

# Cultural Value

## 'Evidence of Things That Appear Not?'

A Critical Review of the Role of Arts and Culture in the Regeneration of Urban Places and Urban Communities

by Peter Campbell, Tamsin Cox, Stephen Crone & Stuart Wilks-Heeg



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### **Executive Summary**

This review examines the propositions made regarding the role arts and culture may play in the regeneration of urban places and urban communities. It explores both the evidence available to support these propositions, and the methods employed to produce this evidence. This study builds upon previous analysis of this topic to understand the contemporary state of knowledge and practice in this area. It considers the relationship between the stated purposes of cultural interventions, and the conditions under which knowledge generation around such interventions take place. As such, it seeks to explain why particular methodological approaches are employed in given circumstances. The review focuses on practice in the UK, but also considers examples from further afield, including the European Capital of Culture programme. By way of an overview, the review provides a pair of typologies which have emerged from the evidence reviewed. Firstly, a typology of the ways in which interventions may seek to achieve 'regenerative' outcomes, and secondly a typology of methods employed for evaluating programmes, outlining the different data sources and approaches to analysis commonly employed. The review also considers how far such evaluations establish whether these regenerative outcomes have been achieved and identifies a number of shortfalls in this area. As such, a number of common challenges and contextual issues are identified to attempt to explain the quality of evidence currently available. Finally, the review considers what possibilities there are for improving the current state of knowledge production, and likely future directions in this area.

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## **Key words**

Culture, arts, regeneration, urban development, evidence, measurement, evaluation

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"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report."

– Epistle to the Hebrews 11:1-2, c. 63

"When Augustine says that 'faith is a virtue whereby we believe what we do not see,' and when Damascene says that 'faith is an assent without research,' and when others say that 'faith is that certainty of the mind about absent things which surpasses opinion but falls short of science,' these all amount to the same as the Apostle's words:

'Evidence of things that appear not'"

– Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* c. 1270

"As early as 1988 the National Audit Office recommended that the Merseyside Development Corporation be wound up because it had spent hundreds of millions to very little apparent effect. How its effects are measured is, of course, the holiest mystery of regeneration. [...] The National Audit Office was impotent against what is essentially a *faith*"

"The proposition that concert halls, fine art, museums, galleries, theatres, public sculptures, etc., are beneficial in any way other than aesthetic is unprovable. The notion that they might be socially, morally, economically useful is, in other words, nothing more than a belief, a hope."

– Jonathan Meades, *On the Brandwagon*, 2008

"The 'impact' of the various uses of culture in the urban setting was often taken as an article of faith across a variety of differing global municipalities.

However, Liverpool's [European Capital of Culture] 2008, with its associated research programme, Impacts 08, seemed to offer precisely the kind of evidence that had been lacking in the rush towards culture-led regeneration."

– Dave O'Brien, *Cultural Policy*, 2013

"Most of the studies reviewed cannot establish causality between arts and culture and the wider societal impacts."

– Arts Council England, *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society*, 2014

## Introduction

In discussions of the role of 'culture' in public policy, the idea that cultural activity may have a special role to play in the process of urban 'regeneration' is one that has now been prominent in one form or another for many years. As the remarks above suggest, however, the clarity and strength of evidence gathered to substantiate this relationship is, at best, open to question.

This report will briefly trace the emergence of the prominence in certain circles of culture as a proposed tool for regeneration, but will mainly focus upon recent activity in this area, asking:

- What 'regenerative' role is culture seen as playing?
- What kind of evidence is produced to establish this role?
- In what way does this evidence construct a particular idea of 'value'?
- Why is evidence gathered in certain forms rather than others?
- What does the available evidence suggest regarding the role of culture?
- Are there any ways in which data production in this area can potentially be improved?
- Where there is such room for improvement, how can this be explained?

As such, this review will give a general overview of the kinds of activities which claim regenerative impacts, the differing propositions for change, or impact, which are made (be these implicit or explicit), and the types of methods which are employed in producing evidence. We do not seek to provide a comprehensive assessment of *all* current evidence available in these areas, nor do we attempt to rank methods and approaches to producing evidence on a scale from 'good' to 'bad'. Rather, we seek to give an overview of current evidence, and to establish, where possible, a coherent explanation for current practice in the production and usage of this evidence.

## Definition of terms

To answer such questions as these involves entering the definitional swampland around the concepts at play, and we must briefly consider what is meant by 'regeneration', what, indeed, we mean by 'culture', what types of regeneration are particularly related to culture, and so on. Whilst achieving total clarity on such matters is beyond the scope of this report, it is nevertheless important to attempt to give some notes towards a definition, so that there is as little confusion as possible over what the object of discussion actually is, as so often occurs in consideration of these issues.

### What is urban regeneration?

The urban environment is, almost by definition, one of constant churn, and so 'urban regeneration' has to refer to something more than simply 'change' or 'improvement' (however this may be defined). Evans (2011, p.7) states that the term is "associated with extremes of social decline, multiple deprivation and disadvantage and in economic terms, below-average performance". It is, therefore, the city or town that is struggling, whose socioeconomic life has experienced a significant downturn or slump, and which without intervention will continue in this direction, that is a candidate for regeneration (Jones and Evans 2008, p.161). Evans (ibid.) also points out, however, that mainstream programmes to assist in these conditions,

such as central government Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities and their predecessors originating in the 1970s – the European Structural Development Fund and European Social Funding – have traditionally lacked a cultural dimension and 'culture' is not one of the key domains that feature in how improvement is measured and regeneration investment is assessed.

Vickery (2007, p.14), in his comprehensive analysis of the emergence of the idea of 'culture-led regeneration' notes:

It now seems to be the case that the single term 'regeneration' generally signifies the more basic industrial land physical reconstitution and development, whereas 'urban regeneration' refers to the development of the orbit of social habitation: it involves communities and the social-cultural infrastructure. Urban regeneration strategy implementation often goes unnoticed by the public and cultural sector if it involves only housing or the recommissioning of 'brown field' de-industrialised land. However, urban regeneration strategy is famously responsible for the reconstruction of waterfronts, docklands, and new retail and culture developments, some of which are evident in every major city in the UK.

Whether it includes cultural activity or not, regeneration must thus involve activity which is in some way 'new', be this in its usage, or in its very existence. As such, the emphasis given in propositions for regeneration is often on what *additional* value policy interventions can bring. Special urban policy programmes targeted at particular urban areas first emerged in the UK in the late 1960s (Atkinson and Moon 1994), although it was not until the 1980s that the term 'urban regeneration' was used (Jones and Evans 2008, p.2). Over time, there were a number of shifts in how these programmes diagnosed urban problems and in how they sought to 'solve' them. Despite these often profound policy changes, urban regeneration programmes continued to be characterised by dependence on modest, time-limited and discretionary funding schemes (Atkinson and Moon 1994). This tendency for regeneration to operate as an unstable adjunct to mainstream policy programmes has also reflected the status of many regeneration initiatives as policy 'experiments' (Wilks-Heeg 1996).

In this context, regeneration policy has long been beset by controversies about the balance to be struck between economic and social objectives (Shaw and Robinson 2010). There have also been long-running debates about the extent to which it is possible to *measure* the specific impact of urban regeneration initiatives (Turok 1991, Ho 1999). Even where clear objectives have been defined for regeneration policies, they have often proved relatively ephemeral given the unstable, often experimental character of policy interventions. Profound methodological problems have also been identified in the process of seeking to identify the *specific* effect of individual regeneration policies (Robson *et al.* 1994). The localities in which regeneration schemes operate are also subject to shifts in mainstream policy programmes, spending on which typically dwarfs regeneration funding, and to wider patterns of structural and cyclical economic change (Blackman 1995). Despite numerous attempts to establish the 'additionality' created by urban regeneration programmes, the voluminous research on the topic arguably tells us little about 'what works', if anything, or why (Cochrane 2007).

## **What role can culture play in urban regeneration?**

These points, however, refer to 'regeneration' activity broadly speaking, not necessarily specifically upon cultural programmes seeking regeneration. The focus of this report on culture first raises the problematic task of also defining *this* term. Whilst it is difficult to make a definition totally explicit, in the discussion below, culture is broadly understood in terms specifically related to artistic, expressive activity in some form, rather than a more generic definition.

The 'discovery' of culture as a tool for urban regeneration, and its subsequent journey from the margins of regeneration policy and practice, are difficult to date and map precisely, but certain patterns are relatively clear. Vickery notes that up until the 1990s, urban regeneration was largely led by property development (2007, p.29), and that during the 1990s, the role of culture in urban regeneration was still often linked strictly to physical or spatial development – focussed mainly either on altering the design of the urban environment, or on installing public artworks (2007, pp.18-19). Matarasso (2009, p.7), however, notes that prominent statements around the economic outcome of



cultural activity (albeit not ones specifically related to urban regeneration) *can* be found prior to this period:

For instance in the Arts Council Chairman's 1985 lecture on 'The Political Economy of the Arts' in which Lord Rees-Mogg claimed that 'The Arts Council gives the best value for money in job creation of any part of the state system'.

Similarly, in 1986, the Arts Council produced 'Partnership: Making Arts Money Work Harder' which argues for a more multivalent role for the arts, in developing industry, building communities, and so forth. What is certainly clear is that propositions regarding the potential for cultural activity to achieve beneficial socioeconomic outcomes have become increasingly prominent over the last 30 years or so, as has the notion that culture has an important role to play in processes of urban regeneration. Cultural events and projects – including mega-events, such as the European Capital of Culture, and smaller projects, such as the repurposing of empty retail units for artistic purposes – are seen by many towns and cities as a viable tool to assist in the reversal of processes of decline.

Various area-based initiatives and state-led schemes with a general focus on regeneration have thus in recent times invested in arts and culture as part of wider programmes of investment, including the Single Regeneration Budget, which helped, for instance, to fund public art (Gateshead Council 2006; Public Art Leicester 2005), community music projects (Dhamak Beats 2012) and artists' studios (ACAVA 2014); the European Regional Development Fund, which has invested in the renovation and construction of new cultural facilities (European Commission 2013), business assistance for cultural enterprises (DCLG 2013) and a centre for carnival arts (UKCCA 2010); the New Deal for Communities, which, in certain areas, used arts and culture-related activities to attempt to tackle mental health inequalities (Blank *et al.* 2004); and the Housing Market Renewal scheme, which helped fund artists' studios (NFASP 2010), public art (Pendle Borough Council 2014) and artist-led participatory projects (Arts Council 2009; Media and Arts Partnership 2008).

This is not to say, however, that culture has moved to a central or even a prominent position in many regeneration programmes. Indeed, in the overarching evaluations of such schemes, there remains typically little or no discussion of the role of culture in relation to overall findings (e.g. Audit Commission 2011; DCLG 2007; DCLG 2009; DCLG 2010; Leather *et al.* 2012). Nevertheless, the overall trend for an increasing use of cultural activity, either as an adjunct to, or critical component of, urban regeneration processes, is clear. Upon reviewing the evidence that is produced to evaluate the manner in which culture may contribute to such processes, certain key propositions seems to be in play. These are that:

- Cultural activity stimulates work in the 'creative industries' – a high growth sector, dependent on SMEs with few infrastructural dependencies, ideal for economic regeneration
- Cultural activity prompts 'creativity' and creative skills more broadly, encouraging new ideas which may manifest as innovation and entrepreneurship
- Major cultural events serve to develop the cultural sector, strengthening its wider impacts
- Major cultural events may also involve particular developments in the built environment conceived of as being particularly 'cultural' in character, such as an 'iconic' landmark or new museum, supporting wider physical regeneration, which may also raise property prices
- Cultural activity attracts tourists, bringing economic benefits, and wider changes in the labour market and social conditions
- Cultural activity changes the image of a location, altering perceptions and ameliorating negative associations with deprivation and decline
- Increased participation in cultural activity changes the mind-set of residents, prompting increased confidence, stronger civic identity, community cohesion, social inclusion, 'wellbeing' and related social benefits
- Cultural activity acts to support wider regeneration programmes, engaging residents and/or providing them with a means to express their views regarding regeneration activity

Many of these propositions ultimately posit an eventual economic outcome, and perhaps unsurprisingly so. If economic decline in urban contexts is a major part of the problem to be tackled, then regeneration of any sort will require an economic component, and culture-led regeneration has more often than not been aligned to economic development in some form since its establishment as a prevalent concept (Vickery 2007, p.30). Indeed, as Vickery also notes, in policy circles it is the 'intrinsic' benefit of cultural activity that is most likely to be neglected:

There is an empirical case to be made for culture in the way it can attract more visitors and make a place look more interesting, but there's no conceptual 'driver' in the field of public policy asserting a strong argument for culture *per se*. (2007: 67)

With such a focus on economic, and therefore in some form *numeric* and/or *monetised*, outcomes, it may be assumed that many aspects of cultural regeneration would be relatively easy to measure. Before the issues above are considered in detail, however, one important point to consider is the historical emphasis in academic analysis of this topic on a general *lack* of convincing evidence when it comes to the wider impacts of cultural practice.

## How has evidence relating to cultural practice been produced historically?

Attempts to provide numerical evidence to understand the nature and achievements of art and culture are not new. It is now, for instance, over three hundred years since de Piles created his *'balance des peintres'*, measuring painterly achievement on a series of 20 point quantitative scales (Graddy 2012), but with regards to measuring the wider effects that culture may have, it is clear that attempts to create relevant bodies of evidence have increasingly proliferated over the last 25 years or so. In his review of Myerscough's *'The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain'* (1988), which is often referenced in later work seeking to understand the regenerative role of culture, Hughes (1989, p.34) refers to an "almost scandalous lack of empirical research into the operation of the arts sector", and praises Myerscough's efforts to rectify this situation in the late 1980s. Hughes also, however, points to some methodological questions regarding Myerscough's work which seems to inappropriately inflate the role of the arts, veering away from an attempt to simply present the position of arts practice with clarity, and closer to advocacy for the cultural sector.

