

<p>Institution: Middlesex University (UKPRN: 10004351)</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 36 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Politics and Policy: Facilitating engagement and influencing debate</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Cultural studies at Middlesex has often exemplified the New Left tradition that played an important role in founding the discipline. It sees cultural research as part of a broad continuum informing and shaping political debate, policymaking and civic education. Facilitated by a series of e-publications, public events and other activities, many associated with the journal <i>Soundings</i>, and working with organisations such as the <i>Guardian</i>, Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and the Labour Party, this research has had a demonstrable impact on issues of intergenerational politics, ethical consumption and the role of identity in new political formations. Key beneficiaries are charities, NGOs, political parties, think tanks and members of the general public.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research for this case study is varied and encompasses a range of critical, theoretical and methodological approaches within the New Left tradition spanning different cultural, social and political issues over an extended period of time. What links the work together is an orientation towards cultural research as an important form of participation in public debate in the work of researchers including Little, Jo Littler (Senior Lecturer 2000-2012), Kobena Mercer (Research Associate 2000-2002), Professor Jonathan Rutherford (1994-2011), Professor (Baroness) Lola Young (1992-2002) and the collective use of the journal <i>Soundings</i> (1995-present) as a vehicle for dissemination and collaboration with party political and civil society organisations.</p> <p>Research has revolved around a core team of Ben Little, Jo Littler and Jonathan Rutherford. Little currently co-edits <i>Soundings</i> with Sally Davison, Littler is an editorial board member, and Rutherford edited the journal from 2003 to 2012. Members of the group work closely with the founding editors of the journal: Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey at the Open University and Michael Rustin at the University of East London. Links with the New Left roots of the journal's approach to cultural studies have always been made explicit and renewed through a range of activities. Funded by Middlesex, Little followed the recent launch of <i>After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto</i> with the re-release (with a new introduction by Michael Rustin and a public event) of <i>The May Day Manifesto of 1967/8</i>, a key New Left document originally written by Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson.</p> <p>While the group's research at Middlesex is situated within analysis of the contemporary cultural conjuncture and the hegemony of neoliberal ideology, individual researchers cover distinct areas within this frame. Rutherford's interest in identity and masculinity has informed his longstanding work with political parties. His collection <i>Race, Identity & Belonging</i> (2008) is the latest example of this strand. Rutherford has produced a series of works in collaboration with Jon Cruddas MP. Their work on the cultural construction of conservatism produced the collection <i>Is the Future Conservative?</i> in 2008, which contained some of the background conceptual work to what would become known as 'Red Toryism' and 'Blue Labour', political philosophies designed to create formations that would orientate mainstream political parties away from the neoliberal consensus.</p> <p>Little's work has focused on the engagement of young people with politics. His PhD (2010) looked at the way in which 1980s comic books created a space for reflection on the complex shifts in identity politics and the ways in which young people were encountering and making sense of these changes. His work grew to encompass collaborations with activists (Little and Grayson</p>

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2011) and he has also been writing and presenting on social movements, popular culture, campaigning, the network society and media technology. This work directly informed his editorship of the *Radical Future* series (2010, 2012).

Littler's work on the mediation of ethical consumption has involved collaborations and interviews with international academics and activists and extends across the publication of her book (2009) and an array of related articles. She has also been a key commentator on the celebrification of society as a cultural corollary of neoliberalism.

3. References to the research

1. Cruddas, J. and J. Rutherford (eds.) 2008. *Is the Future Conservative?* Lawrence & Wishart, London.
2. Rutherford, J. 2007. *After Identity*. Lawrence and Wishart, London.
3. Little, B. 2010. *2000AD: Understanding the 'British Invasion' of American Comics*. In Berninger, M., Ecke, J. and G. Haberkorn (eds.) *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures*. McFarland, London: 140-152.
4. Little, B. and D. Grayson. 2011. The National in the Network Society: UK Uncut, the English Defence League and the challenge for social democracy. In Meyer, H. and J. Rutherford (eds.) *The Future of Social Democracy in Europe: Building the good society*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 177-191.
5. Littler, J. 2009. *Radical Consumption: Shopping for change in contemporary culture*. Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
6. Littler, J. and S. Binkley. 2008. Cultural Studies and Anti-Consumerism: A critical encounter. *Cultural Studies* 22 (5): 519-530.

The outputs include books, chapters and articles, reviewed through peer, editor and publisher processes which ensure high quality.

4. Details of the impact

The above research has had impact both on the ways in which issues are discussed in the public sphere and on placing particular issues in the public domain.

