

The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK: A Review of Evidence

Graeme Evans

Cities Institute, London Metropolitan University

Professor Graeme Evans is Director of the Cities Institute, a multi-disciplinary research institute working across architecture and social policy. He was director of Inter-Action and the London Association of Arts Centres and director of research at Central St Martins College for Art & Design, London. He undertakes policy research for the Culture Ministry, arts and cultural agencies, the European Commission and UNESCO, in the fields of cultural economics, arts development and urban design. His book Cultural Planning is the first to link town planning and city design with the provision of arts and cultural facilities.

Abstract

The role and impact which culture demonstrates as part of the regeneration process is celebrated universally today, with a twenty year track record of the arts' contribution to urban regeneration. The rationales for investing in culture as part of regeneration programmes has moved over this period from the overtly economic, to culture's potential in the social policy spheres of crime, education, inclusion, diversity, identity, health and 'quality of life'. Despite this longevity, the actual evidence which can provide an objective assessment of the arts' contribution to regeneration is surprisingly lacking. This is due to the absence of an acceptable measurement system and indicators which can capture and attribute social impacts to cultural elements in the regeneration process, and also due to the resistance to impact measurement within the cultural sector itself. This paper is based on a recent study undertaken for the Culture Ministry in the UK

Keywords

Regeneration, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact.

Introduction

Culture, but not just its aesthetic dimension, can make communities. It can be a critical focus for effective and sustainable urban regeneration. The task is to develop an understanding (including methods of study) of the ways – cultural and ethical – in which even the 'worst estates' can take part in and help shape the relics of their city (and society) as well as their locality. This is a massive challenge to academics, professionals, business, and to local and ultimately national government and – of course – citizens².

Government policy formulation and evaluation increasingly demands an evidence base in order to justify public resources and measure outcomes from policy implementation, and the focus of this paper has therefore been upon *published* evidence of culture's role in the regeneration process. There is now a substantial amount of reflective and documentary-style writing on this subject which lacks objectivity and an explicit research methodology. The cumulative value of such work, however, does need to be acknowledged, especially where similar conclusions have been reached about the relationship of cultural activity to regeneration.

Evidence and case study material has been analysed by the main impact area and type - economic, environmental and social; and by the main art form/cultural activity concerned. The definition of cultural activity for this critique encompasses the arts (including film), libraries, museums, heritage and cultural tourism. Regeneration has been defined as the transformation of a place that has displayed the symptoms of environmental, social and/or economic decline: *breathing new life and vitality into an ailing community, industry and area [bringing] sustainable, long term improvements to local quality of life, including economic, social and environmental needs*³. The indicators of regeneration most commonly referred to here are those already widely used by the UK Government in the context of neighbourhood renewal, social inclusion and community cohesion: reduced levels of crime, improved health/well-being, increased educational attainment, reduced unemployment, and quality of life.

This review has identified three models through which cultural activity is incorporated into the regeneration process:

- **Culture-led regeneration**

In this model, cultural activity is seen as the catalyst and engine of regeneration. The activity is likely to have a high-public profile and frequently to be cited as the sign of regeneration. The activity might be the design and construction (or re-use) of a building or buildings for public or business use; the reclamation of open space; or the introduction of a programme of activity which is then used to rebrand a place.

- **Cultural regeneration**

In this model, cultural activity is fully integrated into an area strategy alongside other activities in the environmental, social and economic sphere. Examples include *Birmingham's Renaissance*⁴ where the arts were incorporated with policy, planning and resourcing through the city council's joint Arts, Employment and Economic Development Committee, and in the 'exemplar' cultural city, Barcelona⁵. This model is closely allied to the 'cultural planning' approach to cultural policy and city regeneration⁶.

- **Culture and regeneration**

Here cultural activity is not fully integrated at the strategic development/master planning stage (often because the responsibilities for cultural provision and for regeneration sit within different departments or because there is no 'champion'). In some cases, where no planned provision has been made, residents and cultural organisations may respond to the vacuum and make their own interventions. Although introduced at a later stage, cultural interventions can make an impact on the regeneration process, enhancing the facilities and services that were initially planned.

Reasons why culture is frequently an add-on and 'retro-fitted' rather than an integral part of a scheme include the fact that the local authorities and partnership bodies responsible for regeneration schemes are rarely structured to facilitate collaboration between staff responsible for regeneration and for cultural activity and they may not naturally think of themselves as collaborators. The other common reason is the lack of a champion with experience of what cultural activity can contribute to regenerative projects. The lack of discernible cultural activity or provision within a regeneration scheme does not necessarily mean that cultural activity is absent, only that it is not being promoted (or recognised) as part of the process.

