been case studies of individual localities, based on qualitative interviews with BNP voters (Rhodes 2006) or archival materials and secondary literature (Copsey 1996; Goodwin 2008). Though useful in terms of shedding light on party strategy and the important role of local contextual factors these studies do not permit a more systematic examination of BNP support. Indeed, it is worth recalling Kitschelt's (1995: 255-6) earlier observation of the limits of ecological reasoning in regard to the British case, namely that ecological evidence is too thin to prove individual level arguments about the nature of support for the British far right.

The Spatial Approach to Model Estimation

Social science tends to use techniques that do not take into account of spatial interdependence. Conventional regression analysis assumes the units of observation to be independent yet in practice in the world is not so simple as the observations from one case may depend on those from another case. This may be over time as in time series analysis, but also across space. In respect to voting behaviour, a vote cast in one location may link to votes cast in nearby areas. Spatial analysis seeks to explore and allow for this spatial dependence, either visually or in a regression model by applying weights to the estimation. This kind of thinking has a long pedigree in geography, which started to be explored much more in the 1970s (see Fotheringham et al 2000 for review). More recent applications have been the development of a family of statistics and measures and the use of GIS to visualise the results (see Anselin 1995). The result has been a series of papers and publication across several subfields and recent applications within econometric and political science (see Darmofal 2008; Franzese and Hays 2007).

In this paper we do not aim to carry out a full spatial analysis of far right support in the UK. That awaits further stages in our current research project which will be a spatial analysis of local election results from 2002-08, running regressions to take account of demographic and political characteristics, then taking account of the spatial autocorrelation through weighted models. For this paper we seek simply to show whether the data in two years is spatially correlated or not. This allows us to offer the criticism of studies that use regression on aggregate-level data that their models may have spatially auto-correlated errors, which means their coefficients are biased and the standard errors may be incorrect. Of course, it may be the case that the controls within the regression models have adequately accounted for the spatial character of the data. But if they have not tested for any remaining correlation, it is not possible to know that from reading their results whether their estimates are correct or not. With the preparatory analysis carried out here, we can also prepare the ground for further analysis subsequent to this paper.

Data and Methods

Our data draw from ward level results in the English local elections 2006-2008 as they appear in the local election handbook for 2006-2008, published by the University of Plymouth (Rallings and Thrasher 2006, 2007, 2008). We thank Colin Rallings and ICoCo for making the data available to us electronically. We use ESRI's shape file for these ward level units, which is the standard for storing spatial information. We use GeoDa software (Anselin 2003) to produce these statistics and figures. To produce these figures we specify a weights matrix, which in this case is a queen. We first present the standard method for detecting autocorrelations, Moran's I statistic. A significant positive correlation indicates positive correlations and the negative figure

the opposite. The MORAN statistic may be presented through a scatterplot which show quadrants with positive and negative autocorrelation. The second stage is to present LISA statistics, which give local Moran statistics for particular locations, which allow the reader to inspect where the areas where the spatial autocorrelation is occurring and what type it is. We present the cluster map the divides up the quadrants into different high-high, high-low, low-high and low-low elements.

Results

We present the results for vote share for the BNP in local elections for the different years. Different councils have elections in these years which will explain part of the difference in these maps, though there are core of districts that have elections every year.[13]

Figures 1-3 shows the scatterplots for these years, which shows a high degree of autocorrelation for each year, with Moran's I of .202, .397 and .443 respectively, which indicates high positive autocorrelation. This also appears to be growing over time, which will be interesting to explore in later data analysis. Perhaps the BNP is gaining more of an effect generated by its presence and prominence in recent years, partly through publicity and also through the growth in the number of candidates (see Table 1)?

Figures 4-6 present the LISA cluster maps for the vote shares for the same years, which shoes the positive autocorrelation for BNP vote in its heartlands of the North West, West Midlands, East London and Essex. What is particularly interesting are the areas of low-high (light blue) autocorrelation in areas near the red high-high areas,

which we appear to be near areas of ethnic minority concentration, which might be similar geographically but do not have a high BNP vote. We need to investigate this in further analysis. We repeated but do not report the same analysis on BNP candidate nomination, which yields similar results as in Figures 1-6, but with a wider number of areas, such as the North East, where the BNP put forward candidates, but did not get votes.

