

<b>Institution:</b> University of Southampton
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 17B Geography and Environmental Studies
<b>Title of case study:</b> 17B-06 Policy-focused Evidence-based Research on Retail Access, Competition and Planning
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research conducted by Professor Wrigley of the University of Southampton has had a major impact on retail sector practices and government retail policy. Retail is a key sector of the economy. Gross value added (GVA) by the sector has risen by over 50% in real terms over the past 15 years. Wrigley's research established the key role of food retail in disadvantaged communities as a tool for both urban regeneration and a response to the 'obesity epidemic'. Its impact has reset the parameters of policy debate on retail competition and contributed to both the evidence base and policy formulation on the future of the high street in the face of case of economic crisis and changing retail practices. These impacts have had national and global reach on UK and US government policies and have been significant in the launch of a large-scale experiment to eradicate 'food deserts' (areas lacking healthy foods) in Philadelphia. The impacts have also been instrumental in convincing the retail industry of the value of academic research.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The retail industry is globally significant. In the UK alone retail sales of £303bn in 2011 were equivalent to 20% of GDP and retail employs one in nine of the workforce. Professor Wrigley has led world-leading agenda-setting research on the retail industry which has been published in relevant leading journals and attracted over 5000 citations. The research has leveraged over £2.8m in substantial and prolonged support from UK industry (J Sainsbury PLC and Tesco PLC), Research Councils (ESRC), Government Departments (BIS, DCLG), and international agencies. Three interrelated research projects provide the underpinning for the impacts achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Pioneering cross-disciplinary (geography, public health, urban planning) research (2000-4) on 'food deserts', examining the problems of food access in deprived urban communities. This ESRC/Sainsbury co-funded research originated as a response to the Acheson Report on health inequalities and has attracted over 800 citations. It incorporated the first large-scale 'natural experiment' of the dietary consequences and urban regeneration impacts of ameliorating an 'unsupportive local food environment' in a highly underserved and deprived part of a major UK city via the opening of a new full-range food store. The research produced prize-winning academic papers which remain amongst the highest cited on the topic and has increasingly underpinned international impacts, particularly in North America (<b>3.1, 3.4</b>).</li> <li>2) Large-scale methodologically rigorous evidence-based research on the nature and effects of retail competition. This evidence, in the context of regulatory inquiries, has reset the nature of policy debate on the impacts of retail development and the social responsibilities of leading retailers. Three interrelated projects focused on: (a) the entry and exit of small and specialist stores in over one thousand UK town centres and high streets (2007-08), (b) large-scale 'before/after studies of the effects of food store developments on market towns and district centres (2008-10), and (c) the trip generative capacities, 'anchor' potential, and community responses associated with 'new generation' in-centre corporate convenience stores in small towns (2010-12) (<b>3.2, 3.5</b>).</li> <li>3) Research supported jointly by ESRC and Tesco PLC (2010-13) on the economic health of UK town centres and high streets after more than a decade of progressively rising rates of on-line shopping, complex effects associated with the '<i>towns centres first</i>' approach to retail development, and differential responses to the macro economic shock wave of post 2008 global economic crisis. After publication of well-received pioneering studies of the differential performance of over 250 town centres and high streets as global economic crisis exposed these drivers of change, the research moved in 2012-13 to a forward-looking assessment of alternative visions of the future configurations of UK high streets. That assessment builds outwards from the government commissioned Portas Review and Prof Wrigley's position as the sole academic on DCLG's Future High Streets task force looking over a 25 year horizon (<b>3.3, 3.6</b>).</li> </ol>

### 3. References to the research

#### Key Outputs

- 3.1 Wrigley, N.**, Warm D.L. & Margetts, B.M. (2003) 'Deprivation, diet and food retail access: findings from the Leeds 'food deserts' study', *Environment and Planning A*, 35: 151-88. [Awarded Ashby Prize 2004]. Highly cited in relation to field specific norms: 226 citations Google Scholar.
- 3.2 Wrigley, N.**, Branson, J., Murdock, A. & Clarke, G.P. (2009) 'Extending the Competition Commission's findings on entry and exit of small stores in British high streets: implications for competition and planning policy', *Environment and Planning A*, 41: 2063-85.
- 3.3 Wrigley, N.** & Dolega, L. (2011) 'Resilience, fragility, and adaptation: new evidence of the performance of UK high streets during global economic crisis and its policy implications', *Environment and Planning A*, 43: 2337-363. [Nominated for AESOP 2012 Best Published Paper Prize].

