

Institution: University of East Anglia
Unit of Assessment: 32 Philosophy
Title of case study: Establishing a body of ‘Guardians for future generations’: a radical policy proposal arising from philosophical work on theories of democratic representation.
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The aim of Guardians for future generations is to develop a method of giving future generations a say in current policy-making discussions, by applying Rupert Read's innovative thinking about the nature and ideals of democracy. We have promoted Read's proposal for a body of magistrates, "Guardians for future generations", via think tanks, policy review bodies, public events and the media. Impact has been achieved in two key areas: (a) policy-making and the terms of policy debate in the UK, Europe and the UN, and (b) public discourse and public understanding of major issues affecting future life in the UK. We offer reasons for believing that the UN was partly influenced by this work, insofar as it is apparently in the process of inventing a "UN Special Representative for Future Generations".</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p><i>For research references (RRs) see section 3.</i></p> <p>Rupert Read has been engaged in research into ideas of democracy, since he came to the University of East Anglia (UEA) in 1997. This research activity has led to a number of publications including the following:</p> <p>RR1 is Read's forthcoming paper, 'Guardians for future generations: a modest Platonic proposal?', in <i>JIRR</i>. Starting from the ideas of Habermas, about the 'ideal speech-community', Read suggests that future people need to be included this community. Without their consent, the community cannot legitimately make decisions.</p> <p>RR2-5 are earlier papers on future people. Read argues that that we need the same caring/loving attitude toward future people as towards our own children. Attitudes based around "justice" are insufficient, he suggests. His choice of the term "guardian" deliberately evokes the vicarious care of children.</p> <p>RR6-7 are on democracy. Read suggests that democracy, as an ideal, is hard to square with libertarianism or with liberalism as it currently exists. To achieve genuine democracy we need to go beyond aggregation of votes and distant representation.</p> <p>Barbara Goodwin's work on the 2005 revision of her 'Justice by Lottery' was one stimulus feeding into the earlier stages of Read's research on sortition, the results of which appear in RR1-7. Goodwin was at UEA until her retirement in 2011.</p> <p>On the basis of this research on democratic theory and the idea of sortition, Read himself has developed and promoted a practical political proposal, for a body of appointed "Guardians of the Future" in the UK. He has also recommended similar solutions in other contexts (e.g. the UN).</p> <p>The route to impact from this research is by way of Read's own direct application of the ideas to international political structures, and via the enterprise activities of the UEA School of Philosophy, in promoting the ideas, in the media and to policy makers, with the results shown. NB The use of sortition in Read's proposal has the explicit and deliberate effect of limiting the influence of party politics. The aim is not to promote a party-political agenda.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>RR1. Rupert Read "Guardians for future generations: a modest Platonic proposal?" <i>Journal of International Relations Research</i> (Issue 3 'The environment', December, 2013) (http://journalofinternationalrelationsresearch.com/#).</p> <p>RR2. Rupert Read "Care, love and our responsibility to the future", in <i>Changing the Climate: Utopia, Dystopia and Catastrophe</i> Ed. Andrew Milner, Simon Sellars and Verity Burgmann, Arena Publications, 2011, ISBN 978-0-980-41582-7</p> <p>RR3. Rupert Read "On future people", <i>THINK</i> 29 (Vol.10, Autumn 2011), pp.43-7, online at http://journals.cambridge.org/repo_A83AqV93</p> <p>RR4. Rupert Read "Why the ecological crisis spells the end of liberalism", in <i>Capitalism, nature, socialism</i> 22 (2011), 80-94 DOI: 10.1080/10455752.2011.593893, online at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10455752.2011.593893</p> <p>RR5. Rupert Read "There are no such things as commodities", in <i>Journal of Philosophical</i></p>

Economics. 4 (2011), 83-94.

RR6. Rupert Read "Economist-Kings?", *European Review* 19 (2011) 119-129, online at http://journals.cambridge.org/repo_A79vSAq9

RR7. Rupert Read "Beyond an ungreen-economics-based political philosophy", *IJGE* 5 (2011), 167-183, online at <http://www.inderscience.com/info/inarticle.php?artid=42556>

Evidence for the quality of the research:

All the above references have passed rigorous peer-review for specialist journals well-respected in the field. Note especially the *Journal of Philosophical Economics*, *International Journal of Green Economics*, *Journal of International Relations Research*, and *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*.

4. Details of the impact

For IS references see section 4 (Impact sources).

This research has already had impact in two key areas: (a) policy-making and the terms of policy debate in the UK, Europe and the UN, and (b) public discourse and public understanding of major issues affecting future life in the UK. More is expected in both areas. The reach and significance of these ideas for public policy can be judged from the extent to which they have already influenced debate in the UK, Europe and the UN, and from the testimonials of active politicians and lawyers working in this field. The reach is both geographical and political: it extends beyond the UK and Europe, and to political bodies that have substantial national and global influence. The significance can be measured both in terms of the urgency of the issues, and the long-term benefit that would accrue from solving them. This research has already made a real contribution to the debate about a possible long-term solution, and has arguably brought implementation, in the medium term, a step closer than it would otherwise be.