Nevertheless, starting at a point of a 'scandalous lack' of research, one may expect such initial forays into evidence gathering to have some flaws, but also that once the research ball has started to roll, that gaps in evidence would gradually be filled and methods become more robust, and that this would inform evidence production when matters of 'regeneration' begin to rise up the agenda. As we shall see below, however, specific methodological problems which exist at the early stages of these major attempts to gather evidence on the effects of cultural practice continue to the present day, and seem likely to persist. Also, over the course of the time period in which the concept of cultural regeneration gained prominence, one finds continued reference in the literature to problems with, or to a paucity of, useful evidence in this area, despite the ever-increasing level of attention being paid to this subject.

In a discussion of attempts to provide evidence specifically on the broad social and community benefits of artistic activity, for instance, Reeves (2002, p.7) notes that this link has been strongly argued for since the 1960s but that the "significant body of evidence" produced since this date "was anecdotal and there were significant gaps in the documentation of work". O'Brien (2013, p.91) also dates political recognition of the potential for culture to be utilised for directly economic ends to the late 1960s, whereas Gray (2007, p.206) dates a proliferation of activity in this area to the late 1970s, and puts forward the position that in recent years the idea of a more "instrumental" role for culture has increasingly been supported, be it in terms of "economic growth", "reduction of public debt", "the remedying of social exclusion" or "the creation of social benefits from personal development to community empowerment", but that this has happened "*regardless of the evidential basis for these*" (emphasis added).

In the UK, these ideas around a broad-ranging set of outcomes for cultural activity achieved a particular prominence over the course of the New Labour administration (1997-2010). Prior to this administration, Selwood (2006, p.35) argues that the prevailing position of government departments regarding cultural activity was that "performance measurement was generally considered inappropriate and was effectively avoided".

In concert with wider activity seeking to establish 'evidence-based policy' (Oakley 2008), however, this position has changed considerably over recent years. Lees and Melhuish (2013, pp.1-2), for instance, discuss how over the course of the entirety of the New Labour administration in the UK, arts and culture were often positioned as having a particular role to play in urban regeneration by dealing with 'social exclusion', but that,

throughout New Labour's three terms in office, little or no substantive evidence was gathered in support of this position, despite a proliferation of statements relating to the importance of evaluation and a number of initiatives to implement evaluation methods.

Similarly, Reeves (2002, p.17) points to a 1999 report by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which "identified a lack of hard information on the regeneration impact of arts" as a key issue requiring policy attention. Reeves concluded at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that there was,

widespread consensus among commentators that there is a lack of robust evaluation and systematic evidence of the impact of arts projects, or cultural services, more broadly, despite a wealth of anecdotal evidence. (2002, pp.31-32)

As attempts to leverage cultural activity to achieve regeneration continued, Lees and Melhuish (2013, p.12) point out that this 1999 stance of the DCMS regarding a lack of robust evidence "was restated in 2001, and the lack of evidence to date noted. The same situation was recorded again in [2004]".

Nevertheless, by this point in time the idea of culture being linked to regeneration had gained major traction, and in 2004 Evans and Shaw produced their much cited review for DCMS, 'The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK'. García (2005, p.842) succinctly notes of this report that Evans and Shaw "note important weaknesses due to the lack of evidence about long-term legacies and the limited understanding of social and, particularly, cultural impacts". This comment comes as part of a wider consideration by García of the European Capital of Culture programme and the so-called 'Glasgow Model' of achieving urban regeneration by the hosting of such a cultural programme. García emphasises at this point in time that the Capital of Culture programme has no formal monitoring processes, and that any information available is largely ad hoc, resulting in,

the creation of virtually unquestioned 'myths' about the value of hosting the title that cover up the lack of serious attempts to learn lessons from the experience and establish replicable models of successful and sustainable culture-led regeneration (García 2004, cited in García 2005, p.844).

Indeed, García (2005, p.863) concludes that the European Capital of Culture programme should not be seen as a robust method of achieving urban regeneration due to "the poor standards of event monitoring and evaluation, particularly in the long term."

We can identify similar points being made during this period in time regarding other areas in which cultural activity is assumed to contribute to urban regeneration. Of the creative industries, and the economically and socially regenerative potential they are seen to have, Oakley's assessment of the position of evidence in 2004 is that,

on the face of it, these look like sectors that have a lot to contribute to social polarization, but very little to inclusion. My argument is not that this is the case, but simply that we have very little evidence either way and that the evidence we do have is unfavourable. Nevertheless, the rhetoric persists. Terms like social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and widening participation are peppered throughout any policy documents relating to the creative industries. (p.72)

By 2006, Selwood (p.45) was able to note the by now "common criticism that cultural rigorous policy research is scarce, and that evaluation is regarded as under-developed and is poorly documented", points reinforced by Bailey's assessment of the lack of rigour in data collection regarding cultural practice (2006, p.3), and Gray's summation (2006, p.111) that the cultural sector remained unable to "demonstrate how and why it is important at anything other than an anecdotal level".

## The state of evidence more recently

Over the course of many years, then, the idea of cultural activity achieving a range of 'instrumental' outcomes, including those specifically linked to some form of urban regeneration seems to be one that had gradually achieved traction without strong evidence for this relationship being strictly necessary. That said, evidence of some form continues to be produced and utilised to demonstrate the regenerative power of culture, and, as noted by O'Brien (2013, p.95) at the outset of this report, some have seen more recent attempts to substantiate this position as an improvement on historic practice, offering "precisely the kind of evidence that had been lacking". This report will now concentrate, therefore, on examining the specifics of exactly *what* evidence is utilised to make these claims, and on analysing the range of evidence-gathering activity carried out more recently.

### Approach to selecting sources

Firstly, it is important to briefly discuss the material considered below. Having traced more historical process above, this report concentrates predominantly on major reviews of evidence or significant individual studies dating from the last decade. Identifying relevant material is made difficult by the nebulous nature (or at least usage) of the idea of 'regeneration'. Could arts activity which would have taken place in any case be newly discussed as a driver of regeneration once this terminology becomes prominent? Does this mean it will achieve different ends? In order to assess *evidence* of regeneration, however, the activity discussed below is that which articulates, however loosely, some kind of proposition for how, or why, regeneration will occur. The review thus proceeds on the basis that if activity is explicitly framed as being an attempt to achieve 'regeneration' through culture, and evidence is presented to establish this, then it is this *framing* which is more important than adherence to a strict conceptual definition. As such, the material presented here emerges from a consideration of bodies of evidence which fit within these parameters, rather than being developed more theoretically and then 'applied' to available evidence of the impacts of arts and cultural interventions. As will become apparent, this sometimes provides clusters of activity with a degree of coherence and clarity, but in some areas propositions for change are less clear. The issue of when and how a proposition for regeneration is made, and how evidence is produced, disseminated, framed and (occasionally) repurposed is also explored below, as are the difficulties often faced by evidence production practices. The review focuses mostly on findings from the UK. There are, however, also references to practice further afield, including significant European cultural regeneration programmes.

This report is also informed by academic literature on the topic of arts and culture in urban regeneration, sourced by searching key databases for terminology relating to culture and regeneration, collating material in key journals (e.g. *Cultural Trends*, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*) and following up relevant sources to conduct a wide-ranging review. Sourcing and sorting available 'grey' literature in this area is a complex task due to the lack of a central repository, the potential breadth of activities which might claim engagement with regeneration and the difficulty (in some instances)

of understanding the 'status' of individual sources, including whether they are in the public domain or not (discussed further below). The CASE (Culture And Sport Evidence) database has been searched using 'regeneration' as a key word, and each record reviewed to determine its suitability for inclusion. We have also consulted with the research team at Arts Council England, who kindly shared relevant sources gathered during their recent Evidence Review (Arts Council England, 2014), and we are grateful to a number of individuals and organisations who have shared reports and documents identified in our review process which were not readily publically available.

The 'grey' materials discussed are resistant to simple categorisation, due to myriad permutations of funder, researcher and publisher and the bearing that these combinations have on the transparency (and quality) of published research. Documents may, for instance, be grant-funded or commissioned, with the research itself undertaken by academics, commercial research agencies, arts and culture organisations, or public bodies of one kind or another (e.g. local authorities, NDPBs). Also, the findings from this research may be presented in any number of forms, or not presented at all, depending on the party responsible for publication. Certain sources are generally less likely to include detailed methodological information and may be more inclined to be selective or partial in the use of methods and evidence. Evans and Shaw note in their 2004 review, for instance, that project assessment reports for the purposes of informing internal management and external funders are "rarely published" (pp.7, 58) and this situation seems to persist.

As noted in the introduction, the research team have not been seeking to provide a comprehensive assessment of *all* evidence, but to provide a picture of the patterns and types of evidence which is available. As such, individual sources are (in many cases) *examples* of types of intervention, types of methods for evidence production and types of impact.

## **Regeneration via sector development of cultural and creative industries**

### *Context*

In their assessment of the rationale for much activity seeking to achieve urban regeneration, Böhm and Land (2009, p.93) summarize the situation thus: "the arts are seen as central to the development of social entrepreneurs whose creative energies will revitalise both the local culture and economy", and account for this position by the following analysis:

The assumption seems to be that 'creativity' is a transferable skill, and that developing the population's artistic creativity will deliver creativity and innovation in other sectors (2009, p.80)

Arts provision thus leads to urban regeneration via the development of 'creative' skills which can be used in a wide variety of sectors, or in industries related specifically to cultural activity, resulting in increased employment levels. Official positions regarding the recent UK staging of the European Capital of Culture programme in Liverpool, for instance, can be seen to reflect this position:

Creativity has a lot to offer industry and business and we need to make sure that all employees, employers and business people understand that. Winning European Capital of Culture shows how key creativity is to Merseyside; to its people, to its economy and to its future. (Jones 2008)

This position links in many ways to the influential 'creative class' thesis, wherein differing forms of 'creativity', be they cultural, economic or technological, are seen as "interlinked and inseparable" (Florida 2004, p.8). From such a position, broadly put, any activity which can be positioned as 'creative', including cultural activity, is vital for achieving success in the urban environment, even if cultural activity only acts as "an instrumental sideshow that in turn attracts the workers, which attracts the hi-tech investors" (Pratt 2008, p.108). The idea that culture is part of an overall system of creativity, generating income and employment as part of a move to a 'creative economy', as well as having a social role to play can be seen to have maintained a certain dominance and popularity in recent years, both at an international level (e.g. United Nations 2008, p.iii, European Commission 2010a, p.2, Lähdesmäki 2014, p.490), and at a national level, with the Arts Council amongst others emphasising the centrality of cultural activity to the creative industries (ACE *et al.* 2010, p.1; DCMS *et al.* 2008, p.7), and local authorities emphasising the link between cultural activity, "knowledge and innovation" (Liverpool City Council 2012) and "competitiveness" (Liverpool City Council 2013, p.2).



### *Producing evidence*

We thus need to consider what activities are undertaken, and what evidence is produced to substantiate these links between cultural activity and increased/diversified economic activity, and what propositions are, or can be, used to make this link. Propositions for the role of culture and, examples of the types of data produced to provide evidence for urban regeneration are thus listed below.

**Proposition:** Cultural activity stimulates the creative industries, leading to:

- Economic growth, diversification and competitiveness
- A change in the industrial profile of the city supporting investment in other areas

*Types of evidence:* Volume of 'creative' individuals and firms, level of their economic contribution, and trends in these

*From:* Secondary datasets, stakeholder surveys

Some have sought to establish the role culture may play as an attractive force in decision-making processes around migration from primary survey data (Biddle *et al.* 2006), whereas researchers such as Clifton (2008) have attempted specifically to locate Florida's 'creative class' in the UK using national datasets such as the census and Labour Force Survey (p.66). Evidence regarding the number of 'creative industries' in a given location is also often derived from national datasets such as the ONS' Annual Business Inquiry (Taylor 2006, p.10; Impacts 08 2010a, p.37). These national datasets provide the data which underlies statements such as this:

Investment in the arts and heritage can be put to work to help economic recovery. The sector covered by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport accounts for 10% of GDP. (ACE *et al.* 2010, p.5)

Concern with the overall size and contribution of the 'high growth' creative sector is clear in Local Enterprise Partnerships and local authority plans (e.g. D2N2 LEP 2012, p.12; GBS LEP 2014, p.65; Liverpool Knowledge Economy Group 2010; Morris and Jones 2009). Such strategies do not necessarily link creative industries *directly* to cultural interventions however, and may associate the sector with tourism, 'digital'/IT activities, biological and life sciences, and advanced manufacturing. Typically, documents supporting development of the sector include assessments of the size and spread of business units (e.g. The Economic Strategy Research Bureau 2011) and employment (e.g. Morris and Jones 2009). This kind of mapping of secondary data is, however specifically drawn on in more recent cultural interventions. The UK City of Culture competition requires applicant cities to supply an assessment of the "current nature and

strength of the cultural and creative sectors" in their area, as well as an assessment of how the UK City of Culture programme will "help to boost these sectors" (DCMS 2013, p.19). The winning bid from Hull specifies a target to increase employment in the creative industries by 10% by 2017 (Hull City Council 2014), suggesting that changes in the size of the sector will continue to be seen as key indicators of successfully regenerative cultural interventions, and these indicators will likely continue to rely on data from ONS and local directories to substantiate the level of any change.

