

IT'S NOT THE WINNING... RECONSIDERING THE CULTURAL CITY

A report on the Cultural Cities Research Network 2011-12

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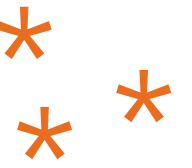
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June 2012



FOREWORD



We are delighted to provide the foreword to this report on the Cultural Cities Research Network which considers the experience of cities that have bid for cultural accolades. For Derry-Londonderry, the process of bidding to become the first-ever UK City of Culture proved to be a huge learning experience. The fact that we subsequently won, meant that we could put in place mechanisms to deliver our promise to genuinely transform our city at the most fundamental level and ensure a future of hope across all communities. The process of bidding helped us to articulate much more clearly what our city is about, who we are, and what we have to offer.

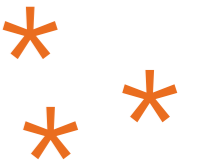
In Northern Ireland, our journey started with the lessons learned from the original Belfast bid to become European City of Culture 2008. That bid underlined the importance of establishing the city's ambition from the outset and informed the decision by Derry City Council, Ilex the urban regeneration company, and the Strategic Investment Board for Northern Ireland to collaborate on the bid to become the first ever UK City of Culture. It was a journey that paralleled the process to create One City, One Plan, One Voice, Derry-Londonderry's regeneration plan. OECD encapsulated the potential that City of Culture designation would have for the city's regeneration when they stated that it was "not an opportunity, but the opportunity".

We see this research as invaluable and look forward to working with those involved in City of Culture 2017. The report showcases what culture can do, how it can genuinely transform, and how it can be an economic driver. It examines the importance of competitions and the factors for success. We are the first part of the experiment to build a 'UK City of Culture community'. That is the legacy of Liverpool and one that we in Derry-Londonderry intend to emulate by putting culture at the forefront of regeneration, enabling it to be the real game changer that it can be, not just in shaping places, but also in changing lives.

Sharon O'Connor,
Chief Executive,
Derry City Council

Aideen McGinley,
Chief Executive,
Ilex urban regeneration company

Shona McCarthy,
Chief Executive,
Culture Company 2013

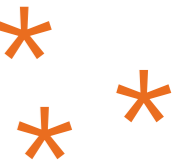


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PART ONE: THE CULTURAL CITIES RESEARCH NETWORK 2011-12

INTRODUCTION



The Cultural Cities Research Network (CCRN) was formed in March 2011, as a platform for discussing and debating the experience of bidding for cultural titles. The UK City of Culture¹ 2013 competition was used as the basis for this discussion, and the network has brought together three of the four shortlisted cities, including Birmingham, Sheffield and Norwich. The network was funded initially for a 12 month period by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRCⁱⁱ) as part of the cross-council Connected Communitiesⁱⁱⁱ programme. Each year the AHRC provides funding from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities. Only applications of the highest quality are funded and the range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK.

The project has been led by the Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC) in association with City University London and the University of Birmingham. Its main objectives during March 2011 – February 2012 were to consider and debate what connects cities during the shared experience of bidding for a cultural title, including:

- * **Situated contexts, motivations and expectations**
- * **Impact of bidding on:**
 - The policy-making process
 - The role of the creative economy in city strategies
 - Connections between different communities

Culture-led regeneration has received increasing attention and recognition as an urban policy paradigm in the UK (Vickery, 2007) as cities, with varying levels of commitment and success, have embraced the possibility of urban development and transformation through culture (Miles and Paddison, 2005). It is frequently defined, stimulated or incentivised by major cultural interventions, programmes, festivals and events – Liverpool’s status as European Capital of Culture in 2008 is representative of the trend in aligning significant artistic programmes and cultural events with the physical regeneration of a city. The impact of such culture-led regeneration is analysed and reported along multiple dimensions (North and Wilks-Heeg, 2004; Griffiths, 2006; Garcia et al, 2010; Rampton et al, 2011). Previous research has also demonstrated that participating in the bidding process has still encouraged a ‘momentum’ around culture

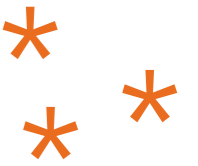
within cities that failed to win the ultimate award (Griffiths, 2006). Less attention has been paid however to the differing situated contexts, motivations and expectations that mobilise individual cities (and different communities within them) to engage in culture-led regeneration strategies and practices, and how these affect their relative outcomes and impact in real terms.

The CCRN has created a first step in furthering our understanding of the bidding process and engagement with it from the comparative, reflective perspectives of UK City of Culture (UKCoC) 2013 short-listed cities. The report that follows summarises the network’s discussions to date, based on the outcomes of three full-day research workshops held during 2011 (one per shortlisted city), and supplementary interviews with key figures associated with the UKCoC 2013 competition. Research workshops were supported by Sheffield City Council, Norwich City Council, and Birmingham City Council and attended by a wide range of network members including different individuals and communities involved with or interested in the bidding process, such as local authority representatives, academic researchers, arts and cultural organisations, plus other businesses, services and professions across public, private and voluntary sectors. The views expressed within the report are those of network participants only.

The report is structured around themes used to plan the research workshops, including ‘incentive’, ‘momentum’ and ‘impact’. Findings indicate that the UKCoC competition acted as a powerful catalyst in galvanising cities to think more strategically about their cultural offer, identity and heritage within a national context and in comparison to other drivers. Connections between relevant communities of practice and interest are strengthened considerably; issues of responsibility and representation however appear to limit the extent to which different residential or social communities engage in the bidding process. The political environment has a significant impact upon the relevance of and engagement with programmes such as UKCoC – network members expressed an interest in forming a wider learning community that would help to consider and demonstrate the true cultural value of the cultural title. The report concludes with a summary of learning outcomes and recommendations for the on-going UKCoC programme, and emerging research questions on the ‘cultural city’.



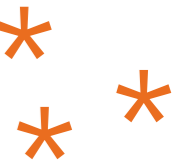
1 BIDDING FOR CULTURAL TITLES: INCENTIVE & MOMENTUM



The ICC and partners are now keen to progress and develop a programme of UKCoC research, building upon these emerging questions and complementing previous culture-led regeneration research by considering in greater detail the motives, incentives, mechanisms and actions that go into reconsidering the cultural city at the bidding stages and beyond. This will help to understand how other cities can be similarly empowered as the UKCoC programme develops based on the situated conditions for change, cultural capital generated and impact achieved. Issues of not just collective capacity, but also readiness, confidence and ambition are integral to the process of achieving change through culture. In this context, it is anticipated that learning through action research of this nature will inform and enhance the potential for aligning the UK's cultural and creative economy with urban policy making and community development, revealing fresh, contemporary insights into regional and national cultural identities and the sustainability of culture-led regeneration.

Participants within and across the three research workshops were unanimous in their view that the UKCoC 2013 competition had acted as a major incentive in energising and encouraging cities within a cultural context. The bidding process helps to articulate a clear statement on a city's cultural identity and offer, which in turn becomes a compelling, persuasive argument to present to stakeholders both within and beyond the city. The experience of bidding for a cultural title seems to generate a shared feeling that 'culture is good', and is worthy of celebrating – this is otherwise difficult to achieve without such an incentive.