Evidence of Culture's Contribution to Regeneration

1. Environmental

Early examples of 'the arts and urban regeneration' were dominated by property-based regeneration, particularly of industrial sites or buildings, 'downtown' areas, water frontages and even entire towns (Lowell ⁷). More recent examples include *Guggenheim Bilbao*, whose early success has spawned further redevelopment of the city, but at the cost of local and regional cultural development and participation⁸. Converting former industrial or commercial buildings for cultural use was common practice well before the UK National Lottery provided a new funding stream. The arts centres movement led the way in the 1970s/80s converting and occupying former town halls, pubs, factories and schools ⁹. There are now many much larger-scale examples, including Tate Modern, London (former power station), the Custard Factory in Digbeth, Salts Mill in Shipley (a Victorian cotton mill), Baltic in Gateshead (1930s flour mill). In some cases the buildings are selected not only because they offer the right kinds of space, but also because of their heritage/symbolic value (Salts Mill, above). The rebirth of redundant buildings as galleries, museums, performance spaces, cinemas and workspaces for creative businesses is one of the more visible signs of attempts at regeneration, along with the emergence of ancillary businesses such as cafes, new street lighting, paving and commissioned works of art.

The UK Lottery has also been a source of funding for a wave of new cultural facilities, many of them in areas deemed to be in need of regeneration. Examples include the Lowry Centre and the Imperial War Museum on Salford Quays; the Centre for Life in Newcastle; Milton Keynes Theatre and Gallery; the Sage Music Centre in Gateshead. These buildings are mostly too young to be producing evidence of sustainable impact, although there is no shortage of material on their *expected* impact.

The Government's commitment to improving the quality of the urban environment through urban policy, sustainable development and quality of life initiatives¹⁰, has moved design quality, 'liveability' and the environment up the regeneration agenda. In a MORI poll¹¹ 81% of people said *they are interested in how the built environment looks and feels*, with over a third saying they are *very interested* and another third wanting more of a say in the design of buildings and spaces. 85% of people agreed with the statement *better quality buildings and public spaces improve the quality of people's lives* and thought the quality of the built environment made a difference to the way they felt.

In a recent study, mixed-use developments were found to produce higher rates of rental and capital return than single use developments¹². Critical success factors for such mixed-use regeneration schemes include tying the scheme into an integrated regeneration strategy; involving all local stakeholders in the development process; promoting design excellence; marketing a strong brand; adequate transport provision/car parking; and planning for a sustainable future ¹³. However this latter report also sounded a note of caution - a reflection of the fact that property-led regeneration alone is no panacea for social regeneration: *Affordability and social exclusion issues remain as points of contention in such schemes, despite their economic success.*

Art in public places

One of the most extensively documented (though not evaluated) cultural interventions in newly designed or reconfigured buildings is spaces commissioned and (less often) purchased works of art. The use made of artists and the practice of artists who have been commissioned to work in the public domain in the UK have both changed markedly

in the past 20 years. The employment of artists as part of design teams¹⁴ is becoming much more common, and although the principle of 'percent for art' is only patchily applied in the UK, the percent for art campaign, led by the then Arts Council of GB in the late 1980s, has raised expectations that regeneration schemes will involve the work of artists somehow.

The role of public art in regeneration is sometimes dismissed as the lipstick on the gorilla, and there has been little research to contradict them. In 1994, the PSI published a list of the claims most frequently made for public art¹⁵. These include:

- Contributing to local distinctiveness
- Attracting companies and investment
- Having a role in cultural tourism
- Adding to land values
- Creating employment
- Increasing the use of open spaces
- Reducing wear and tear on buildings and lowering levels of vandalism

Roberts and Marsh¹⁶ also found that *the image or attractiveness of a development was a significant factor in an occupier's choice of building*, although rental cost, location and quality were more important. Some 62% of occupiers recognised that the contribution which public art made to their building was significant. The findings applied across different types of company but most investors confirmed that public art features did have an important role to play in distinguishing competing buildings and that this facilitated letting and reduced risk. More recent research¹⁷ examines the validity of claims made for the contribution of public art to regeneration and concludes that there is little evidence to support these claims, because of the lack of a rigorous critical apparatus.