Relatedly, some (e.g. Bailey 2006, p.2) give evidence of high levels of new business in the creative sector, and attribute these to the impact of cultural regeneration, and thus a link is drawn between cultural activity, new business activity, and the potentially high economic rewards which can be drawn from this activity. Similar datasets are used to establish the impact of infrastructural development such as Salford's Lowry (New Economy 2013). Some research also uses more anecdotal data to establish whether stakeholders express the view that there has been an increase in creative activity (General Public Agency 2008, pp.21-2), or whether survey results demonstrate a belief that job opportunities are being provided (Biddle *et al.* 2006), rather than seeking to establish this with more 'hard' data.

**Proposition:** Cultural activity stimulates the development of creative skills/approaches, leading to:

- The development of new creative workers (in both subsidised and unsubsidised environments), potentially addressing employment issues

*Types of evidence:* Qualitative data on perceptions, quantitative data on programmes, individuals involved, artist employment

*From:* Interviews, focus groups, surveys, monitoring data

Holden (2007, p.26) argues that schemes (such as Creative Partnerships) which promote involvement with the arts help "build the creative individuals of the future". Roger Tym and Partners (2011, pp.45-47) used structured interviews with economic development and arts development organisations, revealing opinions on the extent to which cultural institutions influence business location decisions and the attraction and retention of skilled workers, whereas Biddle *et al.* (2006) undertook a general survey of the population of Newcastle-Gateshead, finding that over 90 per cent agreed with the proposition that the Quays were providing opportunities for young people to develop musical and artistic talent. A preponderance of more anecdotal evidence in this area, however, may reflect a relative lack of activity within flagship cultural projects to directly promote or engage with creative industries (Comunian and Mould 2014).

At a policy level, 'Creative and Cultural Skills' and the 'National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural' specifically run a range of workforce development programmes,

including activities for young people. The Backstage Centre, a “technical training and rehearsal facility”, works with young people to support the development of specific skills related to the creative industries. The facility itself is described as being “at the heart of a cultural industries business zone [...] and is part of a major regeneration project” (CCS 2014a), reinforcing the association between the location of creative industries activities and the activity of the sector in terms of economic development. The Centre won the RICS’ East of England award for Regeneration, and was described by CCS as being developed “to encourage local talent to stay in the area and aspire for the best jobs” (CCS 2014b). Similarly, a programme hosted by Tate Modern entitled ‘START’ looked to engage unemployed south London residents through cultural organisations providing training and workplace experiences, to support residents into jobs as gallery and retail assistants (Hyslop 2012). Whilst evidence of the *existence* of such interventions is clear, however, evidence of their efficacy in terms of ‘regeneration’ is less easy to establish, as discussed further below.

**Proposition:** Prominent cultural interventions (e.g. mega-events) result in:

- A higher profile, and conditions conducive to the operation of cultural and creative industries
- Subsidised cultural organisations and individuals being more ambitious, collaborative, innovative, building international connections, etc.

*Types of evidence:* Sector perceptions of the success and purpose of regeneration initiatives, sector experiences and direct impacts of regeneration initiatives, sector perceptions of the indirect benefits of regeneration initiatives

*From:* Surveys, interviews, focus groups, monitoring data

Some have gathered evidence regarding creative workers’ views of the nature and extent of the impacts of cultural programmes on their practice. An evaluation of an empty shops scheme in Lancashire (Green 2011) that aimed to develop local creative industries, for instance, used interviews to provide data on the value of reported sales, reported potential future clients, evidence of new audiences for participating artists and creative businesses through artist-reported estimates and evidence of new networks and contacts through interviews with participants. Similar lines of enquiry have been followed using interview and survey techniques around programmes such as the European Capital of Culture (Quinn and O’Halloran 2006, Bergsgard et al. 2010, Campbell 2011, Hakala and Lemmetyinen 2013) and other flagship cultural projects (e.g. Comunian and Mould 2014). Views elicited are, at best, mixed regarding the results of such interventions and the direct impact such a programme can make on commercial creative practice, reinforcing the findings of Palmer-Rae Associates’ historic analysis of the European Capital of Culture programme which found that, when consulted, “very few cities submitted evidence of following through in any meaningful way on genuine economic targets” (2004, p.103).

García and Cox (2013, p.120) note of the European Capital of Culture programme that a range of cities have seen (or may see in future) sustained impact via a development of the 'capacity' of cultural organisations within the host city, usually evidenced through the establishment of new networks or new programmes of collaboration, or the increased levels of 'ambition' reported by individual organisations, which enable whatever effects such events produce to be sustained or developed over a longer period. Such data again come either from interviews/surveys with the sector, or from monitoring data reported by organisations and individuals within the sector. Other studies, meanwhile, refer to the role that cultural events and institutions have in supporting new and emerging artists, for instance through the provision of studio time (New Economy 2013, p.11). More generally, in providing evidence of what activity has been achieved, many evaluations report basic quantitative indicators such as the volume of artists involved, often broken down by, for example, levels of local artists, international artists, etc., and discussions of approaches taken to provide artists with opportunities to develop their work (cf. García and Cox 2013). As discussed below, however, data on what activity has taken place does not enable us to establish the *effects* of this activity.

## **Regeneration via interventions which promote public profile and levels of engagement**

### *Context*

Certainly, when considering the means by which culture can achieve urban regeneration, analyses of the economic 'impact' of tourism and related spending have proved consistently popular, and proliferate in press reports of the effects of cultural programmes (e.g. Cavendish 2008, Johnson 2008, BBC 2009, Hopper 2009, BBC 2010, Carter 2010, Gosling 2010, The Economist 2012, Brooks-Pollock 2013, Edwards *et al.* 2013, Owens 2013, Young 2013). Tourism is often specifically linked to particular developments in the physical cultural infrastructure of cities, via the so-called 'Bilbao effect' of attractive, 'iconic' cultural centres, but also via the association of cultural festivals with wider physical change. These physical developments can also 'regenerate' an area via a broader set of interventions. In an analysis of the European Capital of Culture programme, for instance, Lähdesmäki (2014, p.482) notes that,

Usually these development and regeneration projects include a concrete alteration of the city space: upgrading cultural institutions and their facilities, modifying squares and parks, revitalizing less used or declined districts, e.g. by cleaning and preparation, public art, opening new cultural premises, constructing (cultural) infrastructure and buildings, renewing streets, roads and the transportation system, and renovating old estates and heritage sites.

Arts projects on a smaller scale are also sometimes used as a means to regenerate the physical fabric of urban areas. A relatively recent phenomenon in the UK is the 'empty shops' movement in a number of towns and cities. Whilst some earlier interventions are independent of any form of wider funding (e.g. 'Empty Shop' Durham, founded in 2008 (Empty Shop 2014)), there is a rising pattern of support from local authorities and similar bodies in response to declining levels of retail unit occupancy and a desire to reinvigorate empty high streets using art installations and cultural enterprises (Burchill 2011; Empty Shops Network 2014; Green 2011; Newport City Council 2011).

As well as new cultural practice, some interventions seek to utilise the arts to render wider processes of physical regeneration more 'creative' in some way. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE 2008, pp.3-4), for instance, discuss "join[ing] forces with Arts & Business and Public Art South West [...] to inject creativity into development" and to "include artists in determining the future look and feel of our towns and cities" (p.6).

This association of cultural interventions with some transformation of the physical state of the city is also often broadened out to include a transformation of the *meanings* associated with the urban environment, with cultural activity positioned as being a key driver to achieve positive media coverage or some wider form of image change (García

2010; Gateshead Council 2006) which, in addition to being valuable in and of itself, can also make the city more attractive to a range of audiences.

This section highlights the emphasis placed upon interventions which can introduce new content to an urban locale and its residents, be this a physical asset, or cultural programme of activity. In a few cases, the intervention is also specifically temporary or a 'one-off' (for example, in the case of European Capitals of Culture).

### *Producing evidence*

**Proposition:** Cultural interventions involving a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through public realm and new/changed assets) will:

- Provide new, or improve existing, cultural facilities for residents
- Improve the look/feel of areas, and residents' experiences of them
- Support more usage/reusage of stock/urban areas, reducing problems associated with disuse

*Types of evidence:* Data on physical changes/additions, changes in land values

*From:* Secondary data sets (on physical investment), land use maps, photographs, resident surveys, stakeholder interviews, monitoring data

Studies that seek to document, and occasionally to evaluate, the range of physical changes to urban environments coinciding with cultural interventions typically rely on evidence generated by secondary data on physical investment, observation of the physical process of change, the testimony of local residents and stakeholders, or some combination of these.

Secondary data regarding physical investment offers basic information on the process of physical change, such as levels of investment (e.g. Bailey 2006, p.6) and the range of facilities created or improved (e.g. Liverpool Culture Company 2008; Evans and Shaw 2004; Barnardo's 2005). For example, for many of the 'empty shops' projects, data on levels of reoccupation of vacant retail units is itself suggested as one indicator of success (e.g. Newport City Council 2011). Such data is commonly reported, either as a stand-alone indicator of physical change or as one component in a wider set of indicators. Some studies, however, have relied solely on other sources of evidence to demonstrate change in this area, such as stakeholder interviews (General Public Agency 2008).

Other studies have employed multiple and mixed methods. The 'Townscape Heritage Initiative' sought to bring about regeneration through funding a range of conservation activities relating to heritage, including repairing the fabric of heritage assets, restoring original details and materials, securing continued use or bringing vacant space into use, and supporting public realm works. In addition to using data on physical investment and

conducting surveys and interviews with residents and stakeholders, the longitudinal review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative used a 'Townscape survey' involving land use maps and the observation of "30 to 50 different views of the streetscapes of each THI site" (THRU 2013, p.11) against 25 measures, in order to map overall changes in the physical environment of the case studies.

The manner in which urban space is used by the public is seen by some studies as an important measure of the regenerative impact of cultural interventions. For 'empty shops' projects, local authorities are naturally keen, for instance, to use attendance figures as a basic indicator of the extent to which these cultural interventions are re-animating high streets (Burchill 2011; Green 2011; Newport City Council 2011). Qualitative data from interviews with artists, visitors and participants (Green 2011) is also used to provide evidence of the effects of such schemes. In the case of the longitudinal review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (2013, p.16), public usage and traffic flow was analysed in simple quantitative terms, with higher levels of usage of public space – as observed by the research team and reported by local residents and stakeholders – being interpreted as a positive indicator of regeneration. For other studies, observation of how 'regenerated' public space is actually used is a valuable opportunity to record the experiences of those who might otherwise be overlooked or excluded from formal evaluation processes, using both repeated survey data and more ethnographic methods (Sharp 2007, p.282). In the Barnardo's (2005, pp.32-4) review 'Art of Regeneration', researchers use insights from stakeholder interviews (community workers, activists, young people) to form an impression of how the renovated space is used, by whom, and for what purposes.

**Proposition:** A cultural programme of activity improves usage of space by:

- Providing new opportunities, engaging local residents in urban space in different ways, supporting social inclusion/civic pride
- Providing a focal point/shared narrative for actors from different agencies in the urban environment
- Animating urban spaces

*Types of evidence:* Volume and type of activity involved in programming, volume and types of public engagement

*From:* Monitoring data, audience surveys

As noted above, a common method of providing evidence on the effect of cultural programming is simply to give data regarding the number of events that were held, the number of opportunities that there were to participate, or the number of people that engaged with events in some way, be it through passive or active forms of engagement (Burchill 2011; General Public Agency 2008; Green 2011; New Economy 2013; Newport City Council 2011; Impacts 08 2010; García and Cox 2013). Sometimes there is a particular emphasis by evaluators on the *new* events or festivals created by a cultural

intervention, particular in cases where this new activity is sustained in the long term (García and Cox 2013, p.116; New Economy 2013, p.11). In either case, implicit in such evidence is the assumption that the very existence of cultural events is, in and of itself, of benefit, and that more/new equals better. In any case the mere *existence* of cultural activity in a location is often taken to be evidence of improved usage of that location.

**Proposition:** Cultural intervention involving a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through new/changed assets) will benefit the surrounding area by:

- Improving the value and use of land and property

*Types of Evidence:* Increase in land/property prices and/or usage as a result of new cultural assets

*From:* Land Registry House Price Index combined with data on physical location of UK cultural institutions and other variables (used as controls for the purpose of statistical analysis), stakeholder interviews, resident surveys, 'townscape surveys'

Some studies see a revived local property market as a positive sign of urban regeneration, and therefore seek to explore the relationship between cultural interventions and indicators such as greater demand for property, increasing property prices and changing patterns of property use. A report by the CEBR (2013), for example, attempts to evidence a positive relationship between cultural density (that is, the number of cultural institutions within a particular area) and house prices, whilst a separate study by Sheppard (2006 cited in Markusen and Gadwa 2010, p.382) concludes that MASS MoCA, a new arts centre in Massachusetts, increased local property values by approximately 20 per cent. Similarly, Gunay and Dokmeci (2012, p.220) describe an increase in land values due to cultural interventions in Istanbul, and Hyslop (2012, p.158) attributes a role for the opening of Tate Modern in increasing property prices.

The review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (2013, pp.15-6) also considered the capital and rental value of property in case study areas, but, in addition, monitored shifts in the *patterns* of usage for local land and retail space, through a combination of local and national data sources, physical observation, and interviews and questionnaires with local people. Although few studies have the capacity to employ such a resource-intensive approach, others have also looked at trends in local land and property use, with an evaluation of Salford's Lowry, for instance, pointing to an increase in the number of households during the period 2001-2011 as evidence of wider regeneration of which the venue is part (New Economy 2013, p.23).