Conclusions and Implications

These results indicate that the vote for the BNP in English local elections is spatially interdependent. The vote (and the putting forward of candidates) in part depends on the existence of BNP voters in neighbouring areas. Interestingly there are areas near these BNP areas which appear to get less votes than predicted in the spatial model. This indicates a complex geography where proximity appears to generate support but also lack of support either because of possible resistance to the far right or supply factors, such as shortage of candidates and resources. Needless to say, such explanations and observations are suggested rather than being concluded by our data analysis. It is entirely possible that the spatial dependence in our data is caused by the presence of proximity of socio-demographic factors, such as unemployment, the social class configuration of different areas and their proximity to where ethnic minorities live. If this is the case, the MORAN's I statistic would reduce dramatically in regressions with these covariates, and tests of spatial auto-correlation would not yield significant results. But we do not think this is the case, partly from observing the concentration of the vote, which indicates a spatial pattern. Indeed there are areas of the country that do not have spatial dependence which resemble and have similar histories to the BNP-voting areas. Even if critics do not accept this argument, it

remains for the analysis of aggregate data to show that the data are not spatially dependent. Studies that use aggregate data in English elections have not tested for spatial autocorrelation, so are not able to refute this hypothesis. If it were found that the data is spatially dependent, then estimates based on regressions, without a weight, may be biased and standard errors incorrect. In our future work, with this data, we aim to carry out regressions of this sort to test out core claims from the extreme right literature in a manner. We will use aggregate data, but apply models that correct for spatial dependence.

REFERENCES

Anselin, L.. (2003). *GeoDa 0.9 User's Guide. Spatial Analysis Laboratory*, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL.

Arzheimer, K. (2009) 'Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe, 1980-2002', *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), forthcoming

Arzheimer, K. and Carter, E. (2006) 'Political Opportunity Structures and Right-Wing Extremist Party Success', *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(3): 419-443

Arzheimer, K. and Carter, E. (2010) 'How (not) to Operationalize Subnational Political Opportunity Structures: A Critique of Kestilä and Söderlund's Study of Regional Elections', forthcoming in *European Journal of Political Research*

Backes, U. (2006) 'The Electoral Victory of the NPD in Saxony and the Prospects for Future Extreme Right Success in German Elections', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(2): 129-141

Bowyer, B. (2008) Local context and extreme right support in England: The British National Party in the 2002 and 2003 local elections, *Electoral Studies*, 27, 611-620

Carter, E. (2005) *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?* Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press.

Cho, W.K.T. (2003) 'Contagion Effects and Ethnic Contribution Networks', *American Journal of Political Science* 47(2): 368-387

Coffé, H. (2005) 'Do Individual Factors Explain the Different Success of the Two Belgian Extreme Right Parties', *Acta Politica*, 40(1): 74-93

Coffé, H., Heyndels, B. and Vermeir, J. (2007) 'Fertile Grounds for Extreme Right-Wing Parties: Explaining the Vlaams Blok's Electoral Success, *Electoral Studies*, 26, pp.142-155

Copsey, N. (2008) *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Darmofal, D. (2008), 'The Political Geography of the New Deal Realignment', *American Politics Research*, Vol. 36, No. 6, 934-961.

De Vos, S., Deurloo, R., 1999. Right extremist votes and the presence of foreigners: an analysis of the 1994 elections in Amsterdam, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 90, 129e141.

Dülmer, H. and Klein, M. (2005) 'Extreme Right-Wing Voting in Germany in a Multilevel Perspective: A Rejoinder to Lubbers and Scheepers', *European Journal of Political Research* 44(2): 243–263.

Eatwell, R. (2003) 'Ten Theories of the Extreme Right', in Merkl, P.H. and Weinberg, L. (eds.) *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century,* London & Portland: Frank Cass, pp. 47-73

Eatwell, R. and Goodwin, M.J. (eds.)(2010) *The New Extremism in Twenty-First Century Britain*, London: Routledge

Ford, R. (2010) 'Who Might Vote for the BNP? Survey Evidence on the Electoral Potential of the Extreme Right in Britain', in: Eatwell, R. and M.J. Goodwin (eds.) *The New Extremism in Twenty-First Century Britain*, London: Routledge.

