

## **Literature Review: Culture and Regeneration**

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Graeme Evans & Phyllida Shaw

**In many parts of the world, cultural facilities and activities are increasingly being exploited as a ‘driver’, or at least an important player, in physical, economic and social regeneration. Sprinkle a little cultural fairy dust on a run-down area and its chances of revival will multiply – or so the argument goes.**

**In 2003, the British government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned Graeme Evans and Phyllida Shaw to review the evidence for such claims, with a view to informing its support for cultural initiatives in a regeneration context. The immediate results were *The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK: A Review of Evidence* (2004) and a subsequent consultation document, *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* (DCMS, 2005a).**

**The English government is confident that culture does have a positive contribution to make to regeneration and, in early 2006, DCMS and Arts Council England launched *Where We Live* – an initiative involving government-funded, cultural agencies and designed to deliver sustainable communities policy objectives and to make the case for the inclusion of culture in community planning and redevelopment.**

**To coincide with the IFACCA World Summit, taking place in Newcastle and Gateshead in June 2006, *Arts Research Digest* asked Evans and Shaw to widen their net to look at recent research, from around the world, on the contribution of culture to regeneration. *ARD* is grateful to IFACCA for inviting its members and readers of the IFACCA Acorns newsletter to propose material for inclusion. The article includes references from the UK since 2004 and from elsewhere since 2000.**

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this article, ‘culture’ includes the arts, libraries, archives, architecture, museums, heritage and cultural tourism. It does not include sport.

‘Regeneration’ is defined as the renewal, revival, revitalisation or transformation of a place or community. It is a response to decline, or *degeneration*. Regeneration is both a process and an outcome. It can have physical, economic and social dimensions, and the three commonly coexist.

### **A growing field**

Academic and political interest in regeneration processes, led by, or incorporating, the arts, culture, creativity or the creative industries, is growing both in scope and geographic coverage. This is evident in international initiatives such as UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network (2005), in comparative policy studies, e.g. *Creative Spaces* (Evans, Foord and Shaw, 2005) and academic journals that are devoting special issues to the subject, e.g. *Cultural Policy* (2004), *Local Economy* (2004), *Urban Studies* (2005) and *Cities* (2006).

The claims for cultural activity's role in regeneration have prompted interest in its potential relationship to sustainable development. Put simply, culture is being seen by some policy makers and planners as an insurance policy against future decline, and by some investors (private and public) as a value-added distinction and as an accelerator of development. In the UK, initiatives such as *Where We Live*, cross-cutting policy and research priorities including 'quality of localities' and 'quality of life' (DCMS, *Research Strategy 2005-2010*, 2005b) reflect a desire to promote culture's place in sustainable communities and to place the arts, and culture more broadly, in the mainstream of regeneration policy and practice.

The literature on culture and regeneration ranges from minute analyses of employment data at one end of the spectrum to narrative snapshots at the other (e.g. Lutz et al, 2005). Arts councils, cultural agencies and organisations in many parts of the world are investing resources in celebrating culture's contribution to regeneration, while the academic work on the subject is often taking a more critical position. Articles and reports point to the lack of robust evidence and to the methodological difficulty in demonstrating causality.

*The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK* (2004) identified three different relationships involving culture and regeneration. These were: *culture-led* regeneration, in which cultural activity is 'the catalyst and engine of regeneration'; *cultural* regeneration, in which cultural activity is 'fully integrated into an area strategy, alongside other activities in the environmental, social and economic sphere'; and *culture and* regeneration, in which cultural activity is part of the bigger picture, but is not integral to the planning or development processes.

For this, much shorter, article, we have organised our references under three headings likely to be of interest to *ARD* and *IFACCA* readers: iconic buildings and cities of culture, cultural quarters and clusters, and cultural dynamism.

### **Iconic buildings and cities of culture**

Cities are continuing to invest in iconic, culturally-driven flagships and open spaces in areas identified for regeneration. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Tate Modern on the South Bank of the Thames in London, the Lowry, Salford Quays, and the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles are familiar exemplars. Resistance to this trend can be seen in the fraught regeneration and city branding efforts in Rio, where the proposed Guggenheim Museum franchise came to nothing and in Liverpool, European City of Culture 2008, where the city rejected plans for a striking new building (Will Alsop's 'Cloud') that would have stood next to Liverpool's historic, waterfront buildings. One of the reported weaknesses of this project was the uncertainty about what it would house.

Newcastle and Gateshead, two distinct, but neighbouring, conurbations, have re-branded themselves as Newcastle-Gateshead, to capitalise on the pulling power of their respective cultural attractions. Newcastle has the architectural advantages of an historically prosperous city, while Gateshead is home to two of the most important new cultural facilities in the north of England - the Sage Gateshead (a music centre) and the *BALTIC* (a contemporary art gallery) – and, on its outskirts, one of the country's best known works of public art, Anthony Gormley's *Angel of the North*.