**Proposition:** Cultural activities, and interventions involving a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through new/changed assets) will benefit the surrounding area by:



- Attracting visitors and increasing levels of tourism

*Types of evidence:* Data on tourism and associated spend

*From:* Secondary data sets (e.g. STEAM, bed nights and hotel occupation), primary data surveys of visitors/attendees

Surveys to ascertain levels of tourism and of associated retail spending have been in use to ascertain potential economic regeneration for some time (cf. Reeves 2002, p.8), and continue to have a prominent role in establishing the value of cultural interventions (cf. Sacco and Blessi 2007, Arts Council England 2014). Evidence on the economic benefits of tourism associated with new or refurbished cultural facilities generally involve counts of a number of indicators, including number of visitors, number of overnight stays, number of 'bed nights' sold, level of employment in hotels (or in the service sector more broadly), and levels of spend (Plaza 2006; Moore 2008; ACE *et al.* 2010; Impact 08 2010a; Gunay and Dokmeci 2012; LGA 2013; New Economy 2013). These raw indicators are often supplemented with additional analysis detailing the proportion of visitors that were explicitly motivated to visit due to the draw of the attraction being evaluated (FiveLines 2012, p.17; García and Cox 2013, p.135; Impacts 08 2010), visiting from outside the area of interest (LGA 2013, p.13), or visiting during the 'low season' for local tourism (FiveLines 2012, p.16). Barnardo's (2005, p.30) used box office data to look at what proportion of the Albany's audience came from further afield than the immediate boroughs.

**Proposition:** Cultural activities, and interventions involving a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through new/changed assets) will benefit the surrounding area by:

- Creating economic value through direct employment, and associated indirect and induced benefits
- Creating economic value through direct supply chain spending, and associated indirect and induced benefits
- Creating economic value through direct tourism spend, and associated indirect and induced benefits

*Types of Evidence:* Calculations/indicators of economic impact or size

*From:* Economic impact analysis, visitor surveys, government statistics, organisational accounts/management information, pre-existing input/output models/multipliers (usually from the tourism sector)

There is no shortage of studies linking cultural activity specifically to *economic* regeneration in urban areas, with evidence in this area having been generated in quite large quantities for a number of years (Madden 2001). Most comprise analysis of 'economic impact', and share the same basic premise, albeit with considerable

methodological variations in execution (e.g. FiveLines 2012; GHK 2009; Hyslop 2012; New Economy 2013). Typical approaches (depending on the object of study) include attempts to assess the economic value of employment and spend in the supply chain created by an activity or organisation, or the building of a new physical asset. Approaches may also include attempts to ascertain the proportion of visitors brought into an area along with the associated spend and potential effects of that spend. In some cases, efforts are made to consider 'additionality' – i.e. what can be said to be the additional effects of a particular activity, other than those which might have taken place in any case. Considerations of detailed counterfactual case are rarely included.

Many reports calculate a single figure for 'economic impact'. For instance, a recent report by the Local Government Association notes that,

The 500,000 visitors to the Hepworth Wakefield during its first year contributed an estimated £10 million to the local economy in Wakefield and a recent economic impact of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park estimated its annual contribution to the local economy to be £5 million (LGA, 2013, p.6)

Similarly, for example, the economic impact of the fourth edition of the AV Festival – a biennial contemporary art, music and film festival held in Newcastle, Gateshead, Middlesbrough and Sunderland – was evaluated using the Impact Evaluation Framework (IEF) based on the Green Book, and data relating to organiser and visitor expenditure derived from festival accounts and visitor surveys respectively. Using this approach, the net economic impact of the 2012 festival was estimated to be £1,091,435, with a return of £2.88 for every £1 of public funding that the festival received (BOP Consulting 2012, p.7).

Figures regarding the economic 'size' of an event or institution, whether in terms of the jobs it 'supports', or in terms of its gross overall revenue or percentage share of gross domestic product, are frequently used as evidence of the importance and regenerative potential of culture and the arts. A study of the economic impacts of the Lowry on the area surrounding it illustrates this approach, with the authors pointing to the fact that the "Quays area accounted for almost 75% of new employment opportunities in Salford between 2003 and 2008" (New Economy 2013, p.23). Results such as these are also available relating to the economic impact of Turner Contemporary in Margate (FiveLines 2012), and Moore (2008, p.456) relays unpublished findings from an ECOTEC evaluation of the National Football Museum, Preston, highlighting the economic impact of the capital project itself on local employment, and of its subsequent operation as a visitor attraction. Such analyses can also be found relating to objects other than single programmes or new buildings - the regular activities of the group of major cultural institutions in Liverpool grouped under the 'Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium' banner, for instance, is also the object of an economic impact assessment (Roger Tym and Partners 2011, p.27).

Some studies report more general economic statistics for the area under consideration, either to support or refute the proposition that a cultural intervention has altered an

area's economic prosperity. Jones (2013, p.57), for instance, uses the ONS' Business Structure Database to show that the area surrounding the landmark development of Newcastle-Gateshead Quayside suffered private sector job losses, compared to private sector jobs growth in the city of Newcastle as a whole. This example is helpful in highlighting the way in which evidence is often presented for interventions selectively, and without any significant articulation of the potential relationship between an intervention and wider economic changes and factors. Other studies, meanwhile, refer to the effect that funding for cultural activity has on leveraging additional funding (Evans and Shaw 2004; General Public Agency 2008, p.21), or combine data from various different sources to create composite measures of wider economic 'vitality'. The longitudinal evaluation of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THRU 2013, p.16), for example, used surveys and interviews with residents and local business people, observations of physical change and statistical data, to arrive at a judgment of 'business vitality', which is described by the study as a situation where there are few vacant properties and where the cultural intervention is bound up with, or triggers, further investment. In this instance, what is being offered as evidence is the *perception* of economic benefit.

**Proposition:** Cultural activities, and interventions involving a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through new/changed assets) will benefit the surrounding area by:

- Changing the image of the area, internally and externally

*Types of Evidence:* Changes/improvements in perceptions and media coverage

*From:* Media analysis, stakeholder interviews, surveys of tourists/non-residents and residents, business surveys, city ranking systems, 'expert' opinion, other indicators of 'profile'

Increased profile and image improvement are among the most frequently claimed benefits of arts and culture-related events and projects, and typically occupy a key role in 'regeneration' narratives. These purported benefits are supported by a number of different types of evidence, the most common of which include indicators derived from media (or social media) analysis, such as the total volume of media coverage associated with an intervention, the attitudes expressed by this coverage and its 'equivalent advertising value' (THRU 2013, p.16; Impacts 08 2010a; Liverpool Culture Company 2008; FiveLines 2012; LGA 2013), indicators derived from the perceptions of those based *inside* the immediate area of interest, including residents and local stakeholders (General Public Agency 2008, p.22; Biddle *et al.* 2006), indicators derived from the perceptions of those based *outside* the immediate area of interest, such as tourists, non-residents and non-local businesses (Impacts 08 2010a, pp.31, 46; García and Cox 2013, pp.130-1), the views of 'experts' or 'peers' in the arts and tourism sectors (Impacts 08 2010a, p.35), and the judgments of city ranking systems or 'league tables' (García and

Cox 2013, p.131). It is worth noting that both ranking systems and monetary valuations of media coverage are often both widely used without methodological explanations, making them difficult to analyse or understand in terms of validity.

Whilst various European Capitals of Culture have tracked local perceptions of the host city, with a range of positive effects claimed, the extent to which reported improvements are sustained in the long term is not clear, as surveys are typically undertaken soon after the end of the event year itself (Ennis and Douglas 2011, p.8; García and Cox 2013, pp.128-9). In the case of Liverpool, neighbourhood surveys and workshops which explored residents' perceptions of the city, among other things, found that perceptions of the city improved between 2007 and 2009 (Impacts 08 2010b). Biddle *et al.* (2006) found agreement concerning pride as a result of cultural capital developments in a local population survey. Bailey (2006) also discusses a population survey revealing that, "the vast majority (93%) agreed that the North East is a creative region". Beyond these indicators, the value of cultural interventions is sometimes evidenced through the awards which such interventions attract, e.g. Gateshead Council's (2006) listing of the various awards that the Angel of the North has received, or a similar listing for the Dream sculpture in St Helens (Dream St Helens 2010), demonstrating a heightened profile for an area, and a (new) positive association with cultural activity.

## Regeneration via improved social circumstances

### *Context*

In addition to urban regeneration being achieved via broader economic outcomes, the particularly *social* impacts of cultural activity continue to be emphasised, with cultural engagement being seen to have the potential to alleviate not just economic deprivation but also to transform a social, or perhaps even spiritual, poverty (cf. O'Brien 2013, p.41). Böhm and Land (2009, p.77) date this increasing attention to the "less tangible benefits" of cultural activity as a later development in the discourse around culture and regeneration. In 2002, for example, Belfiore (p.97) identifies Matarasso's 1997 work as being "so far the only" work to attempt to evaluate such benefits, and notes some of the assumed areas in which cultural activity is positioned as having an effect:

The arts and culture could increase social inclusion and community cohesion, reduce crime and deviance, and increase health and mental wellbeing.

Activity discussed in previous sections included interventions which sought to improve facilities for resident communities, or (in the broadest sense) engage these communities, as well as interventions with vaguer propositions which some would argue have an implicit social benefit, via a general economic benefit. One report reviewed, which looks at regeneration in both urban and rural environments, suggests the social and the economic may link in a two-stage process thus:

Community development: Engagement of disadvantaged populations in activities which promote participation, personal and community empowerment and the skills required to be involved in the regeneration process

Community regeneration: The development of new forms of economic participation, engagement with the labour market and improved take up of training opportunities leading to economic recovery. (Adamson, Fyfe and Byrne 2008, p.2).

Here it is the eventual economic impact which determines activity as specifically *regenerative*. More broadly, this is worth considering in the context of the adoption of methods by CASE for monetising well-being, using the ONS British Household Panel Survey (CASE 2010), where economic benefit is understood primarily in individual, rather than broader social, terms.

This section considers activities which specifically seek to engage with communities in order to create a positive social outcome. This includes programmes or activities to connect communities to, for instance, physical developments, major events and festivals

and wider regeneration activity. On the whole, it is worth noting that the propositions made for potential social outcomes are perhaps amongst the least defined we have come across in this review process. In some cases, this reflects the ways in which a concern with social outcomes may be included within larger programmes seeking several different kinds of impacts. As Colomb (2011, p.81) notes, though, "the evidence base on the 'social' impacts of cultural regeneration remains relatively thin".

Indeed, *evidence* of these kinds of outcomes is arguably even more difficult to establish than those areas considered up to now, but nevertheless a range of research activity is regularly carried out in this area, including, for example, surveys and interviews with audience members and programme participants to determine the immediate effects of cultural activity. In some cases it is difficult to relate outcomes directly to cultural interventions. Due to the perceived potential impact of cultural programmes, however, wider 'indicators' such as crime statistics, household income, health statistics, and general population data for a given location are also often included in research (e.g. Ela Palmer Heritage 2008, Impacts 08 2010a, THRU 2013).

### *Producing evidence*

**Proposition:** Cultural projects provide opportunities to engage in cultural 'work' or activity, in order to:

- Develop the (potentially) transferable skills and confidence of a participating group
- Address issues of education/life attainment indirectly, through positive cultural experiences

*Types of evidence:* Skills development, educational attainment, personal development

*From:* Volunteer and participant surveys, resident surveys, education statistics

There are examples of arts and culture-related events and projects which aspire to have a positive impact on the skills, personal development (Barnardo's 2005) and educational attainment of those involved, whether as audience members, volunteers or members of the general public, with these impacts frequently linked, more or less directly, with 'regeneration' narratives. This view is echoed by ACE *et al.* (2010, p.1), who argue that the arts and heritage can assist with "with jobs, training, skills, experience, hope". In the case of Matarasso and Moriarty (2011), impacts on self-confidence and self-esteem were evidenced with extracts from interviews with project participants. In terms of impacts on volunteers, surveys of festival volunteers routinely uncover evidence of increased communication skills, teamwork skills, decision-making ability and leadership skills, as a result of the volunteering experience (BOP Consulting 2012, p.24; Impacts 08 2010a,

p.22), whilst some studies see engagement with volunteering opportunities around cultural organisations as evidence of positive social impact, and provide information of these (Liverpool City Council 2008; New Economy 2013, p.28). In terms of direct impacts on school age participants in particular, some studies have examined the link between arts and culture and educational attainment, including linking cultural activity with reduced school truancy (Evans and Shaw 2004, p.28). Holden (2007) cites an analysis of the DCMS 'Creative Partnerships' programme which found that engagement with arts practice "enhanced motivation" and "encouraged high aspirations" amongst young people, evidenced via their reporting of such states. Oakley *et al* (2013) qualify their view of the same programme as follows:

As might be expected, the evaluation of initiatives such as Creative Partnerships tends to find mixed results (McLellan et al. 2012). Common findings are that pupils' confidence and self-esteem are improved, with the implication that this improves efficacy and sense of well-being.

Similarly, an evaluation of the 'Music for Life' project in Liverpool, funded as part of Kensington's New Deal for Communities regeneration programme, reports "improved pupil behaviour, raising self-confidence and self-esteem" (BaseLine 2007, p.4). In this particular instance, the project is praised for the integration of the intervention and the school curriculum (the project was delivered predominantly through music sessions in schools).

On the whole, what is unclear in these examples is the degree to which positive experiences genuinely alter the future prospects of individuals. Ennis and Douglass (2011, pp.9-10) state that,

there is evidence that arts programmes in schools can increase self-confidence but there is no strong evidence demonstrating that this leads to improved economic outcomes for the participant. In a similar vein, there is evidence that cultural programmes can boost the self-confidence of offenders leaving prison, but there is no evidence that this leads to a decrease in the reoffending rate.