Within Sheffield, the competition occurred at a time when the city "felt ready" to capitalise upon its cultural heritage and identity, improve its national reputation and provided the impetus "to fire" the city's cultural strategy. The bid became a "common cause" between Sheffield's city council and cultural sector, who began to work collaboratively with a shared objective to acknowledge and promote the city's cultural strengths. Birmingham participants offered a slightly more pragmatic perspective –the decision to bid created an "added value" for projects and programmes already in development within the city, with the title acting as a vehicle from which to deliver its existing cultural strategy. Birmingham felt that they "had to bid for it", stating that it would have "said more about the city if we hadn't". This suggests a sense of obligation to the competition as well as it being seen as a genuine incentive. Norwich had a much more internally-focused, socially orientated perspective, stating that the main objective of the bid was "positive social change through culture". The Norwich bid involved creating a greater sense of civic pride with a strong artistic lead from the city's cultural sector.



1.1 THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE CONNECTION

Birmingham and Norwich had also bid for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2008 title (awarded to Liverpool in 2003), and network participants from these cities spoke frequently of the momentum and consistency sustained between this experience and bidding for UKCoC 2013. Birmingham's cultural strategy had "lacked purpose" since the ECoC bid; UKCoC provided an incentive to review the strategy, and also to enhance other initiatives such as the 'Be Birmingham' local strategic partnership. Within Norwich, some of the same people were directly involved with each bid, and the positive energy generated by ECoC, in particular media attention from outside the city – "we couldn't have paid for the column inches it generated" – helped to fuel participation in the UKCoC 2013 competition. The city felt "reinvigorated" by this new opportunity – this was especially true as the bidding team did not have to "go over the same arguments" that had been won during ECoC bid, as the city's cultural profile and confidence had already been significantly raised. Reaching the UKCoC 2013 'final four' then felt like another 'big cultural badge' for the city.

The badge of honour metaphor has been used to good effect by Chair of the Independent Advisory Panel for the UK City of Culture programme (and former Creative Director of Liverpool's term as European Capital of Culture 2008) Professor Phil Redmond CBE. When asked about personal motivations for initiating the UKCoC programme, the response below indicates how the impact of Liverpool 08 played a formative role. The impact described refers to the extent of national exposure and relevance achieved by Liverpool as a designated cultural city:

"...around about a third of the way through '08, I realised exactly what we had... the media were beginning to take more interest, we were beginning to get a lot more media exposure, the analysis was starting to come back about positive stories, and I could sense the excitement and buzz around the city, and all the different conversations that were going on, whether it was in regeneration, whether it was in tourism, or in health or in art... and I suddenly realised that this was a very powerful thing, and that actually, all that it was coming from was a title... the 'badge of authority' to do something with it." Phil Redmond, June 2011

The UKCoC competition does not include a fixed financial prize or award, but it is expected that the title will generate commercial benefits and economic impact for the winning city. This again is based on the Liverpool 08 experience, whereby the monetary value of media profile alone was judged to be significantly beyond what would be ordinarily achievable without a cultural title. Estimated economic return for any winning UKCoC city is based on a 'scaled down' version of Liverpool 08, including anticipated levels of media attention, local government and regional agency support, and corporate sponsorship:

"Our announcements were coming through, saying that our media profile was worth £200m at the end of 08, so we scaled it down and said a city coming along afterwards, with that level of BBC support behind it, which would then drag Channel 4, which would then drag the rest of the media with it, it was going to be worth at least £100m in media exposure. If you then think about all those years in which everyone had been arguing about cities, regeneration schemes promoting themselves etc, they never had sufficient marketing resources. Well if you can go along to someone and say 'here's £100m in marketing'... that's a prize really worth going for. That would be the headline that would probably get people like regional government offices, like the RDAs, like the local authorities, really recognise that this was a prize worth fighting for, it's not just a question of having a couple of concerts, or a couple of artistic festivals, but actually there's a real economic regeneration opportunity to be had." Phil Redmond, June 2011

It was very apparent to network members that Phil Redmond and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) had experienced a strong desire to sustain the momentum created by Liverpool 08, using its regeneration successes as the 'incentive' in itself for UKCoC. Workshop participants appreciated this incentive and were responsive to it – they considered for example the on-going commitment to culture within Liverpool City Council, the extent to which culture is now embedded not just within policy processes but within the city's 'psyche', and whether or not this would have been sustainable without Liverpool 08. Claire McColgan MBE, Director of Culture at Liverpool City Council (formerly Executive Producer at Liverpool Culture Company during 2008) and Non-executive Director of Derry-Londonderry's Culture Company 2013,

confirmed the influence and impact that the ECoC title had upon the city's governing structures, spending and strategic development:

"I wouldn't say there was a grand plan for Liverpool after 08, in fact I know there wasn't, and in fact we've got away with doing exceptionally well because the team that delivered it are still here... we're still pushing it and still coming up with new ideas... and we've got a new council who aren't tired of it and are really ambitious around culture and what it can do... the fact that this council has only cut cultural organisations (funding) by 10% over 3 years is absolutely incredible... the decisions they're having to make and they can absolutely see the economic viability of it, no question about it... a huge thing is that we're doing the biggest event we've ever done in the city in April (Sea Odyssey), and the city's up for it, and it's huge, and it's bigger than anything that's happened in the UK in terms of complexity and size as an outdoor event, and they're letting us do it and you just think 'my god', we're fantastic as a city, so I think that's a measure of it, that we're still allowed to create great ideas and run with them." Claire McColgan, January 2012

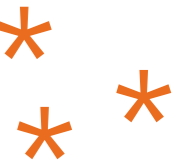
Norwich network members commented that simply bidding for ECoC and UKCoC in succession had helped the city council to understand the value of culture, which is now firmly embedded as part of its corporate plan. Other researchers however have questioned the authenticity and appropriateness of using the 'Liverpool model' to inform and structure the UKCoC programme. Cox and O'Brien (2012) challenge its 'transferability' based on the situated contexts of individual cities and their relative capacity for change. Liverpool for example had the apparent advantage of a significant cultural infrastructure including high-profile institutions; existing and supplementary attention and funding from national government, Europe and private sector investors; and the added advantage of 'right time right place' during the pre-recession 'boom' period for culture-led regeneration. This echoes the 'replicability' issue often inherent in seeking to emulate high-profile and successful cultural initiatives and interventions (Landry, 2000).

It is also worth noting that Newcastle-Gateshead, although shortlisted for ECoC 2008 competition, did not bid for UKCoC 2013, clearly feeling neither the incentive nor obligation experienced by Birmingham. Similarly Brighton, another key participant in ECoC

2008, decided to withdraw from the UKCoC 2013 after the first round of bidding. Paula Murray, Commissioner for Culture at Brighton & Hove City Council (interviewed in February 2012), explained that the competition had "limited usefulness" for Brighton, as the city has travelled a considerable distance since the ECoC bid in defining itself as a cultural city and major tourist destination, and aligning the city's cultural identity and infrastructure with other public policy agendas including health and wellbeing and most recently the environment. Brighton therefore no longer needs the incentive of a designated cultural title. Network participants were generally accepting however of the value of ECoC as a "big marketing tool", which could be emulated by UKCoC and tailored to specific city needs. Members described a feeling of "really wanting to win" UKCoC 2013 after witnessing Liverpool 08 and the impact it had on its hosts.