This is an example of culture-led regeneration initiated by the local authority and supported by national and as regional funds.

In Toronto, an entire city cultural renaissance is underway, following a decline in tourism revenues after the SARS outbreak and 9/11. A buoyant Canadian economy has provided the opportunity and C\$900m of federal and provincial funding are being invested in upgrading the city's cultural infrastructure. Earlier this year, Valerie Ross wrote in the *Globe and Mail* that Toronto's renaissance would not just be about buildings, but also about human content. She cited Richard Florida, who has advised the city: 'You've got to play in the big leagues...but the mistake would be to put big institutions before actual artists' and also Evans: 'Much now rests on a strategy that can incorporate high-arts facilities with artist-led and creative industries and community-based development'. The Province of Ontario has accepted this analysis and launched a Creative Toronto strategy, mirroring Creative London (established in 2004), Creative New York (2005) and Create Berlin (2005).

Meanwhile, in the Thames Gateway region of South East England (the site of major urban regeneration that will include facilities for the London 2012 Olympics), a group of artists invited to take part in the planning process, concluded that: 'There is a tiredness around the idea of the single cultural icon, and a growing awareness that new models of cultural facilities need to be explored...Not every town can sustain its own Tate Modern, and the long-term sustainability of such iconic statements is being increasingly questioned...the iconic building as regenerative catalyst may be the wrong answer.' (Charrette 3, 2004)

Just as some countries with a tradition of erecting iconic buildings are beginning to question the practice, others are adopting the same seductive formula. Yeoh (2005) has drawn attention to the number of South East Asian cities building iconic cultural venues and re-branding themselves as 'creative cities' - Seoul, Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong and Singapore among others.

Writing about Russia, Moss (2005) concludes that 'Western models of cultural growth are not always appropriate models...because the history of cultural development and consumption has followed entirely different patterns; concepts of the fundamental roles of culture are different; and culture-led regeneration has to tackle different problems from those in the West.'

More researchers are beginning to look at the impact of these major projects on existing cultural provision. Writing about Shanghai, which had a long pre-Communist tradition of attracting and supporting artists and is now investing heavily in landmark buildings (cultural and otherwise), Gilmore (2004) describes the city's 'hunger to absorb advancements from abroad. Today,' he writes, 'this permeability is sapping the city's own creativity: its unique culture and traditions are sinking under external influences. Shanghai must begin the task of nourishing this inner force — the imagination of its people.'

Bailey, Miles and Stark (2004) have argued that culture-led regeneration is 'not about about a trickle-down effect at all, but rather represents a counter-balance to broader processes of cultural globalisation'. They maintain that 'only an in-depth understanding of geographical and historical specificities will help us understand the

way in which cultural regeneration potentially strengthens existing sources of identity rather than imposing new ones.'

Singapore's marketing initiative 'Global City for the Arts' and the impressive Esplanade development have been criticised for failing to include in the new venue spaces of a scale and style suitable for use by local groups (Chang, 2000 and Evans, 2003).

Ellis (2005) regrets what he calls the 'copycat' tendency, concluding that it is likely to fail, unless it is part of a much more comprehensive plan for urban renewal. 'Culture cannot revitalize downtown alone. Where cultural infrastructure plays a role, it plays it alongside public and private investment in other civic amenities, transport systems and housing.' He warns that major new cultural facilities can 'preempt and siphon off existing audiences and philanthropic resources rather than generating new ones. This is hardly the regenerative function that the planners will have had in mind.'

Architectural critic, Dejan Sudjic, in *The Edifice Complex* (2005), argues that these buildings are a decadent, short-lived phenomenon, while Charles Jencks (2006) sees them as having both staying power and potential as creative, pluralist forces, providing they observe a code of good practice.

In the responses to the DCMS' *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* (2005) it was felt that landmark buildings did not have to be big to be of high quality, while small buildings and smaller-scale, community-based schemes, rather than buildings, are likely to detract less from the cultural activity itself. Two contrasting community, culture-led projects illustrate this point.

The Yerba Buena Arts Centre in San Francisco is a new multicultural arts project, forming part of a mixed-use regeneration scheme. It has been funded by private and public investment and includes hotels, a public garden, shopping mall and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa). In its first three years, the new complex attracted over 7.5m visitors, making a tangible improvement to the local quality of life, reducing crime in what had been a 'no go' area. The city's hotel bed tax revenue for the arts (established in 1961) also increased by 14%, and the contribution from new hotels in the cultural district was estimated at US\$271m per year, producing wider benefits as well as a return to city (Shimuzu, 2002).