What this seems to suggest is an absence of 'follow-up' evaluation, as well as an absence of focus on causality.

For the review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THRU 2013, p.14), by contrast, the investigators looked at overall levels of educational attainment in the area surrounding each heritage zone, as well as surveying local people to explore their perceptions of the employment situation, whilst also comparing local employment and occupational statistics against broader regional trends. Whilst the data in this instance makes a clear case for the possible 'need' of a community in terms of low educational attainment, it is less clear how this particular project proposed to respond to this this need, nor how it

anticipated causality between the intervention and any positive change which might be demonstrated.

**Proposition:** Cultural projects and activities engage communities in order to:

- Ensure social inclusion in wider cultural programmes
- Support community cohesion and empowerment
- Contribute to other elements of community life, such as crime prevention

*Types of Evidence:* Civic and community pride levels, engagement in new activities, new participants in activity, communities presenting their own creative outputs, perceptions of community vibrancy, engagement and safety

*From:* Audit of community organisations/assets, audience/participant/volunteer surveys and interviews, stakeholder interviews, contextual area statistics, direct observations, monitoring data

A goal of some arts and culture-related events and projects is to develop 'social capital', either by bringing communities together, empowering groups that are seen to be disempowered, including groups that do not typically participate in a given type of activity, or by raising the overall level of civic activity within a particular area. Evidence relating to these objectives is generated using a number of methods. One common approach is to survey or interview volunteers, audience members or participants for a particular project or event, to see whether, in their opinion, the project or event led to new or strengthened interpersonal relationships, including with people from communities that the respondent may previously have been unfamiliar with or hostile to. Matarasso and Moriarty (2011) quoted from interviews with participants to argue that cultural activity in North Liverpool had led to a greater sense of community, less loneliness, people making friends, and people being more civically active. The project also went beyond 'softer' outcomes, to suggested that cultural project participants had become more mentally and physically active. Similarly, volunteers with the Liverpool Capital of Culture reported that the experience of volunteering allowed them to "reach out to others and make connections and friendships" (Impacts 08 2010a, p.22).

Adopting a different approach, the review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THRU 2013, p.14) looked to audits of community organisations to determine the extent to which the initiative succeeded in boosting social inclusion in case study areas, with the proposition that lower levels of community organisations would reflect "a low sense of cohesion, community and vitality". Prior and Blessi (2012) discuss, using survey and interview data, whether the Sydney Olympic Park served to increase social capital levels. A majority of volunteers surveyed for the AV 2012 Festival reported that the experience had either 'greatly' or 'slightly' increased their confidence and self-esteem (BOP Consulting 2012, p.24). General Public Agency (2008, p.31) used a small number of stakeholder interviews to explore whether the 'A@CII' project on the Isle of Wight had had any discernible effect on "confidence and self-esteem in the community", finding



that “a general improvement in Pan’s [‘a former council-owned estate on the outskirts of Newport’] reputation seems to have occurred”.

Some studies have attempted to explore the link between cultural interventions and measures of crime or the fear of crime, albeit with varying degrees of methodological sophistication. For example, whilst General Public Agency (2008, p.31), in their review of Art at the Centre, use stakeholder interviews alone to gauge whether work on the Isle of Wight had had any effect on anti-social behaviour, the review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THRU 2013, p.15) combines crime statistics, physical observation and the perceptions of local people (as captured by surveys and interviews), to determine the extent to which the condition of each area changed over time. Neighbourhood research by Impacts 08 (2010b) also explored perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour and feelings of personal safety, and how these changed before and after Liverpool’s year as European Capital of Culture in 2008, through the use of neighbourhood surveys.

Whilst some programmes or projects may target particular communities with the sole intention of positive social outcomes, other activities are part of wider cultural programmes where communities may be targeted or engaged with to ensure that they do not ‘miss out’, or to ensure that a project can be said to be inclusive. Typical evidence of such activities may simply include basic assessments of activity run for/with local communities, and levels of engagement. Liverpool’s programme as European Capital of Culture included a dedicated “Creative Communities” programme, some of which is enumerated in the end of year publication (Liverpool City Council 2009), and evaluation of the Dream sculpture in St Helens recorded “people involved in educational workshops, events, art projects and study visits” as evidence of levels of social inclusion (Dream St Helens 2011).

Evidence on the potential social impacts of cultural activity often comes by measuring the number of events, the size and social characteristics of the audience (e.g. the extent to which the activity succeeded in attracting a local audience or an audience drawn from particular social groups), or the size and social characteristics of the volunteer base (e.g. Liverpool Culture Company 2008; Impacts 08 2010a; García and Cox 2013). On the whole, demographic information about audiences/visitors/participants/volunteers is often patchy, making it difficult to understand if major events and other activities are reaching groups who might not normally be reached. There are examples of mixed methods being used, including box office data, surveys and general observation (e.g. Barnardo’s 2005), which suggests that there remains an issue (potentially of cost/resources) in undertaking sufficient and robust fieldwork in order to ascertain *who* is actually engaging with cultural activities (see, for example, the absence of such data in the review of European Capitals of Culture (García and Cox 2013)), and the effects of this engagement.

By way of context for much of this activity seeking to engage new groups, it is perhaps worth noting the finding in relation to the removal of entrance fees for national museums:

Research shows that when the national museums in England dropped their entrance fees in 2001, this did not broaden the audience for museums but rather

meant that the existing primarily middle class audience went more often. (ESRC 2009, p.7)

**Proposition:** Cultural interventions which specifically take place in the context of wider regeneration programmes can contribute to urban areas by:

- Emphasising the role of culture, thereby engaging people in a different manner, adding value to existing programmes or in some cases ameliorating some of the negative effects of regeneration
- Providing an 'alternative' (perhaps even a resistance) to regeneration activity

*Types of evidence:* Levels of engagement between communities and regeneration planning processes, alternative responses to regeneration programmes

*From:* Interviews, case studies of activities.

An evaluation of 'Art at the Centre', an Arts Council South East initiative, used a small number of interviews with artists and local politicians, as well as residents, in order to analyse the extent to which programme activity was successful in engaging the community with the development process around regeneration activities. The range of activities included explicitly cultural activities and interventions, and attempts to use cultural personnel or methods to engage the community in broader regeneration processes. In one example, relating to the area of Swale, the evaluators note that the absence of the arts strategy (which was developed through the project) in the area's overall published masterplan was seen as reflecting a "lack of commitment to the arts", and the evaluators suggest that "better parity should be sought with regeneration processes" (General Public Agency 2008, p.27).

Similarly, the evaluation of the Music for Life project in the Kensington area of Liverpool suggested that, in order to have a greater effect within the local community and to ensure that it was not seen as competing with the wider regeneration programme which funded it (New Deal for Communities), it should,

attempt to move towards a fuller integration with environmental, social and economic policies in Kensington. For example, a review of the management arrangements may be required [...] the inclusion of a broad spectrum of community leaders is encouraged. These local voices should be tasked with selling and promoting the value of the project and re-assuring residents that the project does represents best value for the local communities is not simply siphoning away money from spending on 'concrete developments' in the local area. (Baseline 2007, p.4)

In both these instances, cultural projects are seen as needing to fight for a place within broader regeneration programmes.

Qualitative data is also available to demonstrate positive attitudes towards the value of schemes involving artists in processes of planning. CABE (2008) provides information on case studies and interviews with architects, for instance, to demonstrate that artist involvement was seen as valuable:

Both architects acknowledged that [the artist's] work had allowed them to develop a much deeper understanding of staff requirements and the needs of day centre users [...] and that the process had validated the need for Public Arts programmes to be run at both health centres. (p.8)

Others report the potential of arts practice to "facilitate community involvement" (p.16) in the process of redevelopment. All evaluation of this project rested on eliciting the opinions of stakeholders in the project.

It is also worth noting that there are examples of activities which actively seek to resist or offer alternatives to the 'agreed' narrative around regeneration programmes. The Liverpool Biennial project 2 Up 2 Down/Homebaked brought an artist to work with a community in an area which had been subject to a Housing Marketing Renewal programme. The programme has sought to re-establish a community bakery in a building previous used as a bakery, and also to support the community to engage in and determine the future development of their own neighbourhood (2Up 2Down 2012.). In national press coverage, the project is framed as a response to what is perceived to be failed regeneration practice, particularly the HMR programme (e.g. Hanley 2012; Moore 2012), and an empowerment of the local community in the response to large, structural programmes which fail to recognise the needs of those communities. Beyond this, artists may also use their practice to critique regeneration programmes, as seen both in the UK and around the world (e.g. Southwarknotes, n.d.).

## Typologies of interventions and methods

Overall, the review finds some common types of interventions/propositions, and common methods used for exploring the value of these cultural activities. This section briefly summarizes these typologies.

### Typology of interventions

It is worth noting that the propositions discussed are often implicit or assumed in explanation of the purpose of interventions, rather than explicitly laid out and planned for. The typology below is therefore merely of interventions and propositions *seeking* particular outcomes - it does not confirm that the sought-for impacts can actually be demonstrated, only that these propositions are sufficiently recognised and, often, accepted by key stakeholders, including funders, policy-makers and those undertaking research work.

**Table 1: Typology of Interventions**

<b>Area of Intervention</b>	<b>Proposition</b>	<b>Outcomes sought</b>
<i>Regeneration via sector development of cultural and creative industries</i>	Cultural activity stimulates the creative industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic growth, diversification and competitiveness</li> <li>- A change in the industrial profile of the city, supporting investment/innovation in other areas</li> </ul>
	Cultural activity stimulates the development of creative skills/approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development of new creative workers (in both subsidised and unsubsidised environments), potentially addressing employment issues</li> </ul>
	The cultural sector develops via involvement in major opportunities (e.g. mega-events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A higher profile, and conditions conducive to the operation of cultural and creative industries</li> <li>- Subsidised cultural organisations and individuals are more ambitious, collaborate, innovate, build international connections, etc.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Regeneration via interventions which promote public profile and levels of engagement</i></p>	<p>Cultural intervention involves a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through public realm and new/changed assets)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create, or improved existing, cultural facilities for residents</li> <li>- Improvement in the look/feel of areas, and residents experiences of them</li> <li>- Attraction of visitors</li> <li>- Support more usage/reusage of stock/urban areas, reducing issues associated with disuse (including crime)</li> <li>- Improvement in the value and use of land and property</li> </ul>
	<p>A cultural programme of activity changes usage of urban space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local residents engage in urban space in different ways, supporting social inclusion/civic pride</li> <li>- Visitors attracted to the urban locale</li> <li>- A focal point/shared narrative for actors from different agencies in the urban environment is provided</li> <li>- Crime, city usage/engagement is affected through animating spaces</li> </ul>
	<p>Cultural activity and interventions involving a change in the built environment of an urban locale (through public realm and new/changed assets) benefit the surrounding area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of economic value through direct employment, and associated indirect and induced benefits</li> <li>- Creation of economic value through direct supply chain spending, and associated indirect and induced benefits</li> <li>- Creation of economic value through direct tourism spend, and associated indirect and induced benefits</li> <li>- Positive change in the image of an urban centre, internally and externally</li> </ul>

<i>Regeneration via improved social circumstances</i>	Cultural projects provide opportunities to engage in cultural 'work' or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of the (potentially) transferable skills and confidence of a participating group</li> <li>- Issues of education/life attainment addressed indirectly, through positive cultural experiences.</li> </ul>
	Cultural projects and activities engage communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social inclusion in wider cultural programmes</li> <li>- Community cohesion and empowerment</li> <li>- Contribution to other elements of community life, such as crime prevention</li> </ul>
	Cultural interventions which take place in the context of wider regeneration programmes can contribute to urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of a cultural element adds value to existing regeneration programmes or ameliorates some of the negative effects of regeneration</li> <li>- An 'alternative' (perhaps even resistance) to regeneration is provided</li> </ul>

### Typology of methods

This typology gives a brief overview of common approaches in attempts to generate evidence of regenerative outcomes. These are grouped according to common approaches (e.g. use of secondary or primary data), and within these areas by the focus of the data and the kind of evidence it is being used to produce (or which is being attempted).

The clusters of collected and available data suggest some common approaches across existing studies, and also suggest some of the limitations of/for those studies, in attempting to model the impact of interventions where (in some cases) limited data about the subsector is available, or usable.