Fotheringham, A. S., C. Brunsdon and M. Charlton (2000) *Quantitative Geography: Perspectives on Spatial Data Analysis*, Sage.

Franzese, R. and J. Hays (2007), 'Spatial econometric models of cross-sectional interdependence in political science panel and time', *Political Analysis*, 15: 140-164

Golder, M. (2003). 'Explaining Variation in the Success of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe', *Comparative Political Studies* 36 :432–466.

Goodwin, M.J., Ford, R., Duffy, B. and Robey, R. (2010) 'Who Votes Extreme Right in Twenty-First Century Britain? The Social Bases of Support for the National Front and British National Party', in: Eatwell, R. and M.J. Goodwin (eds.) *The New Extremism in Twenty-First Century Britain*, London: Routledge.

Husbands, C.T. (1983) *Racial Exclusionism and the City*, London: George Allen & Unwin.

Jackman, R.W. & Volpert, K. (1996). Conditions favouring parties of the extreme right in Western Europe. *British Journal of Political Science* 26(4): 501–521

Jesuit, D.K., Paradowski, P.R. and Mahler, V.A. (2009) 'Electoral Support for Extreme Right-Wing Parties: A Sub-National Analysis of Western European Elections', *Electoral Studies* (in press)

Kessler, A.E. and Freeman, G.P. (2005) 'Support for Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe: Individual Attributes, Political Attitudes, and National Context, Comparative European Politics, 3(3): 261-288

Kestilä, E. and Söderlund, P. (2007a) 'Local Determinants of Radical Right-Wing Voting: the case of the Norwegian Progress Party, *West European Politics*, 30(3): 549-572

Kestilä, E. and Söderlund, P. (2007b) Subnational political opportunity structures and the success of the radical right: Evidence from the March 2004 regional elections in France, *European Journal of Political Research*, 46: 773-796

Kitschelt, H. (1995) *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Knigge, P. (1998) 'The Ecological Correlates of Right-Wing Extremism in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 34:249–279.

Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M., & Passy, F. (2005) *Contested Citizenship: Political Contention over Migration and Ethnic Relations in Western Europe*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lubbers, M. and Scheepers, P. (2000) 'Individual and Contextual Characteristics of the German Extreme Right-Wing Vote in the 1990s: A Test of Complementary Theories', *European Journal of Political Research*, 38(1): 63-94

Lubbers, M. and Scheepers, P. (2002) 'French Front National Voting: A Micro and Macro Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25(1): 120-149

Lubbers, M., Scheepers, P. and Billiet, J. (2000) 'Multilevel Modelling of the Vlaams Blok Voting: Individual and Contextual Characteristics of the Vlaams Blok Vote', *Acta Politica*, 35(4): 363-98

Lubbers, M., Gijsberts, M. and Scheepers, P. (2002) Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe, *European Journal of Political Research*, 41: 345-378

McGann, A.J. and Kitschelt, H. (2005) 'The Radical Right in the Alps: Evolution of Support for the Swiss SVP and Austrian FPÖ', *Party Politics*, 11(2): 147-171

Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, P. (2005) *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Loughlin, J. (2002) The electoral geography of Weimar Germany: Exploratory spatial data analyses (ESDA) of protestant support for the Nazi Party', Political Analysis, 10(3): 217-243

O'Loughlin, J., Flint, C., and Anselin, L. (1994) The geography of the Nazi vote: context, confession and class in the Reichstag election of 1930', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 84: 351-380.

Rallings, C. and Thrasher, M (2008) *The 2008 Local Elections Handbook*, Plymouth: Local Government Elections Centre

Rydgren, J. (2007) 'The Sociology of the Radical Right', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33(12), pp.1-12

Swank, D. and Betz, H-G. (2003) 'Globalization, the welfare state and right-wing populism in Western Europe', *Socio-Economic Review*, 1: 215-245

Van der Brug, W. (2003), 'How the LPF fuelled Discontent: Empirical Tests of Explanations of LPF-support', *Acta Politica* 38(1): 89-106.

Van der Brug, W., M. Fennema & J. Tillie (2005), 'Why Some Anti-immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed: A Two-step Model of Electoral Support', *Comparative Political Studies* 38(5):537-73.