Claire McColgan offered an interesting, alternative perspective on Liverpool's relationship with the UKCoC programme, including the enhanced opportunities presented for the developmental sharing of experiences and learning, both culturally and professionally. The programme also acts as an incentive for Liverpool to build upon the success of '08, and to feel challenged and inspired by other cultural cities rather than promote itself to them as the example to follow:

"...it's very interesting for me, after being in Liverpool for 10 years and working from the bid through to the legacy, as to how you can use your skills really, and your experience to help another city do things differently, because you would always do things differently if you had your chance to do it again... so I've found that really interesting, and also for me professionally, I've found it really different, advising a board, rather than actually being in the heart and the heat of everything, and I've really enjoyed that... and also the links with Liverpool and Derry are really strong and it's important that we keep those links... for Liverpool, it's very important that we don't get lost in the ECoC success story, it's important that our story is carried on and changed, and developed and we're not always talking about 2008 too comfortably." Claire McColgan, January 2012



1.2 CULTURAL TITLES AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

For cities involved in both competitions, UKCoC presented an opportunity to evolve and bid differently, particularly with respect to leadership capacity and capability. In Norwich for example, advisors commissioned during the ECoC bidding phase were not re-commissioned for UKCoC 2013 bid, as there was a renewed confidence in the city's own cultural leaders to work independently. "Enhanced leadership" was described as a key learning outcome of both bidding processes. The shared experience of bidding also helps to identify collective leadership strengths and complementarities, especially as new organisations and consortia are formed (discussed in more detail below) and bring 'new life' to cultural sectors. The 'common purpose' helps this process, as professional relationships begin to feel more equal and individual interests take a back seat. Garrett-Petts (2005) notes that a Canadian city's (albeit successful) bid to host a national event, in this case a summer games programme, came at a time when the city was searching for a 'shared sense of identity', and that the major legacy was a greater capacity for organizational leadership and a 'what do we do next?' attitude.

Despite the apparent appeal of collective leadership approaches, UKCoC bidding cities still felt that they needed the "right ambassadors" to both generate support within the city and promote its cultural offer externally. Cox and O'Brien (2012) refer to the challenging leadership lead-in to Liverpool 08, whereby high-profile personnel changes created an opportunity to use the city's 'difficult period' as a rhetorical device that not only satiated media onlookers, but also appealed directly to the people of the city in coming from 'one of their own', and in recognising its turbulent history:

"Phil Redmond's choice of metaphor – the "scouse wedding" – was meant partly as an explanation of moving on from the public disintegration of the original delivery team and several high-profile resignations, but also as a wider comment on the nature of reconciling multiple and often conflicting requirements and expectations to create something unifying. Liverpool's "success story" stems from the narrative that the failing city (failing not just over a few years in organising a

festival, but over decades in its economic and social health) has somehow "turned it around", using culture... The media... reflected a story of competing cultural concerns: the high profile "external" appointments made early on, including an Australian artistic director, eventually making way for an authentically "scouse" saviour." (pp. 96)

The role of individuals and mediators in driving momentum was discussed during workshops, from the commissioning of consultants to advise on the bidding process, and the appropriation of local celebrities, or even "public intellectuals" in the case of Norwich and Stephen Fry, to 'back' the bid. The ambassadorial element is seen as especially important. Claire McColgan identified this as a current gap in Derry-Londonderry's preparations for 2013:

"They've got everything right, in terms of who they have appointed, but they still haven't got a spokesperson for the city... like we had Phil... and you need that person who's really media friendly and is very tenacious in terms of media I think, but that might come." Claire McColgan, January 2012

1.3 DID BIDDING FOR UK CITY OF CULTURE 2013 CONNECT COMMUNITIES?

The strongest connections between different communities within all three shortlisted cities appear to have been made between professional groups ('communities of practice'), or those directly involved in cultural planning and delivery. These include new partnerships and the formation of professional consortia. A particularly interesting example is the Norwich Cultural Communities Consortium, which was developed following ECoC 2008 in response to a need to "look beyond Arts Council regularly funded organisations" and the established cultural order, to create a mechanism for smaller community-based arts organisations to become involved with city-wide cultural decision-making and planning. This created an added enthusiasm for UKCoC 2013, with more organisations 'feeling involved'. Other examples of relationship building include greater degrees of synthesis between culture and other public policy agendas and initiatives within cities; another interesting example from Norwich is Future Projects¹, which uses a cultural planning approach to community provision and development.

From a policy and governance perspective, the bidding process has been significant in facilitating cooperation between council departments, and a 'greater understanding' of the role and value of culture. Changes in local governance structures, most notably the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), were frequently discussed. The 'test' felt by some participants will be securing the same level of support for culture from LEPs as previously given from the regional development agencies. In Norwich, where collective activity and a focus on 'place' are still high on the agenda, representatives from the cultural sector and city council's cultural department seemed confident in their ability and capacity to work with the LEP to help shape what they do. Paula Murray of Brighton & Hove City Council observed that cities have to be connected from a governance point of view for the bid to have any degree of credibility. In that case, cities with such a condition already in place may be in a stronger position than others.

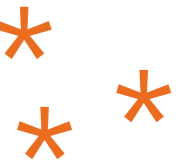
¹ Please see <http://www.futureprojects.org.uk>

The extent to which different residential, non-professionally associated communities become connected by the bidding process, or even remotely involved, is less evident. There are a number of barriers or challenges to full community engagement. Network members from both Birmingham and Norwich spoke of difficulties in connecting communities within and across city centres, city regions and counties. The very idea of a 'CITY of' title can be quite inflammatory in determining 'who' and 'what' constitutes the 'city' and how expectations can be balanced. Another barrier is a gap in knowledge and skills relating to HOW to engage communities – participants spoke of the 'blank canvas' created by opportunities such as UKCoC for communities to express their own ideas and interpretations of their own cultural cities. Despite this acknowledgement, cities still struggle with enabling "grass roots" contributions and development.

Similarly communities are not sufficiently empowered to proactively engage with the process. Participants from a community action group in Birmingham commented that it is "awkward to speak about communities and empowerment in the same breath", and described the realities of inner-city living and long-term unemployment, including "kids falling into the abyss". A discussion on the 'historical perspective' to empowering communities followed, including communities being empowered by understanding their own history, and by 'other' communities acknowledging their cultural role and contribution. The reality of achieving this in cities is problematic as culture becomes increasingly ghettoised. It was also observed that the cultural characteristics of cities will always impact upon issues of 'connectedness' – including disconnected identities and differing levels of 'city pride'. Birmingham members for example commented that the city does not have the 'same sense of collective cultural self' compared to Liverpool.