**Table 2: Typology of methods**

<b>Area of data</b>	<b>Focus of data</b>	<b>Evidence sought</b>
<i>Tracking/analysing secondary data</i>	Cultural and creative industry sector volume of businesses, employment and GVA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish 'contribution'/size of sector</li> <li>- Posit relationship between intervention and any growth in industry sector</li> </ul>
	Tourism activity, including off-the-shelf multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Size and value of the sector, including changes/increases</li> <li>- Average spend indicators, where primary data is not available</li> <li>- A 'normal' comparison from a similar period, to establish potential variation</li> <li>- Triangulation with primary data (e.g. surveys) or provide overall volume calculations</li> <li>- Calculation of indirect spend and jobs supported</li> </ul>
	Physical changes, such as volume of new facilities, levels of investment, land prices, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volume and spread of investment in cultural facilities</li> <li>- Relationship between new capital developments and land prices</li> </ul>
	Contextual indicators, including crime statistics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide context for primary data in those areas/demonstrate 'need'</li> <li>- Track change, and infer relationships between cultural activity and change</li> </ul>
	Media sources and existing ranking systems for cities, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media reception, international response and media coverage 'value'</li> <li>- Changes in ranking systems and potential relationship between cultural intervention and change</li> </ul>

<i>Primary data</i>	Interviews/surveys/focus groups looking at sector/stakeholders views and experiences of interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Confidence' of the sector in an intervention, and what it is expected to achieve</li> <li>- Direct experiences of engaging with an intervention, including funding/procurement processes</li> <li>- Possible indirect benefits, such as increased business due to profile change for a sector/urban centre</li> <li>- Changes/improvements in sector 'performance', including collaboration, ambition, etc.</li> </ul>
	Surveys of visitors/attendees, establishing origin, demographics, motivations and visit behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Estimates of volume of out-of-area visitors prompted by activity</li> <li>- Types of visitors</li> <li>- Economic value of visitors (and therefore, of activity/attraction)</li> </ul>
	Interviews/surveys with residents, participants and volunteers looking at public views and experiences of interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Confidence' in/understanding of an intervention, and what they expect it to achieve/think it has achieved</li> <li>- Direct experiences of engaging with an intervention, including potential benefits such as skills development, increased personal confidence, etc.</li> <li>- Indirect benefits, such as perceptions of external views of an urban centre</li> </ul>
<i>Observed data</i>	Ethnographic approaches, observing changes in physical landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impacts of cultural interventions on use of physical space</li> </ul>
<i>Monitoring data</i>	Data reported (predominantly) by the arts and cultural sector to funders or evaluators, relating to activity levels, engagement levels, partnerships, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish the size and scale of an intervention</li> <li>- Assess collaboration within the sector, including with artists</li> <li>- Assess collaboration with partners outside the sector</li> </ul>
	Data reported (predominantly) by the arts and cultural sector relating to future plans, networks, continued collaboration, new programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legacy of cultural intervention</li> </ul>



## Where does this evidence take us?

The information above gives a detailed insight into current practice. These are the types of information that are most often used to make a case that culture can assist in processes of urban regeneration. Having established the range of evidence which is used to make claims regarding urban regeneration in more recent years, then, we must ask how useful this evidence actually is.

### Regeneration via sector development of cultural and creative industries

The least controversial matter is that additional cultural regeneration programmes can boost the size of the cultural sector itself, at least temporarily. To consider the specific matter of trying to ascertain where 'cultural value' emerges from this activity, however, Oakley (2009, p.410) notes a key problem with linking cultural activity to potential outcomes within the 'creative industries'. Whilst the idea of such a link may help to make the case for funding cultural activity, it does so,

at the cost of collapsing several, carefully constructed arguments for public cultural funding into essentially one: it's good for the economy.

This argument becomes yet more problematic, then, when the precise nature of the link between economic growth and such industries becomes difficult to ascertain (Hesmondhalgh 2007, p.141). Even more problematic is the seemingly systematic pattern of attempts to overstate the economic role of culture, which can be identified from relatively early on in evidence-gathering practice. Discussing Myerscough's influential studies, Hughes (1989, p.35) notes that:

Of Myerscough's total arts sector revenue of £10 billion in 1985, less than 10 per cent was generated by these conventional arts activities, even when the total revenue of museums and galleries and of craft activities are included in this total.

Similarly, the policy definitions which are used to define 'creative industries' are consistently dominated by non-cultural activities at both a national and international level (Tremblay 2011, p.295). As such, even if statistical evidence suggests that 'creative industries' can bring about economic regeneration, how these industries, or the skills required to successfully work within them, link directly to increased cultural activity is much harder to establish. Nevertheless, it seems a common position to assume the link between economic success, the promotion of creative industries, and cultural activity

as 'proven' (Campbell 2014, p.1002), despite the persistent lack of robust support for this position.

### **Regeneration via interventions which promote public profile and levels of engagement**

When it comes to the issue of aligning cultural programmes with *physical* regeneration, Lähdesmäki (2014, p.482) refers back to Palmer-Rae's analysis of the European Capital of Culture programme which finds that,

it is difficult to define which of the major construction and regeneration projects of the ECOCs are due to the ECOC designation and which of them would have been implemented even without the designation. [...] In the media discussions and the marketing rhetoric the renewed city space is usually intertwined with the celebration of the ECOC year.

The issue here is not so much the *nature* of evidence presented, but rather how these pieces of evidence are positioned as *outcomes* of cultural activity, rather than of other processes. As is discussed in further detail below, what seems to be missing from many evidence gathering projects is an attempt to articulate propositions such as those considered above with sufficient clarity and detail. Without this vital first step of clearly identifying what process is under scrutiny, it is not possible to clearly assess by what mechanisms cultural intervention could achieve the outcomes asserted.

On a similar note, the Liverpool Culture Company (2008) note the blurred lines around the association of physical regeneration with cultural programmes. Despite noting that as result of their programme,

The physical transformation has been immense. The new Arena and Convention Centre, Cruise Liner Facility, Liverpool ONE, restored and renewed St George's Hall and Blue Coat Arts Centre are very visible legacies from the year. (p.3)

They also acknowledge that,

The European Capital of Culture title did not in itself attract any direct funding for the physical regeneration of the city. It did however bring forward both public and private sector investment in the City to deliver transformational infrastructure based around maximising the City's heritage and visitor appeal (p.6)

In considering this issue of how evidence is provided for 'new', regenerative interventions, Harford's take on economic impact assessments (2013) is also worth considering. With regards to a recent event in which former Culture Secretary Maria Miller discussed the economic benefits culture can bring, specifically referring to the example of Yorkshire Sculpture Park referenced above, he notes that "there is no cost-benefit analysis", and so no consideration whether this intervention was better than others, nor how much of the activity it stimulated would have occurred anyway, or had been displaced from other locations. Issues such as these regarding economic impact analysis are considered further below. As above, though, it should also be noted here that problematic practice in accounting for the broader economic impact of cultural practice is not a new development (Hughes 1989, p.38). Whilst economic impact analysis can be problematic, however, what is not under question is *whether* cultural activity has a wider economic impact, but rather how this can best be understood.

Relatedly, on the issue of what it is in particular that cultural programmes are *adding*, García (2005, p.863) sounds a warning on the use of tourism as an indicator of cultural success. If attracting tourism is seen to be the main objective of cultural programmes, these could "be easily replaced by large business conventions, global sport competitions or any major corporate event".

On the issue of the image change which these developments may bring about, again the issue is not so much the *nature* of the evidence gathered as what this evidence shows us, or what it is evidence *for*. Liu (2014, p.506) notes that marketing spend for cultural programmes and city visits show only "a little correlation":

Image generation in itself does not ensure tourism inflow. In many cases, in fact, if the event is not sustained or followed-up by strategic marketing initiatives or valid investments, no significant medium- to long-term changes to local place image will stem even from a well-executed event.

More broadly, in a reconsideration of the 'Bilbao effect', Plaza *et al.* (2009, p.1712) question the absence of a consideration of the cultural effects of new cultural infrastructure in the urban environment. Despite great attention on the change in tourist levels and city image, "nothing or very little has been said about the artistic effects of the [Guggenheim Museum Bilbao]".

## **Regeneration via improved social circumstances**

Whether specifically related to regeneration programmes, or just a part of cultural practice more broadly, many practitioners and commentators acknowledge the difficulty of producing evidence relating to social impacts. For instance, Ela Palmer Heritage (2008, p.7) state that:

There is little quantitative evaluation of the benefits of regeneration on social capital. This may be due to the difficulty of measuring the experience of a whole community. Therefore, the most successful evaluation of this type has been of participant numbers in smaller regeneration projects, for instance the level of local voluntary activity or civic action.

Whilst numbers of participants can be established relatively easily, establishing the social outcomes of such participation poses a greater challenge. As with the issue of economic impact, this also raises the broader issue of the *specific* value of cultural interventions. Looking at cultural policy more broadly, Gray (2006, p.105) points at the potential problem of evaluating such policy in a manner which "would be purely instrumental in intent and would have no bearing at all on whether the policies involved actually are cultural policies or whether they are social inclusion policies *manqué*", and also argues (p.105) that such social outcomes "are often, by their nature, actually non-assessable in any straightforward, conventional, sense". Also at this broader level, Oakley *et al.* (2013, p.23) raise the following warning regarding the assumption that cultural participation or volunteering can resolve social problems:

There appear to be well-being benefits from cultural participation, but they remain captured by those healthy, happy, and educated enough to participate in them in the first place. More disturbingly, research on activities such as volunteering, which are correlated with well-being benefits, seems to suggest that it is easier to improve the well-being of people who have relatively high levels of well-being to start with.

Similarly, when looking at the case of Istanbul, Gunay and Dokmeci (2012, p.220) note that although cultural programmes seek to address social issues, "most of the visitors are outsiders and the accessibility of the community is limited to participating in cultural activities in their neighbourhoods. There also appear some sceptical views on the fact that these projects do not have spin-off impacts on the economic development of localities or improve quality of life in the nearby areas".

~

On this brief assessment, it must be acknowledged that the practices of evidence gathering over the last decade or so has not necessary led to a substantially more robust position, and in many ways, despite some steps forward, there is some considerable stagnation in this area, and this reflects more general patterns in this field. Flew (2010, p.87) argues that the general literature regarding the idea of "creative cities" is often characterized as being light on evidence, and Lees and Melhuish (2013, p.2) point out that the historic state of affairs regarding evidence at a policy level seemingly continues

in reports released following a change in UK government and that a recent report on the value of engagement in culture and sport finds that it,

cannot present any evidence for, or conclusions on, the long-term benefits relating to community cohesion, and that further work needs to be carried out in this area, based on both existing and new data.

By 2011 we thus continue to find similar statements to those found much earlier in the discourse around evaluating the role for culture in regeneration:

It has not yet been demonstrated that the higher levels of cultural participation that result from investment actually do lead to increased confidence levels and, most importantly, better labour market outcomes. Our own review of the literature confirms this and highlights the lack of demonstrated impacts as a major barrier to evaluating the role of culture in regeneration. (Ennis and Douglass 2011, p.6)

Richards argues that an "absence of hard evidence has [...] stimulated criticism of creativity-based development strategies" (2011, p.1243), and evidence on the role of creative industries continues to be questioned (e.g. Campbell 2014), following an almost continuous attention on the problems with establishing evidence in this area since the emergence of the concept (e.g. Taylor 2006, Throsby 2008). García's 2005 points on the absence of rigorous evidence relating to the European Capital of Culture programme in particular are echoed in much more recent analysis (García and Cox 2013; Liu 2014, p.500). Nevertheless, there are continued *assertions* that culture is playing a regenerative role, regardless of evidence, or in opposition to evidence, in the current decade.

## How can this be explained?

If we see the continuation of certain forms of evidence-gathering practice, but this practice does not necessarily provide us with a clear picture of the role of culture in regeneration, this must be accounted for. A number of issues can be identified, and these are detailed below.

### Short-termism, or a lack of longitudinal data

Evidence is usually generated alongside particular schemes or events. Urban regeneration, however, must necessarily occur (if it ever does) long after these schemes or events take place. Referring to a range of developments around new cultural venues over the course of a decade, Hyslop argues that "in most cases it is too early to judge the success of the long-term impact of these projects on the economic and social development of their communities" (2012, p.153, see also Barnardo's 2005, p.16; CABE 2008, p.5; Ela Palmer Heritage 2008, p.30). In many cases, therefore, evidence is only available regarding an event or activity itself, and not on its wider impact.

Ennis and Douglass pointedly state the necessity for longer term study, and the production of longitudinal data, without which "it may not be possible to determine conclusively whether culture-led regeneration, *or indeed any regeneration, works*" (2011, p.2, emphasis added). Whilst there is much that is specific about regeneration programmes using culture, this deficit therefore applies much more broadly. Indeed, a recent report for the Department of Communities and Local Government focussing on the economic value of all forms of regeneration notes that there is "little evidence available on the value of regeneration benefits" (Tyler *et al.*, p.21). As can be seen in the types of evidence discussed above, however, such longitudinal study is rare, despite longstanding identification of this problem, and calls for further developments in this area (Reeves 2002, p.104; Evans and Shaw 2004, pp.8, 57). In their review of the history of the European Capital of Culture programme, for instance, García and Cox (2013, p.19) find "little to no research" into the long-term effects of the programme, and find of the small amount of research that does exist, that "claims and evidence about medium to long-term effect varies considerably" (2013, p.24).

At the very least, studies hoping to provide evidence of change should at least seek to establish some form of baseline from which this change can be gauged. The 2013 Centre for Economics and Business Research report to Arts Council England and the National Museum Directors' Council finds, however, that this is often not the case:

Many studies do not comprehensively evaluate the underlying state of an area before the arts and cultural investment or only report on the impact of the project for a short period after its completion. This poses problems for assessing the longer-term impacts that the arts and culture can have on a given geographic location. (CEBR 2013, p.88)

Even when research does seek to tackle these issues, it can be noted that the scope of research often remains limited. At the outset of this report it was noted that the 'Impacts 08' research into Liverpool's tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2008 was seen by some as being able to provide evidence which had previously been "lacking" (O'Brien 2013, p.95), and whilst robust baselines are established in many areas by this research programme, its final report focuses on findings "up until early 2009" (2010a, p.13). Relatedly, the CISIR longitudinal research project into culture and regeneration in the North East of England ceased its research around halfway through its proposed ten year tenure (cf. Bailey *et al.* 2004).