#### Key Grants

- 3.4** 2000-2004: ESRC/J. Sainsbury co-funded research project '*Food Deserts in British Cities*', award total £377,000 – split 66:33 ESRC/Sainsbury in pre-FEC funding environment and part of ESRC/BBSRC/FSA/DoH Food & Health programme. PI - Prof. N. Wrigley, Co-Is – Profs M. Lowe, B. M. Margetts and A. Jackson.
- 3.5** 2005-2010: Series of interrelated research grants from Tesco PLC. Awards totalling £847,000 – in all cases PI – Prof. N. Wrigley.

To provide evidence-based research on retail competition and retail planning issues – specifically on 'entry and exit of small and specialist stores in UK town centres & high streets 2000-06', for 'before/after studies of the impact of new foodstore developments on market towns and district centres', and to assess the trip generative capacity, anchor potential, and community responses to 'new generation' in-centre corporate convenience stores.

- 3.6** 2011-13: ESRC/Tesco PLC co-funded research on the '*UK High Streets During Economic Crisis and their Future Configurations*', Initial award £297,000 (split 50/50) plus £100,000 'follow-on' award and linked PhD Scholarships, PI – Prof. N Wrigley, Co-I Prof. M Lowe.

To investigate differential performance of over 250 town centres and high streets as they adjusted to the shock wave of global economic crisis and subsequent austerity. Additionally to provide a forward-looking assessment of alternative visions of the future configurations of UK high streets building on and outwards from the government commissioned Portas Review..

### 4. Details of the impact

Individually and collectively, the interrelated projects outlined in Section 2 and the cumulative underlying research programme of which they form part, have significantly impacted policy debate, held policy to scrutiny and influenced policy development during the REF period as follows:

- 1) The '*food deserts*' research initially impacted UK policymakers through invited presentations to the British Retail Consortium (2002), the All-Party Parliamentary Food & Health Group at the House of Commons (2003), and the World Economic Forum (2004). The research is acknowledged to have significantly influenced national and international policy regarding retail-led urban regeneration and to have provided a key element in the evidence base that led to the development of almost 50 'urban regeneration partnership stores' in some of the most deprived urban communities in the UK. The impact within the current REF period has extended this reach to North America. In 2008 the escalating financial cost of dealing with the consequences of obesity and food insecurity led the US Congress to mandate the US Dept. of Agriculture to report on the 'causes and consequences of 'food deserts' in the USA'. Significantly Professor Wrigley was one of only two international experts invited to contribute evidence via the US National Academies. Subsequently the Southampton 'food deserts' research (**5.1**) and its focus on the access to healthy foods has become 'a cornerstone of the Obama administration's food policy' (*Washington Post*). Most recently, the policy impact of the Southampton research has been manifested in the form of an ambitious large-scale policy

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experiment set up to eradicate 'food deserts' in Philadelphia (5.2). In 2012, both the *Washington Post* and *Science* acknowledged the pioneering role of the Southampton research in underpinning this real-world impact.