The stark truth presented in workshop discussions is that UKCoC "had no relevance to kids in communities" and just involved "the council spending more money on a website". Participants spoke of a need for community work to "come into the city" and not just to be about outreach, creating more opportunities to bring communities together, reduce insularity and self-dependence – "where deprivation is high, 'culture' is not a priority". This raises questions similar to those

2 THE IMPACT OF BIDDING: REFLECTION & REJUVENATION



posed by Mooney (2004), and directed to Liverpool in the run-up to '08, including "...whose and which Liverpool is being celebrated? Whose story is dominating – and whose story is being marginalised?" (pp. 338). At a city level, there is a need to understand 'buy-in' to culture as a city brand, and to compare the narratives created by communities to the "official story". More cultural mediation between communities is required. Phil Redmond offered an alternative to conventional interventions and the suggestion that communities be brought together within the city, whereby a greater understanding of culture in city communities, including the role, value and impact of cultural habits and lifestyles, and what communities want based on their own opinions, experiences and preferences is achieved:

"...in '08 I went to so many events out in communities like Croxteth and Kirkdale and Norris Green where people just came together for an entire day and just enjoyed themselves with their own community, they didn't need to go to Liverpool One, they didn't need to go to a concert or whatever, they just had a fantastic time doing their own talent show, doing their own garden festival, doing whatever... when I was on the Youth Commission I asked to speak to a couple of the kids who had been disestablished from the curriculum and were now under special provision... after 15 minutes they became 13 year old kids just wanting someone to talk to... and in this conversation with them, they said 'why did they bother building that new sports facility'... in the old one (they) had 12 footy pitches, and two gyms and could do this, that and the other... in the new one (they have) got one pitch and an Olympic swimming pool... and then they say, and the other one was free and this one costs us £2.75 and it's crap... so instead of spending £20m, if they had said to the local community, here's a million, tart it up... another couple of million to subsidise it for the next 20 years, that would have gone a hell of a lot further than this iconic, PFI white elephant... and it's that kind of thing, we need research on that, that communities can do it themselves... we need to kind of get into the community and do the research, that goes back to policy makers and says that actually this is the way it is, and this is really what the big society is about, never mind all the political rhetoric or whatever, it's about turning round to the community and saying what do you want?" Phil Redmond, June 2011

Within Norwich, there seemed to be lots of passive support for the UKCoC 2013 bid from the city's residents, and a sense that 'the public' was much more confident in the city's chances of winning as compared to ECoC 2008, which was regarded as an ambitious and institutional title. When the city was unsuccessful, the general response was kind natured and offered in a 'never mind' spirit. This indicates that a 'community of support' was created within the city, even if residents were not actively involved in the bidding process. This sense of collective support was also felt by Claire McColgan during Liverpool's experience of bidding for ECoC 2008, which she described as the best part of the process in terms of public support and a sense of all being in it together:

"...I think if we hadn't won, nobody really expected Liverpool to win, so if we hadn't it wouldn't have been a surprise, but the work that we did was all around connecting communities, it was absolutely about making sure that culture was absolutely more than just the sum of three arts officers... so whatever we'd have done in terms of the bid, it absolutely raised the profile of culture within the city, and people got it, and they loved it, and that would have been great even if we hadn't won. I think that bidding for something is the best part, actually delivering things or not delivering them is the worst isn't it? And then everyone wants a bit of it don't they?" Claire McColgan, January 2012

Decisions invariably have to be made and acted upon by the few - this opens up the question as to whether it is realistic to expect all communities within a city to engage in the bidding stages, and whether indeed they would want to be involved, given the choice. Participants were honest in stating that the risk of excluding some groups and communities may be an 'unintended consequence' of the bidding process. It was considered to be easier to engage (all) communities when the 'title is won'. The examples of more connected cultural working in Norwich given above indicate that the bidding process acts as an enabler in establishing opportunities for connecting communities in the future – this should not be overlooked as an example of potentially significant social impact, and should be considered in greater detail as the UKCoC competition develops.

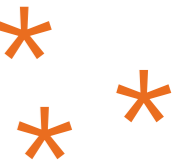
2.1 LOSING AND LOST MOMENTUM

UKCoC 2013 acted therefore as a high-impact incentive during the bidding phase, but momentum is seemingly lost as time passes and the competition becomes less relevant to unsuccessful cities. In one 'first round' bidding city, despite having written into the bid how the proposed plan would be adapted if unsuccessful, the "initial buzz" became dispersed and the arts programme was not supported by local authority. It was observed that momentum is more likely to be maintained if driven from 'bottom up' throughout, but this is difficult to accomplish for reasons already identified. A 'middle out' option was also put forward; with many 'grass roots' voluntary organisations now feeling the same protective insularity as city councils, cities need people and organisations that are "feeling relatively stable" to act as connectors and keep momentum going.

The transience of the bidding experience is also compounded by varying levels of consciousness and awareness of cultural titles, their value and relevance. During one discussion for example, participants could not name the current (2011) European Capital of Culture, despite the relative significance and impact of Liverpool 08. It was also observed that Derry-Londonderry had kept a relatively low profile since winning the 2013 title, so it was difficult to understand, at least at this stage, what "success looks like" for UKCoC. Many participants felt that the momentum of the competition could have been sustained with more visibility from the title holder, including more communication and connections with shortlisted cities. On reflection, some participants from Norwich and Birmingham noted that bidding for UKCoC had not generated the "same level" of momentum as ECoC 2008. It was only when reconvened and reminded of the experience that some network members became conscious of the actual long-term impact of bidding – the Norwich workshop in September 2011 for example provided the first opportunity for the bidding team to get together since the announcement of the winning UKCoC 2013 city in summer 2010.

In her role as Non-executive Director of Derry-Londonderry's Culture Company 2013, Claire McColgan was able to feedback positive accounts of the city's experiences in preparation for 2013 - arguably with more coverage and dissemination, these stories would maintain interest levels in the UKCoC programme:

"I think it's (UKCoC) really important because what it does is focuses a city's mind on something... I think David Henshaw in 2000 or whatever called Liverpool 08 the rocket fuel for regeneration, which is exactly what it is, it focuses people's minds on it... so I think it is really important, for cities like Derry, it's changed things... they've brought huge amounts of money into the city because of it, huge amounts of attention on the city in a really good way, and there's everything to play for with it... the resources that have come in are huge, and also the fact that it has raised the profile of Derry-Londonderry in a very different way than what it is known for... and I think it will continue to do that." Claire McColgan, January 2012



2.2 POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS

In some cases the political ramifications felt by unsuccessful bidding cities cast a serious shadow over any positive impacts felt during the bidding phase. When asked if they would bid again for this or similar cultural titles, participants from Birmingham explained that the 'appetite was lost', especially within the context of two successive failed bids. Such failure is off-putting for arts organisations "fighting for survival". Bidding raises aspirations; unfulfilled aspiration was described as a "sore on the city", and another bid as "pure masochism". Local political agendas will also impact upon a city's capacity and willingness to repeatedly compete on a national scale – the localism agenda was described as 'too strong' in Birmingham by one participant, whereas the previous administration had an explicit regeneration agenda.