Attitudes to public art and more radical architecture can be suggestible, but ultimately appreciative. An example of this is the story of 'The Angel of the North'¹⁸. This Lottery-funded, monumental sculpture near Gateshead, was greeted with disdain at both the model and drawing stages. There was resistance to its installation (a 'Stop the Statue' campaign collected petitions and phone-in polls were ten to one against). Then came acceptance and ownership as this icon began to take shape on its site overlooking the A1 road. Imaginative cultural projects in one area can encourage boldness in another, although the replication of projects is a risk¹⁹ and most artists and architects would argue that site specificity is the key to successful projects.

Creative clusters

The repopulation of an area with clusters of creative businesses and the people who work for them and visit them touches all areas of regeneration: environmental, economic and social. Cultural or creative industry quarters have been celebrated in exhibitions at the Museum of London²⁰ and at *Creative Clusters*²¹. Major cluster developments have taken root in Vienna (Museum/Quartier 21), Toronto (Liberty Village), Helsinki (Cable Factory) and Montreal (cité multimedia)²².

The organisation of cultural production in close proximity through industrial clusters and shared workspaces is long established, with the advantages of economies scale, information and knowledge sharing, joint marketing and the re-use of buildings, outweighing imperatives of competition, lower land and labour costs, a higher individual profile and lower density locations²³. Clusters can also provide a rare source of economic and employment growth in areas of high unemployment and industrial decline, bringing skills and micro-enterprise opportunities to regeneration²⁴. They can also act as a research and development resource for other firms through their work in media and

technology and more open and flexible organisation around networks and managed workspaces²⁵. Where there are opportunities to build apartments, live-work premises, as well as offices, more people will move in and an evening economy may develop, as has been the case in Manchester's Northern Quarter, London's Hoxton, and the Lace Market in Nottingham²⁶.

Not all of the evidence in relation to culture's contribution to environmental regeneration is positive or at least, sustainable. An apparently successful artist-led regeneration of run down areas and buildings can lead to the rapid commodification of spaces for higher value (rental, capital) single-use spaces such as lofts, offices and retail outlets²⁷. This cycle is now familiar in artist zones in regenerated areas of cities from Berlin, New York and Toronto, to London, e.g. Tate Modern, and Clerkenwell and Hoxton in the 'City Fringe'²⁸. Less sustainable versions therefore occur where extremes of gentrification or single-use property development drive out cultural and community activity, or displace resident groups, or where there is a lack of economic diversity which limits the wider distributive and regenerative effects and makes such developments vulnerable to economic and other external changes, for example the dot.com zones and isolated techno-park developments. South Park in San Francisco saw an influx of over 200 companies in a two square mile radius: *we were experiencing the highest residential eviction rates in the country, entire blocks were being completely evicted...Rents simple got way too high. A lot of creative people - architects, engineers, and graphic designers - moved out of the area entirely. They were part of the culture of the city, and now they're gone*²⁹. Serial replication is therefore not a sustainable strategy here, as in the case of flagship cultural developments³⁰.

2. Economic

The economic rationale has underpinned much public intervention in regeneration since the late-1970s, particularly in employment, related training and inward investment, targeted at particular areas and communities. Economic effects also feature as indirect outcomes of environmental and social regeneration, as social costs are reduced and taxation and other revenue increases.

The economic measurement of cultural projects has tended to arise where external funding - private but primarily public - has required information about the economic and employment impacts of the investment. Studies of the wider economic importance of the arts, commissioned from the mid-1980s, focused on culture's contribution to the national or regional economy and not on regeneration programmes and their effects. These studies made the link between the arts and tourism in terms of visitor spend, employment in the arts and cultural industries, and the importance ascribed to cultural amenities in employers' relocation decisions (where 'culture' ranked highly in middle manager location preferences)³¹.

Regional/city impacts

Local area impact studies have increasingly identified the contribution of the cultural industries to regeneration, including as part of area regeneration, development site or regional economic strategies³². Employment impact studies were a common feature of ERDF and earlier regeneration programme funding. These typically used multiplier analysis of direct employment and spending, and indirect and induced effects in the impact/benefit area. They also drew on tourism impact studies and it is no coincidence that cultural projects were largely assessed in tourist terms. UK Government Offices likewise categorised such projects as 'tourism'. In a study of ERDF funding of cultural projects tourism was used as a proxy for cultural investment, in the absence of a separate category in Brussels, mostly in cultural flagships in the regions³³. Cultural

organisations have therefore been particularly successful in leveraging European funds, and likewise boroughs in using EU funding for infrastructure investment prior to cultural project development.