- 2) Three specific impacts on policy formation and planning practice have flowed from the research on retail competition. First, the 2006-08 Competition Commission '*Groceries Market Investigation*' drew on the Southampton research in its extensive and pivotal technical/research appendices, changing the environment for retail competition in the UK's high streets (5.3). Second, the research on the impact of large foodstores on market towns and district centres has been accepted, since publication in 2010, as providing state-of-the-art evidence for use in the practice of planning - in proposal submissions, decisions and appeals. The Government's *Planning Portal* directs users to a clear summary of the key Southampton findings (5.4) and examples of the use of the Southampton findings, as a keystone of the retail location planning process, continue to rise steadily (5.5). This substantial impact on planning practice was highlighted in the leading trade journal '*The Grocer*' as an exemplar of how evidence-based research has reset the parameters of debate on retail competition. Third, catalysed by an invited presentation to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Town Centres, the British Retail Consortium, the British Property Federation, the Association of Town Centre Managers, and leading retailers, Professor Wrigley's research on 'new generation' town centre corporate convenience stores, has impacted on corporate and governmental retail planning policy, debunking conventional perceptions and ensuring evidence-based policy making. In a highly unusual unsolicited letter, this work was described by the CEO of Tesco as 'a timely and important contribution to the debate about the nation's high streets' impacting the firm's corporate strategy (5.6).
- 3) The co-funded research for ESRC and Tesco PLC (2010-13) is having an ongoing impact on policy formation. It was made available to BIS as background research for the Portas Review and is acknowledged and summarized in the evidence base evaluation (*Understanding high street performance*, 2011 Dec) commissioned by BIS and released to accompany the Portas Review. Additionally, ESRC have used this research to exemplify impact on retail policy in Select Committee evidence (5.7). Professor Wrigley is the only academic invited to serve on the DCLG Future High Street Forum – a high-profile taskforce of key stake-holders concerned with taking forward policy on the revitalization of town centres/high streets (5.8). His work has been highlighted by DCLG for the evidence that it brings on the drivers of high street footfall. He is playing a lead role in shaping DCLG perspectives on retail research. Separately, and additionally, Prof. Wrigley was one of a small number of academics invited by BIS to shape BIS's *Retail Strategy*. Research by his Southampton team features extensively in evidence provided by ESRC to the BIS Select Committee inquiry into the UK retail sector.

In summary, Professor Wrigley's research demonstrates significant impact on UK and US retail policy at the highest level. It has challenged and changed planning and policy practice and had large-scale real-world impact on food access issues in major US cities, on retail policy and planning in the UK, and on policy debates over the future of the UK high street. These claims can be substantiated by independent and senior figures in the UK planning and property sectors and by leading executives in the retail industry (5.9 and 5.10).

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### References 1 and 2 substantiate the claims regarding the impact of the food deserts research

- 5.1 USDA report to US Congress on the '*Causes and consequences of 'food deserts' in the USA*' <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/FoodDeserts.aspx> and associated US National Academies report on the *Public Health Effects of Food Deserts* [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=12623&page=5](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12623&page=5)
- 5.2 Kliff, S. (2012) Will Philadelphia's experiment in eradicating food deserts work? *Washington Post*, June 8, 2012 [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/will-philadelphias-experiment-in-eradicating-food-deserts--work/2012/06/08/qJQAU9snNV\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/will-philadelphias-experiment-in-eradicating-food-deserts--work/2012/06/08/qJQAU9snNV_blog.html); Couzin-Frankel, J. (2012) Tackling America's Eating Habits, One Store at a Time, *Science*,

337(6101): 1473-1475. <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/337/6101/1473.full>

**References 3 to 6 address the claims for impact from large-scale methodologically rigorous evidence-based research on retail competition**

- 5.3 Competition Commission, 'Groceries Market Inquiry' April 2008, Appendices 5.1 and 5.2 Trends in the number and entry & exit of convenience stores and specialist grocery stores. [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/inquiries/ref2006/grocery/third\\_party\\_submissions\\_other\\_org.htm](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/inquiries/ref2006/grocery/third_party_submissions_other_org.htm)
- 5.4 Milne, R. (2010) Report highlights key role for edge of town retailing, Planning Portal (online) [http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/general/news/stories/2010/dec2010/9dec2010/091210\\_5](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/general/news/stories/2010/dec2010/9dec2010/091210_5)
- 5.5 Evidence file (available upon request) containing over 20 examples of the use of the 'Market Towns and District Centres' research in the planning system within 18 months of its publication. Many preface their use by stating that they are quoting the findings of the 'renowned retail research team at the University of Southampton'. Additional examples of this case law impact are emerging continually.
- 5.6 Unsolicited letter from CEO Tesco, December 2012.

**References 7 and 8 address claims for impact from research on the economic health of British town centres**

- 5.7 'Retail Therapy' from ESRC (2013) *Britain in 2013*.
- 5.8 <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/future-high-streets-forum>

**References 9 and 10 lists senior figures in the UK retail planning and property sectors who will substantiate the claims for impact made in this case study**

- 5.9 Group Corporate Affairs Director, Tesco plc.
- 5.10 Mr Williams, Director Planning, CGMS Consulting, London.