The extent to which there is a "level playing field" between different UK cities was also questioned, particularly in that some cities have more to win or lose than others. Of the three cities involved in network discussions, Sheffield had expressed the strongest desire to win, and therefore the greatest disappointment in being unsuccessful, describing the decision as being "hard to deal with". With cities at different stages of cultural development, this will affect the way in which they can bid, which potentially makes a 'like for like' judging process difficult and inappropriate. In relation to preconceived notions of the cultural city, those not usually recognised as such have the most to gain from cultural titles, as in the experience of Glasgow, "a gritty industrial city with severe social problems" (Griffiths, 2006, pp. 417), in becoming the first 'non-conventional' European Capital of Culture in 1990. Claire McColgan also expressed an opinion on the level playing field issue, and recommended an on-going consideration of the 'type' of cultural city that could or should receive the title, based on the impact it would have upon that city:

"...it can re-energise in a big way a city, and I think that could be really exciting. If you look at somewhere like York, there is so much competition within the UK at the moment around tourism and inward investment and whatever, that you might want to look at cities that have got a great foundation but have lost their way a bit in the last sort of 5-10 years and that can be really exciting... and I suppose it's about cities where it can

really make a difference, it made a huge difference to Liverpool, it's making a huge difference to Derry, would it have made the same difference to Birmingham, I don't know, because Birmingham is Birmingham. It would have been a brilliant brand for them but would it have been lost on that city? I don't know." Claire McColgan, January 2012

Participants were conscious of current political climates, agendas and structural changes, both regional and national, and how these might affect the UKCoC competition moving forward. The 'halcyon days' of public spending within which Liverpool 08 took place are no longer applicable – the new assumption is that public money will "no longer flow" to initiatives such as UKCoC and that a different way of bidding and delivering should be considered. This may also affect the extent to which the "brand of the prize" is seen as attractive to central government, and extent to which expectations should reflect UK economic growth. Although some nervousness was clearly evident during workshops about the economic fortunes of 'culture' within cities, members were pragmatic and open to different approaches to funding, acknowledging that tourism and place-making, key facets of the UKCoC competition, are essentially private-sector driven. Representatives of Birmingham City Council noted that the competition had encouraged "increased engagement with private sector" amongst cultural organisations. It was also acknowledged that the publicly-funded, project-based, 'elastoplast' nature of cultural programming may not be missed by some, as it is no longer considered appropriate or desirable.

Given the sometimes harsh consequences felt when bids for cultural titles are unsuccessful, the question emerges as to why cities do not, as in the case of Brighton, capitalise to greater effect on their cultural offer without a 'cultural city' title? Phil Redmond offered a number of explanations as to why the 'badge of authority' is so important and effective in galvanising cities. It was acknowledged that cities do of course have their own existing marketing and tourism strategies regarding arts calendars, cultural assets and events. A 'cultural city' title however brings national attention and exposure that would be otherwise difficult and expensive to secure, encourages a renewed focus and branding opportunities, and acts as an external marketing device to engage national

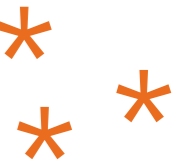
business communities both within and beyond arts and cultural sectors:

"...the point is, they do do it, this is the interesting thing actually... they do do it because you can go into any city and talk to their marketing and tourism people... they will show you a programme of events that is really interesting, right? The thing that's missing is national media exposure, and as we always complain being outside London, there's so much going on that is completely ignored by the national media because it's all focused on London... it's all based in London... so what the real prize was, is to bring national media exposure with it. Through doing that, it would also bring the national arts organisations... they would bring the Tate, they would bring RIBA Sterling prize, they would have English Heritage set aside funding for a project every four years. And then by doing that, by having the national media exposure, by creating special events, you then find that sponsors are easier to find... sponsors see that they are getting some return on their money." Phil Redmond, June 2011

This level of exposure and sponsorship opportunities is especially pertinent when the subsidised arts are in a position of vulnerability, especially within regions where the potential of culture-led regeneration is still not fully understood or appreciated:

"...if you talk to the Arts Council now, loads of cities and counties and councils are cutting their cultural funding absolutely dramatically, whether it's libraries or whether it's the arts... Somerset have just come out and got rid of their arts funding, there is still a way to go for places to believe that culture can actually drive the economic viability of a city. Liverpool kind of got there, Manchester has got there, Brighton's there, but there are lots of places who think it's a very easy win just to get rid of that sector completely." Claire McColgan, January 2012

3 THE UK CITY OF CULTURE PROGRAMME: IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS



3.1 CULTURE-LED REGENERATION AND THE CULTURAL COMPROMISE

Although the 'Liverpool Model' described above goes some way to justify the creation of UKCoC, its influence on the bidding framework was questioned by some participants within network discussions. The perceived focus on economic impact and regeneration created a certain tension between 'external' versus 'internal' requirements – cities felt challenged by what they really wanted out of the title and what was expected from them. These included mixed messages from DCMS: on the one hand the competition was presented as a way to engage people within cities, but the bidding framework underplayed the cultural programme, arguably the most inspiring aspect to engage people with. It was seen as much more difficult to get people involved in "pound in your pocket" pitches. In this context the bid document felt technically constraining, and that ideas were being shoe-horned into particular agendas. Claire McColgan also expressed some concerns over the dominance of regeneration as the reasoning behind the programme and how it is used to define a cultural city:

"There is a danger that if it keeps going down the regeneration route, that you don't see the other side of what culture does, and I think it would be interesting to have a completely different city doing it, that looks at culture from a different angle, otherwise it could just become about regeneration, Liverpool obviously did that, it's a big thing for Derry, but there are other reasons as to why culture is really important... it's about reinvigorating cities as well... the interesting thing about Derry and Liverpool that's very similar, is inherently they've got a great cultural offer, without being a City of Culture they're really cultural cities... it might be interesting to look at somewhere that hasn't necessarily got that but has got other things looking to the future."
Claire McColgan, January 2012

The 'culture versus sport' issue was used to illustrate the continuing difficulties in aligning culture with economic impact within cities. This included public perceptions of the economic value of titles and events, and the appeal of such 'prizes'. Everybody for example would see the value of, and subsequently back, any bid to host the World Cup. Sport is more widely appreciated as a marketable commodity. Some cities embraced the challenge; this played a key role in the bidding experiences of the city of Sheffield for example, which was keen to build a business community around culture. At a local level the competition raised confidence in marketing the city's cultural offer to external audiences via its national focus. It was suggested however that cultural value within the UKCoC framework should not purely be expressed in monetary terms. The lack of any standard method of measuring or evaluating economic impact in the sector should be considered here, although notably DCMS² is currently seeking to address this. The UKCoC programme presents a meaningful long-term 'case' within which to test and develop emerging methodologies and alternative approaches.

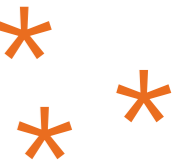
It should be acknowledged that network members offered subjective reflections on the bidding process further to their experiences of preparing and submitting an unsuccessful bid. Phil Redmond uses the term 'step change' to describe the method requested from cities in bidding for the UKCoC title, including a description of the baseline position from which cities will use the year to achieve positive impact in relation to local participation, community cohesion, social inclusion and tourism and city image. Whilst such indicators do not limit bids to predictions of economic impact alone, the predetermination of 'inputs' and 'outputs', and guarantee of resources required, are criticised by Cox and O'Brien (2012) for treating the title as a stand-alone activity and forcing bidding cities to assume direct causal impact. Garcia et al (2010, pp. 60) warn against making "ambitious promises at the bid stage" and their implications for managing expectations of what a cultural title can achieve in isolation, including the caveat that many of the trends identified in the evaluation report on Liverpool 08 "arise from a range of factors, of which the ECoC title is only one".