On a different scale, in Singapore, the case for iconic community buildings includes a Chinese school and a Malay Mosque. Built with the support of a particular community, these buildings have been found 'to derive symbolic as well as use value by reflecting shared memory, identity and solidarity of a social group', and to 'act as a counterbalance to transnational iconic projects that often dissociate the local society' (Ho, 2006).

### **Cities of culture**

Griffiths (2006) describes the European Capital of Culture programme as 'a significant catalyst for culture-led regeneration' and it is true that many of the winners of the title City or Capital of Culture have argued that it will help them to achieve their regeneration objectives. There is, however, disagreement about the best way to do this. In his research into Porto's experience as city of culture, Balsas (2004) found

‘that despite rich and well-participated [sic] cultural events, too much emphasis was put on attracting public investment to regenerate the public space, replacing infrastructures, and modernizing cultural facilities. This was done at the expense of institutional capacity building, building conservation and boosting civic creativity.’

In an assessment of the impact of the Capital of Culture 2001 on Rotterdam’s image, Richards & Wilson (2004) concluded that while the city’s reputation as a cultural destination did grow marginally (at least in the short term), the pre-existing physical characteristics of Rotterdam and its image as a working port continued to dominate public perceptions of the city. Deffner and Labrianidis (2005) concluded that opportunities had been lost in Thessaloniki (City of Culture 1997) because of the focus on flagship projects and the lack of a tourism policy and city marketing strategy.

In a longitudinal assessment of European Capitals of Culture and Cultural Months (Palmer, 2004a), the authors found that ‘too often, Capitals of Culture have focussed most of their efforts on funding events and projects that form part of a year-long celebration, with too little time and investment given to the future’ (Palmer, 2004b).

Newcastle-Gateshead have embarked on a ten-year, longitudinal study of the impact of the new cultural developments on the two communities, and in Liverpool, the Faculty of Social and Environmental Studies is tracking the social, economic, cultural and environmental changes that take place in Liverpool in advance of and after the city’s tenure as European Capital of Culture 2008.

### **Cultural quarters and clusters**

Towns and cities have been developing cultural, or creative industries, quarters and clusters since the 1980s. Perhaps because of the involvement of economists and planners in the design of many of them, their impact has been more closely studied than some of the more visible initiatives. Like the iconic buildings and cities of culture programme, cultural quarters have their advocates and their detractors.

McCarthy (2005) sets up the argument. Cultural quarters ‘may involve uses related to cultural production or cultural consumption, or both, and further spatial concentration is assumed to lead to synergy, agglomeration economies and minimization of amenity loss. However, the designation of such quarters is contested. First, the notion of cultural clustering and designation of cultural quarters in principle may be questioned in terms of its contribution to urban regeneration; and second, there is contention over the optimum orientation of such quarters—for instance whether they should be oriented primarily to consumption, production or both.’

Writing about cultural quarters in Bolton, Dublin and Vienna, Roodhouse (2006) comments on the importance of responding to the specific historical, spatial and social context of each place, and on the key role that universities can play. O’Connor (2006) echoes this: ‘Creative industries create economic value in cities, but require sustained and cumulative intelligence and experience which balances economic and cultural dimensions; past failures to do so have reduced the creative spatial potential of city centres.’

Sustainability is a key issue for cultural and creative industries quarters. Evans and Shaw (2004) found that sustainability is less likely 'where there has been less mixed-use (mix of property, activities, employment sectors, temporal use, production-consumption) and greater dependency on public intervention... This suggests that the mixed economy model and greater sectoral specialisation, identifying with place, heritage (environment, history, industry) and with a comparative advantage...together creates a more vibrant and self-sustaining model of a creative cluster.'

The public-private sector mix is evident in the Newtown area of Johannesburg, where the cultural quarter has a range of cultural facilities. According to Stark and Debnam (2005) cultural productivity has increased by 100% and audiences by 200%. The private sector has been an important player, with catering outlets, residential, retail and commercial developments spilling over into the surrounding areas.

*Arabianranta*, an 'art and design city' in Helsinki, is another example of public-private sector collaboration involving the design and ICT sectors. Arabianranta is a brownfield/waterfront redevelopment that combines art, design and technology in business, education and community development. The project includes new infrastructural investment in units for creative/technology/ knowledge enterprise development (6,000 workspaces/offices, an enterprise incubator, network and business development resources) and homes (8,000 live/work spaces, student accommodation and apartments for knowledge and creative workers).

### **Cultural dynamism**

Florida's analysis of the characteristics of the creative city (2002, 2005) has stimulated considerable debate beyond his North American homeland (other proponents include Nichols Clark (2004). The 'rhetoric has entered the vocabularies of local cultural policy makers and city boosters alike' (Stevenson, 2004).

Florida's creative class thesis uses a number of quasi-scientific proxies for success through a creative milieu and the model has been applied in Canada (Gertler, 2004), Europe (Florida and Tinagli, 2004), and in Australia. 'The relevance to Australian cities and cultures of these European-inspired prescriptions is an open question' (Stevenson, 2004).