Van der Brug, W. and Fennema, M. (2007) 'What Causes People to Vote for a Radical-Right Party? A Review of Recent Work', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 19(4): 474-487

Whiteley, P. (1979) 'The National Front Vote in the 1977 G.L.C. Elections: An Aggregate Data Analysis', *British Journal of Political Science*, 9: 370-80

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: BNP Vote share in the 2006 local elections – Moran Scatterplot
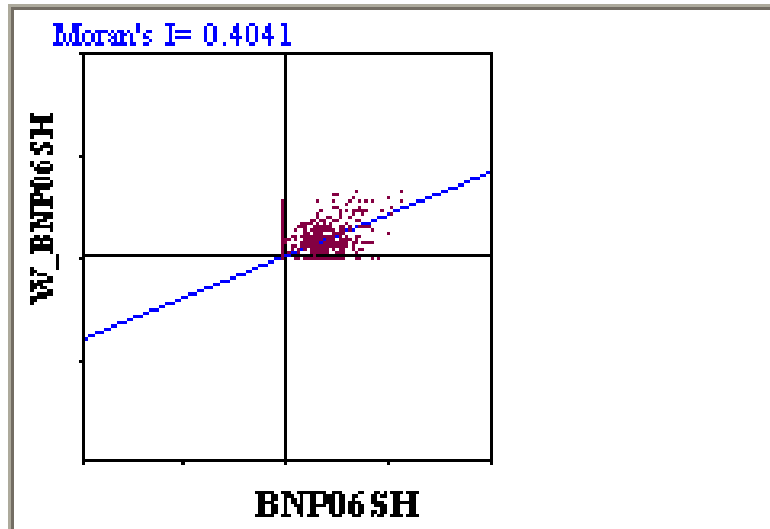
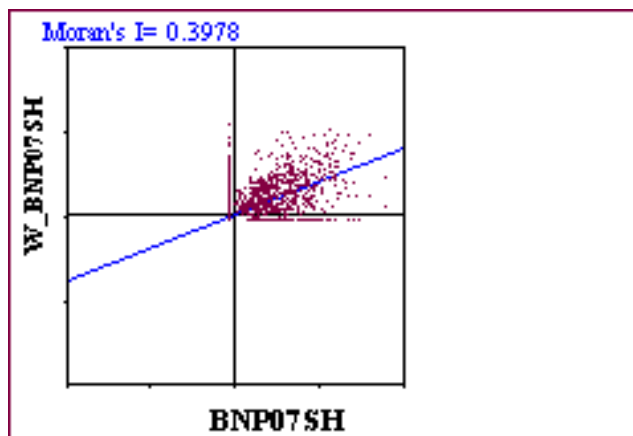**Figure 2: BNP Vote share in the 2007 local elections – Moran Scatterplot**

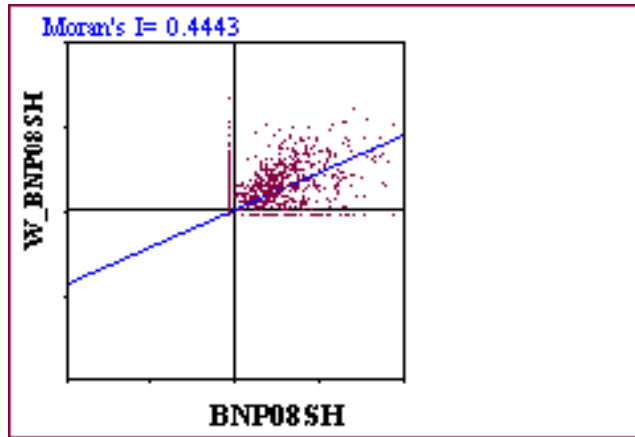**Figure 3: BNP Vote share in the 2008 local elections – Moran Scatterplot**