When asked to describe what had impressed the most about bids from the three shortlisted cities, Phil Redmond offered a much more malleable explanation that was sensitive to situated conditions and characteristics, and included factors such as community engagement and collaborative working:

"...they wanted to get their disparate communities understanding and talking to each other... Birmingham for example came in and said by something like 2018... they would be the youngest city in Europe, by age of population... so that would give them a particular interest to really connect with young people, and I know that this is often the mantra of policy-makers – 'must connect with young people' – but they could see it becoming a huge social and economic issue within the city... every city you go to has pockets of deprivation, and has pockets of wealth... (which is) a comparative problem for them to resolve, so they saw culture, and the badge as an opportunity for different communities to start understanding this and working together... Norwich made great play of its literature if I remember, and they were going to build a new arts centre... this would give them the opportunity to build some kind of iconic structure, where they would get cross party and multi-discipline support, instead of the usual sort of yah-boo, bing-bong politics that goes on saying 'well why should we be spending it on this instead'. With the badge, it can bring people as I said to lower their partisan agendas and collaborate". Phil Redmond, June 2011

A broader articulation of impact is more appealing to smaller cities and local authorities, as expressed by network members from Wakefield, one of the original bidding cities for UKCoC 2013. Wakefield's inspiration for joining the competition was not linked to thoughts of "where do we need to get to", but rather "how far can we progress", emulating the 'step change' theory promoted by Phil Redmond. This would create a greater incentive for cities with aspiration, but not necessarily the infrastructure to support it. Other network members recognised that the general ethos of UKCoC is to transform cities rather than showcase what already exists to merely drive up visitor numbers – they did not interpret the bidding framework therefore as "overbearingly economic". It was suggested that the bidding framework should be structured to enable a more explicitly equitable, incremental process to happen, that acknowledges the contexts and conditions within individual cities, and reconsiders the perceived dominance (in some cases) of economic impact and a stronger communication of its 'transformational' ethos.

² Please see <http://www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7660.aspx>



3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE COMPETITIVE MODEL

Despite the clearly expressed galvanising qualities of bidding for a cultural title, the competitive element of UKCoC was a source of much debate within research workshop discussions, including questions such as ‘does it have to be a competition?’ and ‘would the incentive still be as powerful if not?’. In this context, the competition was compared to other cultural titles, such as the Norwich bid to become a UNESCO City of Literature, capitalising on its literary heritage and resources such as its International Centre for Writing (established by Norwich City Council in association with University of East Anglia). Although the galvanising qualities of the competitive ‘year of’ model presented by UKCoC at both bidding and award-holding stages (e.g. specific timeframes, the need to deliver ‘x’ by ‘y’) have their advantages, the more permanent aspects of UNESCO Creative City titles, in comparison, appear to make cities feel less exposed during the bidding processes, so that there is perhaps ‘less to lose’. The UNESCO process was described by one (former city council) participant as “healthier”, due to the economic anti-climax associated with UKCoC, as most arts organisations immediately redirected their focus to Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding and “economic survival”. It was also observed that competitive models such as UKCoC create more (visible) ‘losers than winners’.

The UKCoC steering group should also be mindful of other UK-based cultural titles and their relationship to UKCoC. Birmingham for example was awarded the Creative City title by DCMS in 2011, which is designed to encourage enhanced public and private sector synergies including joint commissioning and partnership working in association with Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP. The city council, along with cultural and creative organisations is now exploring innovative finance pilots, and using the “current state of flux” as an opportunity to do things differently, no longer relying on non-sustainable grant partnerships. This furthermore negates the incentive for Birmingham to ‘bid again’ for a competitive cultural title, and may encourage other cities to consider and work towards other options.

In reviewing the competitive aspects of UKCoC, network members began to reconsider how the cultural city could be defined and designated. Workshops took place before DCMS confirmed in February 2012 that UKCoC would continue, with the next title to be hosted in 2017. Participants were generally supportive of UKCoC, and feared that the Coalition may not fully back something of this nature, which was originally conceived under a New Labour administration and in a radically different political and economic climate. Participants were reluctant to send a message back to DCMS that suggests a lack of support for UKCoC, or that might discourage other cities from bidding, and discussed other options for awarding the UKCoC title. It was observed that the process could be made more democratic, less “painful and expensive”, and framed in a way that supports the UK-wide creative economy. A ‘rotation model’ was recommended, whereby cities must meet certain criteria to reach a shortlist (reviewed periodically) and are then invited to host the title on a rotation basis. The UKCoC programme would then become a PR vehicle for the whole country, strengthening the varied and complementary offers of all cities, rather than just the ‘winning’ city every four years. Paula Murray of Brighton & Hove City Council commented that the “point of a national title should be to collaborate, not compete”.

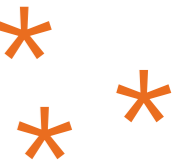
Participants indicated that it was often difficult to understand and explain what the UKCoC ‘prize’ was, and in some circumstances the demands of bidding seemed to outweigh the potential outcomes and economic return, particularly in the absence of a discernible ‘cash prize’. Bidding cities were equally keen however to understand the intrinsic value of the title – what would be the cultural benefits of being UK City of Culture? In this context it was felt that the competitive element may hinder cultural sharing and development, with participating cities feeling ‘protective’ of their own offer. The 2013 competition generated a lot of curiosity and bids in the first round, which were reduced significantly at the shortlisting stages. It was suggested that cities will be paying particular attention to the experiences of Derry-Londonderry in 2013 before deciding to bid again, should the UKCoC competition continue in its current form, in order to understand more fully what the incentive actually is.

3.3 BIDDING CRITERIA AND THE SELECTION PROCESS

The process was also considered by some to be overly long and expensive. In Sheffield for example, the city council’s Head of Arts was seconded to write the bid for 4-5 months, which took time away from other cultural programming activities. Arguably this time and investment has now fed into the city’s cultural strategy, so with hindsight has not been wasted. Similarly Norwich members are looking at ways to use and apply their UKCoC 2013 bid document, and not simply for ‘other bids’. Suggestions included making it cultural leaders’ responsibility to update the document on an annual basis and use the data as the city’s cultural knowledge base, helping to inform cultural strategy, marketing campaigns etc. The combined ECoC and UKCoC bid documents were described as a ‘true story’ for Norwich as a cultural city. Future bidding cities should be encouraged to consider therefore how any outputs from the bidding process, such as cultural data and intelligence, can be reapplied at a later stage.