In attempting to measure the economic impact of cultural activity in regeneration or even generally, the problematic question of 'cause and effect' arises, making it difficult to claim and quantify impacts which may be attributed to a range of endogenous and exogenous factors. The level of primary survey research required to measure economic and distributive effects outside of the cultural project itself is felt to be prohibitive and hard to justify, unless motivated by a funding or other imperative - longitudinal studies of effects even more so.

Appraisal and evaluation of capital projects

Traditional economic assessment applied by Treasury and standard macro-economic theory seeks evidence of *Additionality* - are the economic effects truly additional to what would have occurred if the project had not existed or the investment had not been made (the 'counter factual'); and *Substitution* - is the investment simply replacing investment that would have been made from other sources, or 'diverting' it from other recipients and areas? (creating a 'zero sum').

Measuring the effects of a project or particular investment also needs to demonstrate how far the benefits accrue to the area of impact in community and economic terms, i.e. how much economic benefits 'leak out', such as jobs taken by outsiders/commuters, local spending on goods and services from outside the area and so on . The extent to which cultural projects demonstrate a better and more sustained economic impact than other forms of intervention is therefore a factor in assessing culture's contribution to regeneration. Wider economic impact of the arts studies have concluded for instance, that they offer high job and income (spending) multipliers than other sectors, in part due to their lower employment and capital costs and in part due to the ancillary economic activity they generate through the visitor economy and spending on goods and services.

The appraisal and evaluation of capital projects through government guidance has undergone a recent review and revision³⁴. As well as external economic factors, the need for longer term evaluation was recognised, which suggests that major cultural projects also need to be evaluated over the longer term in order to capture their sustained impacts³⁵. Guidance which is applied in all cases of regeneration programme intervention notes for the first time that *heritage and culture impacts may arise from a variety of interventions*. There is however arguably a bias towards heritage impacts, and less consideration of cultural impacts. This is due to the process and legitimisation of the heritage listing system and other designations of architectural and historic 'assets'. This can result in sites and building exteriors (e.g. facades) being valued and protected, but cultural activity (production, employment, social) not so valued or protected.

Finally, *Distributional Impact* is a prime principle in project appraisal, i.e. how are the costs and benefits distributed across different groups in society. This affects social, environmental as well as economic impacts, but in economic terms, this would require measuring employment effects in terms of full, part-time jobs, and across different income and social groups, as well as by ethnicity, gender, age and disability.

The evidence

Evidence of economic regeneration as a result of cultural activity is largely limited to visitor impacts and internal employment, normally estimated at the appraisal/proposal stage. There is a shortage of *ex-post* evidence, particularly of the distribution of economic benefits in terms of different social groups, whilst there is more evidence (largely anecdotal) of benefits leaking out of regeneration areas in terms of employment

and spending, and of gentrification effects reflected in property values, settlement and visitor profiles, e.g. of “downtown” cultural venues.

The opportunity cost appraisal required of public regeneration investment does not appear to have been applied to cultural activity or projects. This is not surprising since in many senses they are unique to an area, whether based on a single cultural organisation, group or facility. Their arts funding also looks to cultural not economic or regeneration criteria as their main qualification. The reality is that alternatives to cultural forms of investment and projects are few and far between, since they represent one of the few growth sectors - linked to creative industries, tourism/hospitality, place/image-making - which can attract and retain investment and employers. It is the economic prospects, rather than narrower economic impacts in terms of direct jobs and income, linked to wider enterprise, social and equity effects, that combine to make culture a unique element in regeneration. Evidence to demonstrate these individual and composite factors and their synergy is what is lacking, beyond anecdotal and largely unattributable impacts and small-scale project evaluations, including those designed to be short-lived and process based.

Creative Industries

In terms of environmental regeneration, it is in the area of creative industries in both their traditional and newer, digital media-oriented forms, that the impact of culture on economic regeneration has been subject to the most rigorous research. This is most apparent, or at least measurable, in the case of creative clusters and in cultural industry projects located within regeneration areas. Micro-economic studies by definition take a closer look at impacts and distributive effects. These involve primary research and a broader approach to capturing the impact of cultural activity - one not limited to now-dated standard industry classifications and published statistical data ³⁶.