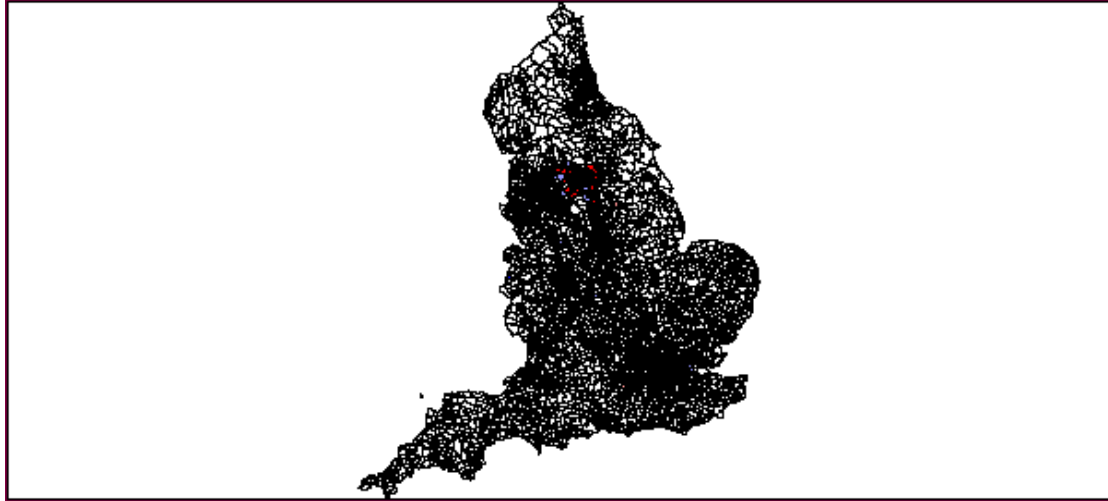**Figure 4: BNP vote share in the 2006 local elections: LISA cluster map**

Figure 5: BNP vote share in the 2007 local elections: LISA cluster map
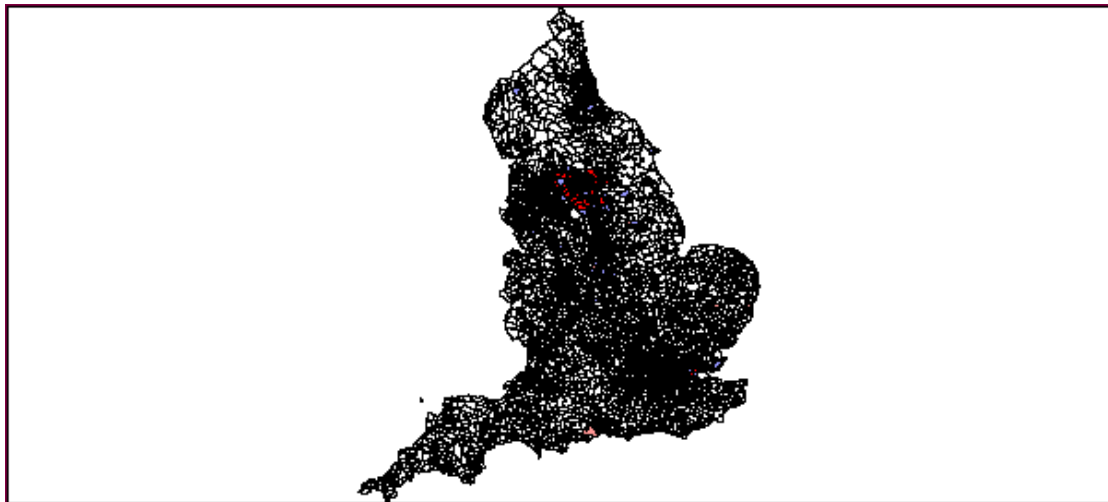
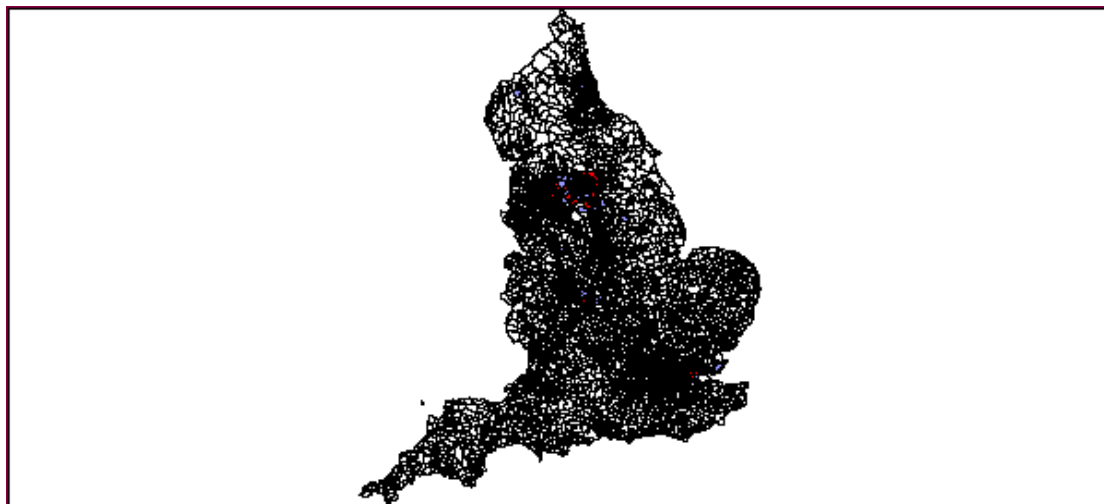**Figure 6: BNP vote share in the 2008 local elections: LISA cluster map**