(a) Policy-making; the terms of policy debate: The UN, Europe, the UK.

i Impact at the UN:

- *Guardians of the Future* by Rupert Read (IS1) is a discussion paper, in which Read champions his policy idea. The document is promoted by the 'Green House' Think Tank.
- During 2011, preliminary drafts and work-in-progress towards IS1 were distributed and discussed at meetings of the Alliance for Future Generations (AFG). AFG is a new coalition of NGOs, who have agreed to work "to ensure that long-termism and the needs of future generations are brought into the heart of UK democracy and policy processes, in order to safeguard the earth and secure intergenerational justice". It includes groups such as Friends of the Earth, and WWF. Its members collectively run into millions.
- On 28th October 2011, on the basis of these discussions, the AFG produced an *Open Challenge Paper* (IS2), for consideration towards the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, to be held June 20-22nd 2012. This paper advocated the idea of "High Commissioners for Future Generations" and a "Commission on future generations" as central targets for implementation at Rio.
- In January 2012, the co-Chairs of the Rio+20 UN Conference, on behalf of the Bureau, produced the draft Outcome document, entitled *The Future We Want* (IS3). This was the "zero-draft", for consideration by Member States and other stakeholders, in preparation for Rio. IS3 contains a proposal for a "UN High Commissioner for Future Generations", as suggested by the AFG in IS2. Since the U.N. group who prepared IS3 had access to IS2, and IS3 closely mirrors IS2 in substance, it is reasonable to assume some causation from IS1 by way of IS2 to IS3.
- In the event, the finished Outcome Document signed off at the UN Conference Rio+20 fell short of the goals envisaged in the draft document. It did not follow IS3 to the point of appointing the "High Commissioner", as recommended in the draft Outcome Document.
- However, on 22nd June 2012 (the day that Rio+20 closed), UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon announced that he would be appointing a 'Special Representative for Future Generations'. We read in the BMZ Newsletter for July 2012 (IS4): "*UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced at the conference that he would be appointing a Special Representative for Future Generations. Minister Niebel welcomed the decision. "This will give sustainability a recognisable face; that will be important in moving forward the international debate. ... The Special Representative will be a kind of travelling advert for sustainability."* The details of how this magistracy will be established and its role are still under discussion. In any case, it seems reasonable to see a causal route from the proposal presented by Rupert Read in 2011, to the creation of this new UN magistracy in 2012.

ii Impact in Europe:

Hungary already has a High Commissioner for Future Generations. The role is currently occupied by Sandor Fulop. Fulop and other experts in his office have identified Read's proposal as preferable to the current model used in Hungary, which offers less substantial protection.

Fulop has championed Read's solutions for Europe and the UK on several occasions. He sent a message of support (IS7) to the launch event at the House of Commons in Jan 2012. He agreed to speak, via Skype, at the King's Place event in April 2012. On that occasion he observed that "a guardian or high representative for future generations somewhere in the organisational structure of the United Nations" is badly needed. This too may have played a causal role in leading to Ban Ki-moon's decision to pursue such a policy following Rio+20.

iii Impact in the UK:

At several high profile events in the UK, Read has brought his ideas to the attention of those involved in debating and formulating policy. We can confirm, on the basis of testimonials, that this has significantly altered the terms of debate and the range of policy options for consideration.

The following narrative lists events and policy documents which together constitute evidence of reaching the target audiences:

- (i) Documents explaining the proposal were forwarded to Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee, in late 2010;
- (ii) Work-in-progress discussion papers and documents were presented at several meetings of the 'Alliance for Future Generations', during 2011;
- (iii) The finished document "Guardians of the Future" (IS1) was launched at a high-profile event at the House of Commons, Jan. 10th 2012. Speakers included Caroline Lucas MP, Jon Cruddas MP and Norman Baker MP, a Co-ordinator of the AFG (Nicolo Wojewoda) and Peter Roderick (author of *Taking the Longer View*). There were comments from other politicians, journalists, and major players in British NGOs. A podcast of this event is available at IS5.
- (iv) On 25th April 2012, *The Guardian*, in collaboration with Green House, hosted an event at King's Place in London. It was chaired by Damian Carrington, Environment Editor of *The Guardian*. Read's "Guardians" idea was one of two proposals concerning "Care for the Future" that had been selected for discussion. The event included an experiment with a mock "super-jury".