These have included a greater attention to spatial and distribution effects, and to linkages in the value-chain – production, consumption, as well as social and environmental-based. Of particular note is the received wisdom that micro-enterprises in the cultural sector are transient and fragile and do not present robust economic activity or prospects. Over 95% of all firms in the UK are “micro”, employing less than five people. However successive micro-economic employment research reveals that many creative businesses are long established and exist beyond the short survival rate of SMEs generally³⁷. They are of course subject to structural and technological change, not least in the publishing, design and media sectors, and susceptible to property boom and bust cycles.

Examples where there has been less ‘mixed-use’ (property, activities, employment sectors, temporal, production-consumption) and greater State dependency, indicate poor sustainability. This suggests that the mixed economy model and greater sectoral specialisation identifying with place, heritage and with a comparative advantage, together creates a more self-sustaining model of a creative cluster.

Festivals and events

Festivals and events are a common feature of regeneration projects, often in the early stages, and there are a number of small-scale studies of individual events that are worth considering ³⁸. For smaller-scale festivals, the most significant impact is in relation to people’s perception of a place ³⁹, both within and outside the community.

The extent of the economic impact of festivals depends also upon their scale and duration, and some of the more useful material is contained in studies of the cumulative impact of long established festivals, such as Edinburgh and Notting Hill ⁴⁰. The recently published study of the economic impact of Notting Hill Carnival estimates that attendees

at the Carnival in 2002 spend £36 million including travel and £9 million on accommodation. The regenerative and distributive impacts of these festivals is however less considered in these narrow economic studies.

The major piece of research undertaken on Glasgow *European City of Culture* 1990 had a clear focus on assessing the short term economic impacts of the event⁴¹. A series of articles were published in the early 1990s looking at the event as an example of urban regeneration through culture. Many of the cultural-related impacts were not sustained, although Scottish Tourist Board statistics indicate that between 1991 and 1998 UK tourist trips to Glasgow increased by 88% while overseas tourist trips between 1991 and 1997 increased by 25%.

The Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow has recently embarked on a research project *Cities and culture: the long-term legacies of Glasgow 1990*. This will investigate the long-term sustainability of cultural investment in Glasgow (both prior to 1990, e.g. Garden Festival, and since, e.g. 1999 Festival of Architecture), and will explore the social and political conditions for these legacies. Perception and media content analysis is unlikely however to provide robust evidence of the regenerative effects attributable to the Year of Culture or subsequent cultural investment in the city. Glasgow still struggles with a negative image of an unsafe city, with the highest murder rate in the UK (higher than London) and a high 'dependency culture' (e.g. social housing).

Several other cities hosting the ECC have undertaken post-event studies in terms of visitor impacts⁴². For example Rotterdam co-hosted the European City of Culture in 2001. Like most festival cities, the research confirmed that the event itself was only part of the long process of revitalisation. The event/year built on the development of cultural facilities, including a museum quarter and upgrading, a new architecture centre and the investment in *grand projets* on the waterfront.

3. Social

At first sight there appears to be a wealth of evidence of the role played by cultural activity in social regeneration, much of it stimulated by the Government's commitment to addressing social exclusion, promoting community cohesion and neighbourhood renewal. But this is still a new field and much of the literature falls into the category of advocacy and promotion⁴³.

The term 'social regeneration' appears more frequently in government/agency literature than in the cultural sector. Here, references to social impact, neighbourhood or community renewal, community regeneration, cohesion or development and social impact, are more familiar than the term social regeneration⁴⁴. Some refer to 'cultural impact' which, with its emphasis on cultural values such as sustainability, cultural preservation, cultural diversity, autonomy, creativity, solidarity and cultural rights, has a close connection with both the individual and community dimensions of social regeneration.