Critics see the notion of a creative class as something divisive and superficial, that is contributing to exclusion and gentrification (Peck, 2005; Nathan, 2005, Montgomery, 2005). They point out that cities scoring high on Florida's Creativity Index also score high on the Inequality Index (as Florida himself confirms). In the UK, the Department for Trade & Industry (DTI, 2004) undertook an analysis of the creative class model and concluded that correlations were largely due to particular lifestyle/life cycle factors (i.e. of white males under 30) and to London's dominance in the creative industries. The study found little causality between creative clusters and higher productivity or, importantly, any link between the 'creative class' and innovation.

Some smaller American and non-European cities (UNESCO, 2005) continue to refer to the cultural (rather than creative) industries in their economic development policies, rejecting the idea of 'creatives' as a class apart and instead promoting cultural development, heritage and regeneration 'for all'.

Florida's work has prompted debates about 'cultural vitality' and 'cultural dynamism'. Herranz, Jackson and Kabwasa-Green (2005) have proposed three measurable dimensions of cultural vitality: 'the presence of opportunities for cultural engagement, participation by residents in viewing and contributing to cultural production, and systems of support that develop and maintain artistically- and culturally-rich urban environments.'

A study of creative industries policies and projects worldwide, commissioned by the London Development Agency and the City of Toronto, has analysed the main rationales for interventions by city and regional authorities. The first phase of the study was based on a 'global scan' of literature and other evidence of creative spaces and their promotion of creative industries and creative city policies and strategies. More than 200 publications from 35 countries and over 75 cities were abstracted and reviewed (Evans, Foord and Shaw, 2005). 'Regeneration' was the third most frequently cited reason for policy and investment, after 'employment' and 'infrastructure', the latter including major investment in physical improvements such as transport and land reclamation.

Much of the writing on creative industries and cultural quarters acknowledges the role of artists and other creative people in early stages of an area's redevelopment and the fact that 'successful' regeneration can lead to their displacement, unless there is a policy or financial mechanism to enable them to stay. In *Art, Gentrification and Regeneration – From Artist as Pioneer to Public Arts* (2005) Cameron and Coaffee trace the historic role of the artist in the gentrification of impoverished areas. Artists and small creative businesses are recognized as agents of change but may have to move out when rents and property prices rise beyond their reach. In his recent paper for *Renew*, the regional economic development agency for North West England, O'Connor (2006) confirms that 'cultural industries can help kick-start property-led regeneration, but without effective planning are driven out by high land values and incompatible new uses.'

### **Some outstanding questions**

The contemporary literature on culture's contribution to regeneration begs some important questions. If cultural activity does have a positive role to play in the process of regeneration, are certain types of cultural activity and certain types of intervention more effective than others?

The research does tell us something about different types of intervention. Developers, architects, artists and public authorities are probably more aware than they were of the importance of involving local communities in the development process and of doing so in a respectful and meaningful way. Very little work, however, has been done on whether one art form or type of arts practice is more effective than another.

At the beginning of this article, we described regeneration as both a process and an outcome. The *sustainability* of positive outcomes will be of growing interest to researchers, policy makers and developers in years to come, as what are currently new projects become established. As noted by several of the researchers cited here, the sustainability of regeneration activity depends to a great extent on the sense of local ownership and how that is reflected in the use of new buildings and public spaces by a diversity of users. High-profile projects that ignore the historic context of a site and

the needs and interests of existing communities (which may be business, or residential, or both) are far less likely to flourish. Similarly, cultural and creative industries quarters that are home to a range of creative businesses and activities are more likely to thrive than those that are more narrowly focused.

Sustainability is critical both for those whose quality of life is most directly affected by the success or failure of these initiatives and for those who have invested in them. Does the integration of culture into the mainstream of regeneration policy and practice represent value for money?

Researchers and those who commission them are keenly aware that the methods used to measure the contribution of culture to regeneration are imperfect. Particular gaps remain in longitudinal research and methods of measuring the social and cultural impact of regeneration programmes that include culture as an integral part of the process.

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Arabianranta

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Impact database, [www.ccpr.designiscentral.net](http://www.ccpr.designiscentral.net)

Creative London, [www.creativelondon.org.uk](http://www.creativelondon.org.uk)

UNESCO Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity's Creative Cities Network, [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=24544&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=24544&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### **The Authors**

Graeme Evans is Director of the Cities Institute, London Metropolitan University  
Email: [g.evans@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:g.evans@londonmet.ac.uk) [www.citiesinstitute.org](http://www.citiesinstitute.org).

Phyllida Shaw is a freelance researcher and writer and a trustee of Arts Research Ltd, publisher of *Arts Research Digest*.