The following testimonials bear witness to the effects on political thinking in the UK:

- Jon Cruddas MP, now leading Labour's Policy Review, commented at the Parliamentary event in Jan 2012 that the Guardians idea was "deeply thought-provoking" and that "we need a hundred ideas like this" (IS5).
- The Rt Hon Lord Howarth of Newport writes (IS8) "*Dr Read has already influenced my own thinking and spurred me to argue in Parliament (for example in my submission to the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee on House of Lords reform) that it is imperative that we find better ways institutionally to acquit ourselves of our responsibilities to future generations*".
- Ian Christie, an Associate of the Green Alliance think-tank, and former Senior Fellow, Policy Studies Institute, writes (IS10) "*Dr Rupert Read's paper on the scope for a system of 'Guardians' for the interests of future generations has had a significant impact in many of the networks in which I work. His paper has been very widely circulated and discussed online and in think-tank, NGO and academic circles known to me. It has been one of the main catalysts for fresh thinking about future generations and their representation in democratic process, as developed recently by bodies such as the Alliance for Future Generations, the Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development, and the think-tank Green House.*"
- Peter Roderick, author of the definitive report "*Taking the Longer View*" commissioned by WWF and the Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development, writes (IS9) "*I became aware of Dr Read's proposal for 'guardians for future generations' during my work for WWF-UK on long-term governance options in the face of increasing pressure on the stability and resilience of the Earth's natural processes. It was by far the most novel and far-reaching of such proposals that I looked at: giving guardians law-making powers had not previously been a part of the debate. It raised several thorny legal issues in my mind, and over time, with his willingness to engage with and work through these, I came to the view that the proposal was both workable and worthy of serious consideration. I therefore included it in my report ('Taking the longer view: UK governance options for a finite planet, December 2010), contributed to its continued development and attended its presentation at the House of Commons.*"

(b) Public Discourse and public understanding

Our impact on public discourse is evidenced by the uptake in public debating fora and the media.

i Media coverage:

Positive coverage by Damian Carrington in the *Guardian* online, 4th Jan 2012 (IS6), attracting 325 comments between 4th and 11th Jan 2012; a polemical satire piece by Brendan O'Neill in the Telegraph online on 5th Jan 2012, attracting 118 comments between 5th and 14th January (many defending Read).

Extensive local media coverage is listed on our *impact sources web page* (see IS6).

ii Websites and discussion fora:

Links to a selection of typical website coverage are provided on our *web page* (see IS6). Some AFG organisations promoted discussion via websites and email lists (see IS6).

iii Public events:

A list is available on our *web page* (IS6). Read has presented his work at Camp for Climate Action Conference, London, 29/11/2009 and 'Changing the climate: Utopias', Monash, Australia 30/8/10-1/9/10 (by audiolink), and was invited to the Town and Country Planning Association Roundtable on Governance, for the 'Reconstructing England' Inquiry.

iv Articles in print:

Read writes for a range of popular and political magazines. See IS6.

The *reach* of these media and public-facing activities ranges from thousands to millions. The reach of our impact on public discourse is measured by audience numbers/readership for programmes and articles, and in subsequent invitations to appear on the media.

The *significance* of the work is evident in the interest shown by the quality press, and particularly in the *Guardian's* interest in promoting the King's Place event.

As Peter Roderick explains (IS9): "*The proposal came at a time when civil society, both in the UK and internationally, has been paying greater attention to inter-generational equity, notably in the run-up to (and since) the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (June 2012). Recognition of the needs and interests of future generations remains a live and growing debate, and Dr Read's proposal has helped to focus minds not only on policies to reflect that recognition, but on where within governance structures such recognition should be located. I think of his proposal and philosophical approach as enriching, and as forming one of the book-ends of, that debate.*"

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- IS1. *Guardians of the Future* by Rupert Read, A Green House Report (available at http://www.greenhousethinktank.org/files/greenhouse/home/Guardians_inside_final.pdf).
- IS2. *Open Challenge paper* from the Alliance for Future Generations <http://www.allianceforfuturegenerations.org/2011/11/openchallenge-proposals-to-rio20/>
- IS3. *The future we want*. U.N. zero-draft Outcome document for the U.N. conference on Sustainable Development, Rio, 2012, available at <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/content/documents/370The%20Future%20We%20Want%200Jan%20clean.pdf>
- IS4. German Federal Ministry newsletter July 2012 (reporting the Rio+20 events) at http://www.bmz.de/en/service/nl/newsletter_archiv/archiv/2012/newsletter_2012_07/index.html
- IS5. Video from the Parliamentary launch <http://youtu.be/3DWcCDCwfmk> and audio podcast <http://www.uea.ac.uk/philosophy/research/impact-beyond-academia>
- IS6. Lists of (a) local media and invitations to speak live, (b) notable web-sites and (c) selected print articles *The Philosophers Magazine* 2nd quarter 2012, 27-8; *Positive News* 71, Spring 2012; *Green World* 2012 vol 73.. See the Philosophy Impact sources web page at (<http://www.uea.ac.uk/philosophy/research/impact-beyond-academia>).
- IS7. Endorsement from the Hungarian High Commissioner for Future Generations: <http://ajbh.hu/allam/eng/aktual/20120322.htm>, and March 22 2012 entry at <http://ajbh.hu/allam/eng/index.htm>
- IS8. Written testimonial from Labour Party Peer Lord Howarth of Newport.
- IS9. Written testimonial from Lawyer Peter Roderick, author of the report "Taking the Longer View".
- IS10. Written testimonial from Ian Christie, Associate of Green Alliance, Fellow of WWF, Former Senior Fellow, Policy Studies Institute.