Network members have also expressed a desire for greater clarity on the decision-making process and how and why the successful city was selected. From a technical point of view, it was felt that cities with the strongest infrastructure in place (for example with baseline visitor figures used to predict tourism growth) and the more systematic bid would be most likely to succeed. However it was observed that other factors such as character, instinct, cultural history and social conditions had played a much stronger role in the selection of Derry-Londonderry as UKCoC 2013. Greater clarification on these issues may help to address some of the ‘level playing field’ concerns previously highlighted. Phil Redmond gave the following reasons for Derry-Londonderry’s success:

“800 years of history! If you were looking for the first UK City of Culture, after Liverpool, Derry-Londonderry was actually quite an easy decision in the end for the judges, because they had gone straight into the fact of recognising that culture and education is the way to bridge all divisions and crack all boundaries, and their strap line of cracking the cultural code, was about sort of drilling in to what makes us who we are, what we are, where we are and what makes up cities. They made a great play of saying that they would see this as a binding agent that would help bring an end to 400 years of trouble in the city... they didn’t shy away from the fact that their difficult history would be part of their shared future.” Phil Redmond, June 2011



3.4 BUILDING A UK CITY OF CULTURE COMMUNITY

The cities involved in the ECoC 2008 competition commented frequently on the network that was formed by this process, which continued to work together following Liverpool's successful bid. Claire McColgan also spoke about the value and impact of this network:

"... (what the ECoC bid did) was engage 17 cities really in a whole cultural experience... we developed a whole programme with those cities, and there was an urban cultural network that was set up, which involved those cities talking to each other on a regular basis, developing programmes to support Liverpool in 2008, and we developed Friendship, which was our big programme, and we developed Portrait of a Nation, and the relationships that were built over those 6 years were just fantastic. I think it's unfortunate that the Olympics didn't take that group on to carry on developing their potential, because actually, it was a great way of cities working together for a greater good really, and I'm really proud of that and think it was a good way forward." Claire McColgan, January 2012

Networks such as this are seen as extremely powerful in sustaining the attention that bidding cities gain from bodies including DCMS, Arts Council and the national press – such attention was regularly quoted as one of the main benefits of bidding for UKCoC and other cultural titles. Norwich members commented on the on-going support they have received from such bodies, which they believe to be a direct result of their involvement with ECoC and UKCoC competitions and relationships created. Increasing the visibility of such outcomes via a UK-wide network of bidding or shortlisted cities would not just help to promote UKCoC and participating cities, but also provide a platform from which to assess its broader impact. It is imperative from an operational and strategic point of view that cities 'feedback' on the legacies of participating at each stage.

Paula Murray, who had also participated in the ECoC network in her role at Brighton & Hove City Council, commented that DCMS had demonstrated a "lack of leadership" in failing to provide on-going support for the initiative, and more generally in its incapacity to work more closely with other government departments and city councils in unifying cultural policy developments with other national and regional agendas. Paula regarded this objective as being more of a priority for DCMS, especially with reference to health and wellbeing agendas, than supporting something like UKCoC, and suggested that more of an effort should be made by the government department to increase the visibility of the sector.

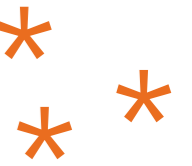
Workshop participants agreed that the ECoC network did not get sufficient purchase from DCMS, or from higher education institutions (HEIs). The UKCoC organising committee consulted with members of the network when developing the programme – there is a real opportunity therefore to reconvene this group, and link with the Cultural Cities Research Network to facilitate connections with HEIs. One Birmingham network member commented that according to National Geographic, a significant contributing factor to the ultimate cultural city is the presence of HEIs, yet the University of Birmingham is routinely excluded in city planning and not regarded as a cultural organisation. Landry (2000) comments that the transformation fulfilled by the successful creative city – and aspired to by UKCoC – cannot be realised without a learning system to support it. A UKCoC network would help to overcome 'lost momentum' issues as time lapses between competitions; capitalise on the positive impacts of bidding in using other cities as benchmarks and mentors; create a national cultural community that supports the UK-wide creative economy; facilitate greater opportunities for research and knowledge exchange with HEI members; align outcomes of the programme more closely with other public policy agendas; and ultimately provide the critical mass required by policy-makers in reviewing the added value of UKCoC.

3.5 SUMMARY OF UK CITY OF CULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations or suggestions for the on-going UKCoC programme are made as a representation of network discussions only, and in the interests of summarising the more applied outcomes of the funded project. Authors acknowledge that these are based solely on the subjective experiences of cities that were unsuccessful in bidding for the inaugural UKCoC title – as such the Independent Advisory Panel for the UK City of Culture programme has been invited to respond to these recommendations and other observations presented in the report (please see Part Two - page 43).

- * **Increase visibility of title-holding city, including sustained connections with shortlisted cities and greater media presence, in order to overcome issues of 'lost momentum', and provide reassurance to future bidding cities regarding the credibility and viability of the title.**
- * **Review bidding framework to ensure that the 'transformational' potential of the title is not lost or subsumed by economic demands, and to allow for more flexible and equitable definitions of the cultural city.**
- * **Reconsider the 'competitive' bidding element, and how this may impact upon or limit collaborative working and knowledge sharing on a national basis.**
- * **Make the bidding and selection process more consistent and transparent, in order to facilitate a more discernible 'level playing field' for all future bidding cities based on their own contexts and conditions.**
- * **Consider the creation and support of a UK City of Culture network or community of interest to enable greater opportunities and a platform for national cross-sector learning and knowledge sharing.**

4 EMERGING RESEARCH INTERESTS



One of the main objectives of the Cultural Cities Research Network in its initial AHRC-funded period was to develop a research community interested in cultural titles and their impact on communities. Throughout each network discussion, participants identified emerging research questions and interests, which could then form the basis of collaborative research projects for the network to take forward and develop in association with additional communities of interest and cultural researchers. These are as follows:

4.1 CULTURAL TITLES AND ENTITLEMENT

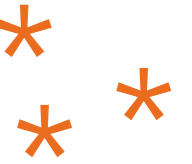
Several research questions were raised concerning the sense of entitlement that comes with cultural titles and how this is experienced or otherwise by different city communities. Some questions link directly to conventional issues of participation and engagement, and how this is captured and measured. Birmingham City Council became concerned by this process when working through its bid, particularly as Birmingham is a 'young city' in terms of age of population. The cultural activities of young people need to be measured differently to the conventional methods of 'bought a ticket/entered a building/consumed a product'. This concern has led to the development of the Happy Brummies research project in association with the University of Birmingham. A similar project on different 'rules of engagement' for different communities within UK Cities of Culture would be of value to a wide range of stakeholders.

Birmingham in this context is a "city of young migrants, with no roots in the city" – the city's future cultural identities will depend on its young people, and they should therefore feel the greatest sense of entitlement from cultural awards. Network members expressed an interest in exploring the role of young people as 'cultural ambassadors', including their influence for example within their networks of friends, family and school, and based on their own understanding and interpretation of culture and cultural engagement.

Participants were also keen to explore the impact of cultural titles within the wider cultural context of the city, using the premise that culture does not work in isolation. A significant recent cultural event in Norwich for example was the promotion of Norwich City Football Club to the Premier League. This will impact not just upon media attention, external interest and visitors to the city, but on internal confidence and aspiration. There is a need therefore to think of 'cultural status' - including titles such as UKCoC - in a more sociological sense, considering the way cities do things and live their cultural lives, and how such "an interrelated set of experiences" contributes to the quality of a city as suggested by Florida (2002, pp. 232).