TABLE 1   Electoral Performance of the BNP in Local Elections 2000-2008

Year	Candidates	Councils	Votes	Votes/candidate	Votes/council
2000	17	12	3,022	177	252
2002	67	26	30,998	463	1,192
2003	217	71	101,221	466	1,426
2004	312	59	190,200	610	3,224
2006	363	78	229,389	632	2,941
2007	744	148	292,911	394	1,979
2008	608	90	234,527	386	2,606

NOTES

[2] For recent discussion of the definitional debate in the study of far right parties see for example Mudde (2007: 11-62).

[3] For a discussion of some of the methodological problems in macro-level studies see the overview provided by Arzheimer (2009).

[4] However, at the contextual level while immigration and unemployment rates are important their interaction with other political factors is more complex than previously suggested, and that their effect appears to be moderated by the institutions of the welfare state. Arzheimer (2009) finds that generous unemployment benefits appear to 'curb' the impact of unemployment where immigration levels are high, whilst if immigration levels are very low generous unemployment benefits increase the probability of voting far right. Thus: "…the lowest levels of ER [extreme right] support are predicted for a system with minimal benefits, low unemployment rates, and minimal immigration. Extreme right mobilization would be most facilitated by high unemployment and high levels of either immigration or unemployment benefits (but not both)."

[5] As these authors note, even fairly moderate levels of unemployment appear to foster xenophobia when social capital is scarce while when social capital appears abundant even high levels of unemployment fail to trigger support for the far right.

[6] N. Griffin (2002) 'How democracy triumphed in Halifax', *Identity* 29, pp.4-5

[7] 'Mythical refugees help BNP win white suburb', *The Observer* 11 May 2003

[8] In the 2004 European elections the party received 134,958 votes in the North West, 126,538 in Yorkshire and Humber and 107,794 in the West Midlands. In contrast the party received 43,653 votes in the South West and 19,427 in Scotland.

[9] A. Lecomber (2004) 'Mapping out a winning strategy', *Identity* 48

[10] Interview with Nick Griffin June 17th 2008

[11] 'Local elections: two million hand delivered literature pieces in BNP's biggest push ever', [available online] http://www.bnp.org.uk [accessed April 18 2008]

[12] 'National weekend of action a great success', [available online] http://london.bnp.org.uk/?p=89 [accessed April 22 2008]

[13] . In 2006**:** Elections were held in 176 local authorities. All seats were contested on the 32 London borough councils. One-third of seats were contested in 36 metropolitan boroughs, 20 unitary authorities and 81 shire district councils. Half the council was elected in a further seven shire districts. In 2007 elections were held in 176 local authorities. All seats were contested on the 32 London borough councils. One-third of seats were contested in 36 metropolitan boroughs, 20 unitary authorities and 81 shire district councils. Half the council was elected in a further seven shire districts. In 2008 elections were held in 137 local authorities in England and all 22 authorities in Wales. In England, one-third of seats were contested in 36 Metropolitan Boroughs, 67 Shire Districts, and 19 Unitary Authorities; and all seats were contested in 4 Shire Districts, and 2 shadow and 2 transitional Unitary Authorities. One-half of seats were contested in 7 Shire Districts. In Wales, all seats were contested on the 22 Welsh councils.