Pathways to impact

Work with *Soundings* has put this research at the forefront of public debates which focus on challenging dominant political frames. *After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto* has been featured twice on *The Guardian's Comment is Free* blog with over 1400 user-generated comments. A series of four linked events organised by Little and chaired by Littler have been regularly oversubscribed with audiences ranging from 40 to 300 attendees and transcripts appearing on Open Democracy's *Our Kingdom* blog site (see video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIVxeJX-3qU>).

Collaborations of this kind are typical of the group's work, reaching large audiences through strong links with media outlets as well as civil society, public policy and party political groups as appropriate to the nature of their work. A spokesperson of the New Economics Foundation stated that such collaborations '*represent[ed] an excellent example of the interaction between a university, think tanks and civil society*'. We identify three specific examples of impact below.

a. Public perception and discussion of the financial crisis and the future of political economy

Rutherford's work is highly influential in public policy debates. He was involved, through *Soundings*, in coordinating numerous impact/engagement activities including the 'Class and Culture' series of talks in 2008 (online debate edited by Little) and After New Labour (2008) with *The Guardian* (<http://pennyred.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/after-new-labour-report-on.html>). These activities brought together academics, NGOs, journalists, activists and politicians from the Treasury, TUC, War On Want, the Family and Parenting Institute, as well as universities of Essex, Jiao Tong, Jawaharlal Nehru and Cambridge to work on alternative cultural economies. Rutherford has been described as one of the Labour Party's 'leading thinkers' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Rutherford) and has had articles published across a range of well known high circulation media outlets while working at Middlesex, including *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Total Politics*, and others.

b. The emergence of intergenerational politics

Little's edited e-books *Radical Future* (2010) and *Regeneration* (2012) on the identities, politics and predicaments of people under 30 had been downloaded over 60,000 times and over 90,000 times respectively by June 2013 (data provided by publisher, July 2013). The books helped to establish the discourse of intergenerational politics in the UK. *Radical Future* was featured in a *Guardian* election special as well as on the *Comment is Free* blog. Attendance at the launch event for *Regeneration* (<http://www.if.org.uk/archives/1826/regeneration-book-launch-at-foyles>) demonstrated the level of public interest (this was oversubscribed with capacity for 150). The books have also acted as the hub for a network of young activists, campaigners and journalists.

The chair of the leading think-tank *Compass* acknowledges the impact of this project stating: '*The work that Dr. Ben Little has done around intergenerational politics helped us develop our thinking around youth policy, directly informing the proposals advanced in the manifesto entitled "Plan B: a good economy for a good society", launched in London in October 2011, which received the support of over 100 leading economists.*'

This approach to intergenerational politics also informs more general 'youth' issues. One of the co-directors of *Intern Aware* collaborated with Little on a project that helped them to collect over 1,500 letters addressed to MPs. This initiative resulted in a parliamentary debate on the issue of unpaid internships, a debate that is still ongoing with further discussion planned this year. A global campaigner for *Oxfam GB* who collaborated with 100 of Little's students for the production of a high quality video on the issue of tax justice reports that '*the experience was valuable to me in my role as organiser as it was an opportunity to find modes of communicating current issues in ways that were relevant*' for young people.

Little has organised a range of political briefing events on this subject and he was invited to brief the leader of the Labour Party as part of a group of young activists in November 2012, with a follow-up meeting in July 2013 and more planned for the future.

c. New ways of thinking about consumption

This was facilitated by Littler's collaboration with the 'Church of Stop Shopping' and participation in ESRC-funded seminars with staff from the Fairtrade Foundation and the AHRC-funded Ethical Consumption seminar. The Chair of *Compass* describes how: '*The research of Dr. Jo Littler has forwarded our engagement with consumer politics, lending us an effective conceptual framework linking radical politics with consumer society.*'

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

1. *Soundings*. Journal established in 1995 and currently edited by Ben Little.
<http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/contents.html>
2. Stuart Hall article in the *Guardian* on the launch of the Kilburn manifesto
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/apr/24/kilburn-manifesto-challenge-neoliberal-victory>
3. *Regeneration* launch event. The Intergenerational Foundation.
<https://www.youtube.com/user/IntergenerationalTV>
4. Libby Brooks on *Radical Future*: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/apr/06/general-election-2010-young-voices>
5. Jonathan Rutherford, (2008) Well-being, economic growth and social recession. Report for the Sustainable Development commission:
<http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=779>

Corroborators:

6. Campaigner, Oxfam GB.
7. Energy Campaigner, Friends of the Earth.
8. Chair, Compass.
9. Lead Organiser, New Economy Organisers network.
10. Co-Director, Intern Aware.