Social regeneration is a new area of inquiry for the cultural sector and researchers are still working out what to measure and how to measure it. These decisions are made by researchers and those who commission them, according to the context in which they are working. In her evaluation of the social impact of the small Millennium Awards scheme⁴⁵ Jackson argues that social impact is 'intangible'. She cautions that it is:

- Not directly verifiable. For example, attitudinal elements of personal impact have to be inferred rather than directly observed
- Personal. The degree of progress will depend on the need of the individual and their baseline of achievement
- A matter of degree rather than absolute. It is not possible to define equivalent units of progress that apply across stages of development or different people or communities
- Subjective. Individual and group feelings and perceptions about a project are not (as might be the case in other types of evaluation) a block to interpretation on impact: they are an element of social impact itself
- Open to interpretation. Two people might have very clear ideas of what is meant by social impact, yet these ideas might be quite different ⁴⁶

This is perhaps, in part, a reaction to the claims that gives disproportionate (and usually unmeasured) weight to individual stories of life changes and new beginnings. Between these two extremes, the past five years have seen the emergence of more confident approaches to defining what social regeneration or social impact might look like⁴⁷ although researchers tend to agree that the complexity of the process of regeneration makes it hard to attribute an effect to a cause, *particularly in the short term*. This review has identified action research projects and reports of formative evaluation processes that are laying the foundations of more appropriate and robust data collection and analysis of social impact.

Matarasso ⁴⁸ suggests a research framework to assess the impact of participatory arts activities: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imaginations and vision, health and well being. He argues that the impact of arts activity on individuals and on communities need to be separately considered, while recognising the link between the two.

One of Moriarty's interests is in working with communities to design and undertake action research and/or evaluation of the impact of the cultural activity in their neighbourhoods. One example is her collaboration with the residents of the Brightmet estate in Bolton to evaluate the impact of a ten-year arts strategy. A report of the first three years identifies the following findings:

- a greater sense of status for children and young people
- a greater awareness of opportunities to take part in creative activities
- opportunities for participants from different generations to work together
- 'something positive to build on', and
- an improved image ⁴⁹

Social capital

The potential contribution of cultural activity to the social capital of a community is a relatively new area of enquiry in the UK. A pioneer in the use of the term was Putnam ⁵⁰ in his investigation of civic traditions in modern Italy.

An Australian study⁵¹ was one of the first to use the term social capital in relation to the arts. It looked at the long-term impact of community-based arts activity undertaken by the Community Arts Network between 1994-5. Alongside artistic, economic and education benefits, social benefits included:

1. Established community networks of ongoing value
2. Raised public awareness of a social/community concern
3. Inspired action on a human rights/social justice issue

4. Improved recreational options
5. Improved understanding of different cultures/lifestyles
6. Lessened social isolation for individuals/groups
7. Developed community identity/sense of itself
8. Increased appreciation of the value of community arts projects

These social benefit indicators were graded using a five-point scale and respondents were asked to give examples in each case. From this study of 232 projects/organisations, overall 65% rated social benefits as significant, with the highest rated factors being the appreciation of the value of community arts; the development of community identity/confidence; and developing community networks.

Weaknesses

The literature review has identified a number of gaps and weaknesses. Most studies of cultural activity and social regeneration are about the impact of participation on individuals and communities. Participation usually means hands-on activity. There is currently much less research available on the impact of seeing or watching.

Another shortcoming in this field is the tendency to concentrate on the experience of the participants. While reports often include comments from teachers, youth workers, play workers, parents, carers, neighbours and others on the fringes of an activity, it is rare for their experience to be evaluated as rigorously as that of the immediate participants in a project. As noted elsewhere in this paper, most of the evidence of impact relates to the immediate or very short-term results of an activity⁵².

Culture's advocacy and credibility is high within the cultural sphere and system. Within the wider regeneration quality of life/liveability mainstream, it is still marginal and often stereotyped through flagship and over-generalised 'creative industries' impacts. The evidence base is lacking or ignored in this situation.

Conclusion

Success Factors

In considering the evidence, it is important to recognise that the impact of an activity is determined not only by the role that culture is playing in a regeneration project, but also by the way in which that role is planned and implemented. The research reviewed suggests a small number of recurrent factors that appear to be critical in optimising the contribution of culture to the regeneration:

- The participation of a 'champion' of culture in regeneration (an individual 'social entrepreneur', activist, or a group, e.g. of artists)
- Integration of culture at the strategic planning stage
- Establishment of a multi-disciplinary project team
- Provision for formative evaluation from the planning stage
- The flexibility to change course if necessary
- Consideration for environmental quality and accessibility – design of facilities/public realm, and integration with services (e.g. transport)
- Genuine consultation with residents, businesses and other stakeholders
- Continued involvement and 'ownership' of all stakeholders in the project and acknowledgement of their contribution

Gaps in Evidence

In the case of the 'hierarchy' of types of information available in this field (Appendix I), evidence may exist but not be published or made public; or may exist in general form, but not specifically analysed in cultural terms. More often however, the rationale for measuring cultural impacts in relation to regeneration is absent or at least not sufficiently valued. In particular:

Culture is not generally recognised in social policy and quality of life indicators and therefore is absent from regeneration measurement criteria, or is subsumed into general outcome measures, e.g. Quality of Life.