This lack of long term analysis is particularly problematic as short term responses to cultural projects can be very different to long term ones. Sharp (2007, p.286), for instance, discusses how enthusiasm around the potential impact of projects can initially be very high, but how this can also easily change dramatically in a relatively short period of time. Similarly, García and Cox (2013, p.133) demonstrate that developments in physical infrastructure can be well-used during a major cultural programme, and that tourism levels can be boosted in the short-term, but that both of these changes can prove unsustainable. These factors will remain unexamined or obscured in short term studies. This is not to say that long term study does not present difficulties (cf. THRU 2013, pp.10-13), not least as reference points in secondary data can fluctuate over time (Brennan 2010, p.5; CEBR 2013, p.113) but it can at least attempt to tackle these extremely important issues. What such longitudinal data can also assist in is contextualising the relatively small role that cultural programmes may play. As Evans (2011, p.6) notes,

The culture and regeneration story requires a historical analysis that also maps change and effects over a much longer time period, within which events form only a relatively small (financial and strategic) part. Investment in housing, retail, transport, education and local amenities are likely to have a more lasting legacy and impact. This will also be important in order to consider how culture might better contribute to the regeneration process, as opposed to simply being corralled into a "festival event" or "year".

## Limited resources

One of the reasons for a lack of such longitudinal data, however, is likely to be the expense of carrying out such research. It is clearly far easier to carry out a single cross-sectional piece of research than to return to a research site year on year to track any potential changes. Belfiore (2002, p.98) rightly characterises "long-term monitoring" as "a very complicated and expensive form of assessment" (see also Evans and Shaw 2004, p.58; Ennis and Douglass 2011, p.10), and this is likely to be beyond the capabilities of all but the very largest institutions (Ela Palmer Heritage 2008, p.30). Evans and Shaw's

conclusions from 2004 (p.21) specifically regarding economic impact thus still seem to apply ten years on:

The level of primary survey research required to measure economic and distributive effects outside of the cultural project itself (and even here, distributive data is hard to capture) is felt to be prohibitive and hard to justify, unless motivated by a funding or other imperative - longitudinal studies of effects even more so.

Making the case for regeneration is a difficult task, and is only one task amongst many for those conducting research regarding cultural practice (Hesmondhalgh *et al.* 2014, for example, describe a proliferation of performance management indicators over recent years). Given limited resources (e.g. O'Connor 2007, p.44) and a range of competing pressures (cf. Selwood 2006, p.41), it is perhaps unsurprising to see the types of evidence gathering practice delineated earlier in the report. It may also be instructive to consider the point made by General Public Agency (2008, pp.8-9) regarding the competing pressures which apply not just to cultural organisations, but to potential external partners in research:

The evaluation methodology was predicated on involving local authority data collection officers in gathering the quantitative data. Despite extensive efforts it proved impossible to ensure the involvement of the officers in gathering data to demonstrate the role of culture within regeneration. If Arts Council England is to pursue an emphasis on 'hard evidence' it may wish to consider making funding conditional on the involvement of such officers.

Similarly, Vickery (2007, p.21) notes in the context of local authority practice how culture is a relatively low priority. As such, it is not likely to gain major traction in seeking resources for research.

## **A lack of clarity**

Even if resources were not a barrier to research, however, one of the major obstacles encountered in our review of practice is one which often hampers successful research in many areas, namely a lack of clarity about what research is actually attempting to achieve, often amounting to a lack of clarity around articulating the types of propositions set out above. It was noted at the outset, for example, that it was felt by some in the late 1980s that the Merseyside Development Corporation had not had sufficient effect. But what effect should it have had? How should it have achieved these effects? And, to link to the point above regarding longitudinal data, could these effects have been known



at this point in time? Such questions can relate to many of the evidence gathering processes detailed above.

If, for instance, cultural activity aims to promote 'creative industries', what is the mechanism by which this will occur? Knell and Oakley (2007, p.21), note on this particular example that whilst discussion of creative industries has become prominent, funding of arts activity has often carried on in much the same manner as it did prior to this prominence, with links being assumed rather than made explicit. As is commonly noted in many areas of research, though, correlation does not imply causation, and simply monitoring what happens at the same time as a cultural event does not necessarily provide us with evidence for what this event has achieved. For instance, a residents survey around a cultural intervention may furnish reports of lower crime or greater optimism, but if most residents have no direct experience of the intervention, it is difficult to attribute improvement to the scheme under evaluation. If, however, research attempts to articulate a mechanism by which culture has a role to play, this may clarify the process by which evidence is gathered.

Without clarity, or at least some detailed consideration, of the means by which culture will achieve its regenerative effects, it is difficult to establish a role for culture. Nevertheless, a cultural programme's presence is often perceived as (and indeed often may be) a "catalyst" for wider transformation (García and Cox 2013, p.132), but disambiguating the role for culture is often impossible in short-term research, and extremely difficult even in long term research (THRU 2013). Whilst this problem with establishing clear links is sometimes acknowledged by those producing evidence (e.g. Labadi 2008, pp.59-60), this may leave us in a position where a role for culture is asserted (e.g. New Economy 2013, p.27), suspected (THRU 2013, p.259), or where research proves to be merely descriptive rather than analytical (Markusen and Gadwa 2010, p.382). Where a relationship seems to be established in a more concrete fashion, for instance between cultural density and house prices, the direction and nature of this relationship can be questionable (CEBR 2013, p.113).

To consider this issue of clarity with regards to developments in physical infrastructure more broadly, Vickery (2007, pp.73-74) notes that policy contexts often assume that cultural developments can assist in forging civic identity, but asks "What is civic identity in an age of cultural heterogeneity and the dissolution of historical civic virtues and authority of tradition? Is it even needed?". Evidence can be gathered on the number of landmark buildings, their cost or their economic impact, but if it is the civic effects of these buildings which are the expected outcomes, this type of evidence does not really address these core questions and may be used as a proxy for data which is, in fact, not available.

Whilst questions around issues such as the nature of civic identity are likely not entirely amenable to HM Treasury's Green Book providing guidance on evaluation, nevertheless its guidance (2003, pp.54-55) indicating the need for a clear rationale when considering regeneration projects, which clarifies how benefits will be achieved, and the mechanism by which beneficiaries will receive these, would be a useful starting point for research into culture-led regeneration to consider, as these questions are vital to establishing a clearer set of research outcomes.

This deficit in clarity is not a new development, and can be identified historically (Evans 2005, p.2) as well as more recently. Reviewing general practice around gathering evidence on the impact of the arts in 2002, for instance, Reeves noted "a lack of clarity by arts organisations about the intended outcomes of arts interventions" (p.39). Without this clarity on how it is culture is expected to contribute to regeneration, and by what means, most evidence produced will be of little relevance beyond its own specific context. Evans (2011, p.13) is worth considering in detail in this area:

Whilst there is no shortage of "evidence", techniques and methods, how these relate - if at all - to the governance and regeneration regime, and where power over which and whose culture is "invited to the festival" resides, is not apparent or at least not part of the evaluation or impact study process. The extent to which this accumulating evidence on the wider effects of hosting and delivering such mega-events has and may be used in the future to inform future events and both cultural and regeneration strategies, is at best marginal.

### **An over-emphasis on the economic**

It is perhaps due to the difficulty of establishing wider effects, and the necessary economic component of regeneration (as discussed at the outset) as well as a broader research agenda which emphasises the necessity of fostering 'economic competitiveness' (Belfiore 2014, p.3), that we see evidence production skewed towards economic indicators and economic impact. Certainly, at least in some respects, economic activity is easier to measure than social or psychological activity. In their discussion of the specific use of heritage-related programmes to achieve regeneration goals, Ela Palmer Heritage note a lack of evidence relating to social impacts resulting from a focus on other areas of impact:

The lack of requirement for social impact evaluation has stemmed from a focus on the economic impacts of regeneration, mainly concentrated on market value, job creation and the desirability of the area for business (2008, p.30).

Similarly, and to echo the points above, in a review of "evaluations by English RDAs [...] that deal with culture and regeneration" Ennis and Douglass (2011, p.8) find that,

The evaluations are generally positive in findings, but lacking in specific evidence. This is because they rely so heavily on the monetized benefits of created or safeguarded jobs and leave other impacts to a qualitative judgement. These qualitative assessments are in some cases little more than hopeful statements, lacking the specific evidence that has long been needed. For example, countless evaluations point to improved perceptions of a neighbourhood, but do not

demonstrate how this connects to the long-term goals of regeneration. Similarly, projects are said to improve confidence amongst residents, based on small surveys taken shortly after the completion of the project. Since evaluations are generally carried out shortly after completion, there are none showing the long-term impact that really matters most for regeneration.

Once economic matters are dealt with, social impacts are seemingly either taken for granted, or expected to naturally 'trickle-down'. As with many of the propositions above, however, the mechanisms by which this would occur are unclear, and so may in fact be erroneous. Indeed, some research specifically argues that "cultural investments do not trickle down to deprived and marginalised populations without strong, proactive forms of political and public intervention at various scales" (Colomb 2011, p.77, see also Evans and Shaw 2004, p.58). This controversy over 'trickle-down' effects also exists with respect to broader regeneration programmes (Jones and Evans 2008, pp.72-73).

Much evaluation, however, does not actually seek to consider such issues and is focussed on more direct economic impacts. This may often be a reflection of the priorities of those commissioning and funding cultural activity, which may not match those of cultural institutions, or indeed of the wider public (cf. García 2005, p.846; Holden 2007, p.32; Shin and Stevens 2014, p.644). Nevertheless, even if figures relating to economic impact are established, to echo the points above, these can be difficult to disentangle from the impacts of other investments, regeneration programmes, and so on (Cox and O'Brien 2012).

What is perhaps more problematic, as O'Brien (2013, p.12) points out, is that "our choice of economic valuation methods may then lead us to actually miss the importance of what it is we are attempting to value". As with the issues highlighted above, it is clear that the problem with a reliance on economic indicators is not a new one (Reeves 2002, p.46), nor are the issues raised by the methodological approaches which often lie behind such indicators.

## **Problems with the application of methods**

Problems noted previously with economic 'evidence' relating to cultural activity include:

- a reliance on narrow economic values and economic indicators considered inadequate for measuring 'difficult-to-quantify' outcomes
- failure to take account of displacement and leakage of spending from the local economy
- failure to distinguish between distributional effects and aggregate income effects of arts spending

(Reeves 2002, p.46)

Criticisms on these and similar terms continue (and can also be identified long before this list of Reeves' (Hughes 1989, p.38)). Again, to consider the broader cultural field beyond specifically regeneration-focussed economic impact studies, in 2010 (pp.380-381) Markusen and Gadwa argues that many such studies,

are plagued with unwarranted assumptions and inference problems. These include: 1) not adequately demonstrating that the arts are an export base industry; 2) treating all spending as new spending, as opposed to factoring out expenditures that would otherwise have been made elsewhere in the local economy; 3) not acknowledging that non-profit arts expenditures are directly subsidized by the public sector through both capital and operations support; and, 4) failing to count the foregone tax revenues that non-profit status confers.

These points are echoed in consideration of specific studies (e.g. Labadi 2008, pp.28-9). Whilst clearer guidance on matters such as these has become available in recent years, such as the English Partnerships 'Additionality Guide' (2008), guidance is also available in the Green Book regarding leakage, deadweight, and displacement (2003, p.53), with the following caveat:

In some cases, the best source of information for assessing additionality may be from those who clearly have an interest in the outcome of the decision. In these circumstances, the information and forecasts should be confirmed by an independent source.

In some cases (e.g. GHK 2009, p.28), it is difficult to ascertain whether this has been attempted, but seemingly unlikely. Even studies which do take these issues into consideration may leave questions unanswered. For instance, English Partnerships (2008, p.14) caution against assuming zero deadweight when assessing interventions, but this assumption can be seen to occur in practice (e.g. Roger Tym and Partners 2011, p.27). More often, though, it seems issues such as these are simply not considered at all (CASE 2011, p.63). A recent evidence review by the What Works Centre (2014) did not include any studies attributing economic impact to cultural interventions as a result of visitor numbers, on the basis that the available studies were insufficiently robust, particularly in respect to identifying *net* benefits of interventions. The lack of consideration of many of these issues can perhaps be accounted for at least in part by the points above regarding resources and conflicting priorities for organisations producing such research. These factors may also account for criticisms made of such studies regarding small sample sizes or a lack of primary research, leading some economic impact figures to be characterised as 'wild guesses' (Labadi 2008, pp.34-5).

What should also be noted, however, is that even if these factors were considered there is also robust criticism available of economic impact studies *per se*. Madden argues that, despite their proliferation, "nearly every economist who reviews 'economic' impact

studies of the arts expresses concern over the technological and practical limitations of the methodologies" (2001, p.165). These concerns reflect the 'failures' noted above, but also more conceptual issues – namely that economic impact studies "provide no argument for government funding" (p.161) and are not designed to serve such a purpose; they cannot indicate whether a sector "is important or not important" (p.165); they often "overstate the net financial impact on the local economy" (p.168); but perhaps of particular relevance to the cultural sector,

By their very nature, 'economic' impact studies are poor at accounting for intangibles. And it is worth pointing out that governments are prone to put intangible considerations before financial considerations. For example, governments often intervene to depress the drugs, prostitution and pornography industries despite their sometimes substantial financial flow-on effects. (Madden 2001, p.170)

To echo the points above, however, Madden concludes that despite their inappropriateness in many ways, economic impact studies of cultural activity "can be seen as a perfectly rational response to political demand" (p.174). To understand their usage, however, does not ameliorate the problems noted. Crompton (cited in CASE 2011, p.79) is instructive here, and perhaps in other areas of impact measurement also: "most economic impact studies are commissioned to legitimize a political position rather than search for economic truth".