Regeneration is a fragmented process that takes place over several years. Monitoring and evaluation both tend to focus on shorter-term, quantitative outputs. Programmes are time limited so offer little opportunity for the longitudinal study of effects. Developers are short-term 'stakeholders' and tend not to be landlords or operators of facilities. Measuring impacts and evaluating beyond the project's immediate objectives and performance, and beyond the objectives of the project's funders is generally not the responsibility of cultural organisations. The former maintain that their objectives are principally 'cultural' rather than social/economic and they feel that a focus on such impacts may detract from their core purpose, particularly where they are less significant than other sectors, e.g. economic/employment impacts.

Cultural development objectives may conflict with economic and environmental regeneration objectives. There is scepticism, particularly in academic studies, over the claims, hype and impacts of flagship regeneration projects on the one hand, and what are seen as instrumental, social policy-oriented, interventionist policies on the other. There is also some resistance from community and cultural organisations to measuring impacts: *Over zealous pursuit of scientific objectivity and the internal validity of evaluation programmes are inappropriate and unhelpful approaches to the evaluation of social programmes and especially arts projects*⁵³. Most major project evaluation tends to produce a dialectic - two stories of winners and losers; rich and poor; visitor impacts and failure to achieve 'trickle down' or wider participation/benefits; gentrification and displacement etc.

This is a fundamental issue surrounding any 'development'. Economic regeneration is more concerned with 'growth' and property development and finds expression in prestige projects and place marketing. The latter regeneration does not necessarily contribute to the former. For example prestige and flagship projects are more likely to bring benefit to the local middle class and cultural tourists. Place-marketing strategies may also encourage the kind of 'safe' art that attracts commercial sponsors and large audiences. There are also dangers in linking cultural development too closely to property-led development subject to market swings.

There are now a wealth of evaluation measures, indicators using quantitative, qualitative/process-based approaches, drawing from economics, environmental, management, community development, health and education spheres. Performance regimes likewise offer a range of comparative indicators⁵⁴, however, there are very few integrated approaches that can be applied to culture and regeneration. There is a call for simpler common measurement indicators on one hand, but a flexible approach using a range of appropriate measures on the other, including self-assessment. Most existing toolkits are not used or easily operationalised, even recent social impact and arts education guidance. There is therefore a surfeit of 'guidance' but a dearth of their actual application, suggesting that on the one hand they are too general and on the other, that resources are not targeted at this aspect of project planning.

In the specific field of public art: *The two prevailing critical paradigms in public art research are productionist and semiotic, commonly employed in some combination. Both of these paradigms are flawed as a basis for evaluating the regeneration claims of public art, although both have been employed to this end*⁵⁵. The nub of this argument is that much public art criticism, although avowedly about the reception of public art, is actually written by artists and arts administrators who fail to say very much about the public reception of the work.

Evaluation takes time and costs money. Few projects or funders are willing to fund this/adequately. The use of formulaic impact methods such as multipliers, reflects this, although they are seldom representative. One-off impact studies are also under-resourced and limited in scope and therefore transferability, a vicious circle. Many impact studies are not published or made public - 'confidential'/consultant produced. Capturing baseline information and building evaluation questions into project assessment is essential. The integration of evaluation within a funded project/programme and clearly establishing the criteria against which 'success' is measured, was a recommendation of the DCMS *Arts and Social Exclusion* report⁵⁶, recognising that the criteria and outcomes should be set by those benefiting and participating in the cultural activity itself.