Historical problems noted in the area of social impacts also seem to apply as much to more recent data. In 2002 (p.104), Reeves notes that,

there has been no research to date comparing the outcomes of community-arts projects against other arts interventions, or which has attempted, through the use of control groups to explore social outcomes where there are no arts interventions.

In the field of culture-led regeneration, we did not identify any such studies in the recent past to provide evidence for the value of cultural activity, and broader problems with the evidence base in this area have been noted (Belfiore 2006, What Works Centre 2014). Whilst schemes may involve participation in a number of forms, who gets involved, why, and how this participation manifests itself is not necessarily made clear (Labadi 2008, p.62). Labadi also notes (p.107) that qualitative data on the impact of regeneration schemes can be tainted by 'optimism bias', referring to one study where,

the six people who agreed to be interviewed and had overall positive opinion of the scheme were all deeply involved in the regeneration and therefore could not really have the necessary critical detachment.

Again, for the reasons noted above, 'research' on regeneration impacts may veer too close to *advocacy* for cultural organisations for it to give an accurate picture of what has been achieved, seeking primarily to demonstrate positive impact rather than ascertain if it exists (e.g. General Public Agency 2008, p.11; DC Research 2011, p.2; LARC 2011, p.9).

## **Problems with transparency of methods and propositions**

Often, however, a critique of methods cannot be made as studies simply do not give sufficient information regarding how data has been produced, or where it originates in the case of secondary data. Again, following the advice of the Green Book regarding dissemination (2003, p.46) would be helpful here. Without clarity in material disseminated, even if research findings only take us part way to the goal of establishing patterns of regeneration, there can often be little basis on which to have faith in their claims. This is especially problematic as evidence regarding cultural regeneration seems prone to the generation of myths or legends (common in many areas of research, cf. Rekdal 2014), whereby a figure, or claim, becomes a 'known' truth, repeated in multiple sources, regardless of its provenance. For instance, as a very brief illustration of the disconnect between evidence and its provenance, Arts Council England (2014, p.19) refer to the "estimated £10 million" contribution to the local economy of the Hepworth Wakefield, a figure sourced via LGA's 2013 report. This second report gives limited information regarding the derivation of the figure (p.6), but no further reference. Further investigation reveals that this figure seems to derive from the gallery's annual report (Hepworth Wakefield 2012, p.80), which notes that the figure is based on "511,781 visitors" spending "an average of £21" each. The caveats above regarding economic calculations clearly apply here but this could not be known from either of the initial reference points which are likely to have a higher visibility.

Similarly, O'Brien (2013, p.111) demonstrates how a range of research on Liverpool's tenure as European Capital of Culture becomes "debased" into a range of key headline figures, and a "mythology" around the nature of culture-led regeneration. Major events such as this often bring an enhanced impetus to provide a rationale for significant public investment, bringing political and other actors into the processes of articulating the purpose and value of an intervention. An economic impact assessment and projection were undertaken to support Liverpool's bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008. This report (ERM Economics 2003) produced projected estimates for changes to key indicators (such as tourism) by 2012 as a result of a combination of underlying growth trends, new projects (including significant capital investment in the city) *and* the European Capital of Culture itself. These figures had been combined in an interim version of the report to suggest an estimated 14,000 new jobs would be created, a figure which both Liverpool City Council and media outlets reported as being predominantly associated with the European Capital of Culture title (Gahan 2003). The full report subsequently provided a clearer assessment of the anticipated effects of those new projects and the European Capital of Culture, resulting in negative media reports about the exaggeration of potential effects (e.g. Weaver 2003) and criticism from, amongst

others, academics who later examined the relationships between early claims for the potential impact and results of the intervention (e.g. Connolly 2013).

In respect of Liverpool, it is also worth noting the impact and usage of later economic impact assessments. Prior to the calculations produced by 'Impacts 08', the research programme examining the impacts of the 2008 programme based at the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool City Council with Liverpool Culture Company published an estimate of economic benefit to the city region of £800m, including £200m of "Global media value" (Liverpool City Council 2009). Whilst Impacts 08 subsequently published a full calculation of estimated additional economic value from tourism (Impacts 08 2010a), policy-makers continued to repeat the earlier estimate (e.g. NWDA 2010). It also appears that either the initial estimate (£800m) or the subsequent calculation (£753.8m) was combined with some notion of the initial investment (calculated at £130m by Impacts 08 (2010a)) to produce the following conclusion:

Research shows that for every £1 we spend on culture, £7.50 is reinvested in the city (Simon, cited in Jones 2012).

The claims and counterclaims detailed here demonstrate some of the ways in which reported figures can become separated from clear methodological and propositional articulations. These separations make the status of certain claims at best unclear and, at worst, invalid.

Often, though, sources and methods are simply not in the public domain in any fashion, as noted by García and Cox (2013, pp.33-34) with reference to evaluations of the European Capital of Culture programme. These difficulties do not, however, halt the proliferation of conclusions such as these:

Some past successful Capitals evaluated that each euro invested in the event can generate an additional 8 to 10 euros. Consequently, the event can contribute to growth and employment (European Commission 2010b, p.3).

## **Measurement is not always feasible**

Where methods are clear, however, it seems that even in areas where guidance such as that in the Green Book could be plausibly followed, this does not always occur for various reasons. There are, however, multiple areas of potential impact where this guidance cannot easily be followed. This may be another reason that evidence often focuses on economic factors. Social and cultural value is difficult to define, and has resisted many efforts to establish robust measures. O'Brien (2013, p.47) notes of methods to assess the impacts of cultural engagement more broadly that "there has been little progress over the past decade of evaluation and research", and Lees and Melhuish (2013, p.2)

note repeated difficulties with evaluating arts projects linked to forms of social regeneration. Selwood (2006, pp.50-51) argues that the kind of evaluation that seems to be attempted in much of the research considered above ideally requires policymakers and funders "to explain how, and to demonstrate that, individuals' transformational experiences can be, and indeed are, transferred from the individual to society." Acknowledging that this does not happen in practice, she continues in a manner which mirrors much of the discussion above:

That doesn't obviate the need for certain improvements: the desirability of rationalising DCMS and other agencies' data collections; of distinguishing between advocacy and research; of investing in long-term evaluation, rather than short-term assessments which are determined by funding rounds; of initiating a rather more considered and honest discussion about the 'transformatory' qualities of the arts. In short, to cut through the rhetoric would benefit the politics and the pragmatics of the sector immeasurably.

Part of such a pragmatism may entail what Vickery terms "an acknowledgement of the non-visible and unquantifiable elements of experience" (2007, p.16), and also perhaps an acknowledgment that the arts and culture are, in Gray's words "essentially contested concepts" (2008, p.212). As Landry (in CABE 2008, p.8) puts it, "despite the obvious contribution that culture, art and creativity make in urban development, these effects are difficult to assess using the traditional methodologies available for valuation", or as Ennis and Douglass (2011, p.10) suggest, "many in the industry do not believe the appropriate metrics exist to do justice to cultural investment".



## Will this situation change?

There are thus many problems to contend with in evidence production practices. On a very basic sociological level, Schutz argues that (1960, p.214) "human activities are only made understandable by showing their in-order-to or because motives". In this situation we could say that these evidence gathering practices are carried out *in order to* achieve a certain goal, *because* of certain influences. The discussion above hopefully clarifies some of these motives.

The following also seems to summarize the situation regarding why certain things are *not* done, echoing the points above:

There is a distinct lack of quantitative evaluation concerning social impacts as identified in this report, throughout not only heritage-led regeneration projects, but also more general built environment regeneration and development projects. Four reasons for this situation predominate: there has been no requirement for such evaluation; the benefits have been seen as self-evident; evaluation of social impacts has not been seen as particularly relevant; and there have been few resources to undertake such evaluation. [...] The need for evaluation to take place over a number of years, especially in the case of measuring crime, health and education, can also discourage groups who dispose of the buildings they regenerate on completion of the project, and start on the next; these organisations are unlikely to evaluate a past project. (Ela Palmer Heritage 2008, p.30)

In many ways, then, even if it leaves us with an unclear picture regarding regeneration, current practice is understandable and unsurprising in terms of prevailing circumstances. These circumstances, however, result in ad hoc evaluation which cannot be used to build a wider evidence base (Ennis and Douglass 2011, p.10), and which due to its closeness to advocacy cannot entertain the possibility of negative impacts (Belfiore 2006, p.32) which, nevertheless, clearly can arise (e.g. Shin and Stevens 2013). Ennis and Douglass conclude that "the best collection of evidence available" does "not get us any closer to answering the question of whether culture-led regeneration is successful" (2011, p.9). As highlighted in discussion above, Reeves' findings regarding the limitations of evidence produced in the 1990s on the impacts of arts practice (2002, p.102), which are largely echoed in Evans and Shaw's 2004 review, seem to persist in the evidence produced regarding regeneration in later years.

As well as persistence within the cultural realm, it should also perhaps be noted that these patterns can also be found in other areas. In a discussion of the effects of "science engagement activities", Jensen (2011) notes a lack of "high-quality evaluation of audience impacts" which "rarely satisfies even the most basic methodological standards", and that "long-term impacts are hardly ever assessed" in studies which lack independence and rest mostly on anecdotal data.

## Where to next?

In terms of where practice may continue in the future, it seems possible that regeneration will increasingly be sought not from cultural practice more broadly, but from the 'creative economy', where evidence of impact is similarly problematic (cf. Jones 2014). There also seems to be increasing enthusiasm (e.g. Markusen and Gadwa 2010, p.382, Arts Council England 2014, p.6) for the use of statistical analysis of secondary data, perhaps inspired by the recent popularity of the concept of 'big data', to ameliorate some of the problems with evidence discussed above. There is good reason to exercise caution here. The recent 2014 Arts Council review of evidence of the value of culture (p.6) points to "promising work using [...] logistic regression techniques", but the work referred to actually enables us to conclude very little from its statistical findings. Before further work is done in this direction, it may be wise to note Gorard's warning on the use of statistical analysis more broadly:

The danger of spurious findings is a general one, and cannot be overcome by using alternative forms of regression [...] In fact, more complex methods can make the situation worse [...] Complex statistical methods cannot be used post hoc to overcome design problems or deficiencies in datasets (2006, pp.82-83).

This approach also raises the question of what can realistically be known with available secondary data. Whilst secondary data deals with some of the problems around data gathering outlined above, the CASE report into this very issue (2011) concluded that current data and methods were mainly helpful when considering business and property-related data (p.71), and that current approaches still often do not effectively consider issues of economic displacement (p.4), appropriate comparators (p.17), or direct attribution to specific interventions (p.80). When data is available to undertake such methods (which is rarely), only relatively large interventions can be adequately assessed.

In addition, given the conditions outlined above, it seems unlikely that broader factors constraining the production of robust evidence on culture's role in regeneration will disappear. What is perhaps more pressing is whether the very idea of culture-led regeneration is one which has now reached its peak. Evans (2011, p.15) argues that:

In many respects the culture and regeneration phenomenon and European project rolls on, as does the impact study and "evidence-based policy" regime - not least in London 2012's Legacy Evaluation programme with a maze of parallel impact studies and meta-evaluations - at least six - by international, national and regional agencies. However in terms of cultural and community development, the regeneration project and event city looks both tired and dated.

Similarly, Lees and Melhuish (2013, p.2) recently concluded:

As public spending cuts dig in across the board, it would appear for now that a 'golden era' of state-promoted investment in arts projects and culture as a component of urban regeneration in the UK may have come to some kind of close.

Nevertheless, the importance of establishing a robust evidence base around these issues continues to have some prominence (Arts Council England 2014), and arguments around regenerative potential remain familiar:

There are five key ways that arts and culture can boost local economies: attracting visitors; creating jobs and developing skills; attracting and retaining businesses revitalising places; and developing talent [...] There is strong evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and/or make communities feel safer and stronger. (ibid., pp.7-8)

That said, just as the arguments made around the value of culture seem to have an impressive stability, so now do the critiques made of these arguments. The Arts Council review of evidence gathering since 2010 finds that "most of the studies reviewed cannot establish causality between arts and culture and the wider societal impacts" (ibid., p.8), again highlighting the need for longitudinal study. Nevertheless, such a document continues some of the circular reasoning which partially accounts for the stagnation in practice, and the lack of progress highlighted above. After stating that no causal relationship has been established between cultural activity and broader social impact, we find this statement:

We know that arts and culture play an important role in promoting social and economic goals through local regeneration, attracting tourists, the development of talent and innovation, improving health and wellbeing, and delivering essential services. (ibid., p.11)

In many substantial ways, even after decades of evidence production, we do not substantially 'know' these things. What would perhaps be better said is that we continue to believe them, even if evidence is only of minor use in supporting those beliefs. Whilst it considers very little cultural activity (for many of the methodological reasons outlined above), a recent report by the What Works Centre (2014, p.5), for example, finds that the "measurable economic effects" of cultural and sporting events and facilities "tend not to have been large and are often zero". Yet the belief in the potential regenerative benefits of culture persists. In the face of the weakness of the evidence available, though, perhaps it is not this belief in the potential benefits of culture that needs further

attention. Instead, we may better ask why, after decades of a relative consistency in practice (and, indeed, of a relative over-emphasis on examining the impact of the arts (Madden 2001, p.164)) should it be seen as important that limited cultural funds are spent on evaluation to prove things that are already known to the degree that current practice can support? Whilst it may be argued that current practice demonstrates nothing more than a continuing faith in the power of culture regardless of evidence, what it certainly demonstrates is a faith in the capabilities of evaluation. Instead of placing the onus on the cultural sector to provide evidence of the benefits it provides, perhaps it is the process of evaluation and evidence-production that should be more pressed to demonstrate its actual value.

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