Measuring the contribution that culture can and does make to regeneration is primarily viewed as an 'externality'. Conversely it is used by organisations - projects, funders - in advocacy and promotion, but often without a solid evidence base. However, internal barriers to the gathering of evidence of impact also exist within the cultural sector and the public funding system. The most common barriers have been identified by several writers. Their conclusions were reflected and supplemented by Reeves⁵⁷:

- a lack of interest on the part of the cultural sector in developing evaluative systems through which to prove its value
- the view, held by some creative practitioners in particular, that evaluation is an unnecessary, bureaucratic intrusion in the creative process
- the view that evaluation is an additional and probably unaffordable burden on small organisations
- the failure of funding bodies to insist that provision for evaluation is made
- the perception of data collection as a chore rather than a tool to help organisations improve their own practice
- a failure to recognise evaluation as an essential part of the process of learning about culture's contribution to regeneration and about how to make the most effective use of cultural provision or activity in a regeneration context
- a tendency, in the design and implementation of an evaluation exercise, to give too great a priority to funders' objectives
- a lack of experience, in the cultural sector, of undertaking formally structured evaluations
- in relation to the arts, the absence of planning norms for arts facilities, against which to measure the quality and quantity of provision

The reasons for the barriers and resistance to the evaluation of impacts are therefore 'cultural' on the one hand, and structural on the other, including the rationale for the resources needed to undertake the required gathering of evidence at the outset and over time.

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Phyllida Shaw

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Appendix I

Different types of impact measurement

The term 'impact study' is now widely used in relation to the 'contribution' or 'role' or 'importance' of cultural activity to another objective. Much of the literature on the contribution of culture to society now uses the language of impacts. Studies that look beyond the project itself traditionally use one (but seldom more than one) of the following fields of impact, which are generally tested using particular measurements:

Environmental – Land values and occupancy (versus vacant premises), design quality, environmental/quality of life, e.g. air/water pollution, noise, liveability, open space, diversity, sustainability. *Tests* include Quality of Life (e.g. UK, Canada - *local quality of life*) indicators and the re-use of brownfield land.

Economic – Multipliers (jobs, income/expenditure – direct, indirect, induced), cost benefit analysis, contingent valuation (i.e. willingness to pay for 'free' activities), inward investment, distributive effects. *Tests* include unemployment rates, spending and wealth in an area, and distribution by social group and location, employer (re-)location, public-private leverage.

Social – Cohesion, inclusion, capacity, health and well-being, identity. *Tests* include participation (penetration rates – catchment, profile, frequency), perceptions, networks, self-help, crime rates/fear of crime, health/referrals.

Researchers in this field have begun to identify a fourth type – *cultural impact*. This term is already being used to describe two rather different effects. One is the impact on the cultural life of a place. For example, the opening of a gallery where there was none before has an impact on the cultural life of that place. The other use refers to the impact of activity on the culture of a place or community - its codes of conduct, its identity, its heritage - what is termed 'cultural governance'⁵⁷.

Types of reporting

Writing about culture's contribution to regeneration is usually presented in one of six types of document. Some are evidence-based, some not.

1. *Advocacy and promotion* - often produced during the feasibility, development and initial impact phase, or to justify further resources/support. Typically presented in the form of promotional material and descriptive case studies.

2. *Project assessment* – produced for internal and external use. This type of report typically concentrates on financial and user-related outputs (e.g. income and expenditure, visitor numbers, direct employment). It tends not to evaluate the process or outcomes of the project. Useful principally to the organisation and its funders, rarely published.

3. *Project or programme evaluation* – focus as much on the process employed to plan and deliver a project as on the results. They may include quantitative and qualitative data or qualitative evidence only. The most common forms of data collection are questionnaires, interview and observation. The evaluation may be of one project only or of a programme involving a group of projects. The evaluation may be carried out by the

organisation itself or with the support of an external evaluator. Participants will be involved to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the methodology chosen.

4. Performance Indicators (PIs) – PIs are used to compare actual performance against targets and comparative standards (e.g. local authority ‘Best Value’, Arts Council PIs, Local Quality of Life Indicators and benchmarks), which are quantitative and service-provision based. PIs are applied more frequently in cultural organisations that are directly answerable to Government, e.g. the national museums, galleries and libraries, and larger funded organisations funded. Based on Government, Audit Commission benchmarks published through annual national arts funding assessment⁵⁷. Published at borough/council and aggregate levels.

5. Impact Assessment – looks at the likely or actual impact of an activity on a particular location, community or economy (e.g. economic, environmental impact, health impact, CBA, transport and tourism impacts). Undertaken for large or sensitive schemes under planning/EU regulations, and/or commissioned research consultant-led impact studies⁵⁷.

6. Longitudinal Impact Assessment – takes a baseline position and compares impacts over time or at least two points in time; maps attitude and perception changes (residents, users), as well as more quantitative change such as visitor levels and economic impacts. This model is used, like evaluation, both for individual projects and for programmes of activity. Rare and often involving universities and inter/national comparative studies⁵⁷.