Other specific 'cultural titles and entitlement' questions include:

- * **Comparing cultural titles – what are the impacts of different titles upon cities and their cultural narratives? How do cultural titles help to model the cultural city?**
- * **Why do cities feel empowered to bid? How can this be used to empower people to become culturally engaged?**
- * **Communities in the cultural city – what different versions and experiences of culture exist in cities? Do cultural titles entitle different communities to participate and engage in different types of culture? Are different versions and experiences of culture celebrated equally by the cultural city?**
- * **What is the role of communities in the creative economy?**
- * **How does your understanding of YOUR cultural heritage affect aspiration and entitlement?**
- * **What roles do resistance and counter-culture have in the bidding process and the 'cultural year'?**



4.2 THE POWER OF CULTURAL COLLABORATION

A significant outcome for each of the short-listed UKCoC 2013 cities has been the collaborations and partnerships formed or strengthened by the experience – in the case of Derry-Londonderry, this continues to be true as the city prepares for 2013:

“...there are organisations that are working together... if you just look at the fact that when there was an incendiary device outside the city of culture office, the whole city more or less came out to say how wrong it was, and that the UK City of Culture was a really good thing.” Claire McColgan, January 2012

Despite practical progress made in this context, there is still a desire to understand or learn more about how to collaborate. Questions include:

- * **Is the cultural sector more predisposed to collaboration than others?**
- * **What is the organisational culture of cultural collaborations, and how do they work in practice?**
- * **Can the cultural sector only successfully collaborate with itself?**
- * **What is the true impact of cross-sector collaborations, and what do different sectors learn from one another?**
- * **Limits to collaboration – how does sector fragmentation (e.g. differences between ‘creative’ and ‘cultural’ sectors) affect collaborative working?**
- * **How cohesive is collaboration? Can whole cities change the way they work?**
- * **How is the impact of collaboration expressed? Are we doing things better or saving money?**

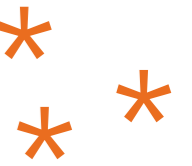
Research on culture-led regeneration itself needs to be more collaborative with other agencies and service providers in order to interrogate the true social and economic impact of cultural intervention in relation to public service provision. Research that is responsive to anecdotal evidence from professional sectors will help to constructively improve the evidence base for culture, not just in providing evidence of an economic reason to invest in culture, but of the cultural shifts that may also be achievable:

“...we need to get more research done alongside health and police and transport on the anecdotal basis that they themselves say that the increase in confidence and wellbeing in Liverpool in 2008 (for example) reduced the demand on their services, and it did it from a health point of view by reducing mild depression... Mersey Care anecdotally tells me that £1 invested in a reading group, to which they can send somebody who is developing mild depression, can ultimately save them £38,000... They are slowly pulling their own data together on that... to go back to their oversight Board, or the regional health authority whoever it is, they’ve got to be able to go back and say we’d like to keep spending money on reading groups and cultural activity because it saves us this down the line. Same with the police... the police anecdotally say that they discovered from 08 that if you get say 1,000 smiling volunteers out at a large scale city event they can withdraw 200 officers, now 200 officers is a pretty hefty cost, but it’s not just that... why withdraw 200 officers with their commando this and that, shields and crash helmets... it changes the very nature of the event, it changes the nature of the city.” Phil Redmond, June 2011

4.3 CULTURAL TITLES AND PLACE-MAKING

Network members were also interested in exploring the extent to which cultural titles help to generate “a better sense of self and place”, including cohesive messages that encapsulate all agendas. Do cultural titles create a greater opportunity for and sense of city councils, cultural organisations, education providers, public services such as housing associations genuinely working together within one cultural identity? Other place-making interests included the practice and impact of city marketing and branding, and the ‘cohesiveness’ of such strategies. One member commented that the city of Birmingham is “better at promoting itself on London underground than anywhere else”, raising questions on who cities market themselves to and why. Other place-making questions include:

- * **How can tourism and place-making relate more/better to communities themselves?**
- * **What are the cultural place-making experiences of cities that do not bid or aspire to cultural titles?**



4.4 CULTURAL TITLES AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

The UKCoC programme also presents an interesting longitudinal research site within which to study both the concept and practice of cultural leadership, a term that is used recurrently within international cultural policy and arts management, but has received relatively little attention from researchers in the field. Emerging interpretations and definitions of cultural leaders (from the leadership literature) include:

Mode	Features	Attributes
Societal perspectives (relative to place)	Community Identity Belonging	Cultural leaders seen as 'one of us'
Aesthetic perspectives (cultural value)	Inherent value Belief-driven Cultivating	Cultural leaders seen as 'agents of change'
Advocacy perspectives (influence)	Agenda-driven Political Visibility	Cultural leaders seen as 'figure heads'

Table 1 – Modes of cultural leadership adapted from Bolden et al (2011)

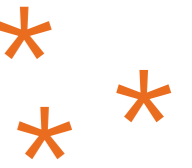
It could be interesting therefore to explore modes of cultural leadership (pre-determined and otherwise) within the context of UKCoC, considering for example the extent to which leadership is internally (in relation to host city) or externally (nationally) driven, and its impact upon the relative successes and/or failures of both bidding campaigns and delivery during the title year and beyond. Other considerations include 'leadership legacies' within title-holding cities (e.g. what happens when cultural leaders change?), and how cultural leadership is incentivised within the post-award period to maintain the momentum and active promotion of the cultural city.

Additional 'leadership' questions for consideration include:

- * **How does bidding for cultural titles impact (from a developmental perspective) upon cultural capacity and leadership?**
- * **How does the appropriation of public intellectuals and figureheads (e.g. Stephen Fry) represent the cultural city?**

Across all identified research interests, there is an underpinning necessity for longitudinal research that continues to question and map the significance of cultural titles and self-proclaimed cultural cities, in order to fully address the contentious issue of 'impact'. Even in the heralded Liverpool example, Cox and O'Brien (2012) stress that the success story remains incomplete in the absence of any continuing study of the long-term impact of ECoC 2008. The UKCoC programme creates a national research site within which to consider this. In all discussions of on-going research interests it was observed that "six month projects are not good enough", and that there is a desire within the network for greater collaborative, more long-term approaches to research that supports and underpins the development, successes and failures of cultural cities.

PART TWO: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES



On 22nd May 2012, members of the wider academic community, including researchers from cultural policy, urban development and arts management fields, were invited to a seminar at Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool to discuss findings presented in part one of this report, future plans for the network and implications for the culture-led regeneration research landscape. As part of this event, invited panel speakers including Dr Jonathan Vickery, University of Warwick; Dr Roberta Comunian, University of Kent; Dr Oliver Mould, University of Salford; and Dr Peter Campbell, University of Liverpool were asked to respond to the report, drawing upon their own research practices and experiences, and to consider the following three questions:

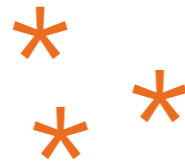
What motivates the cultural city?

Who defines the cultural city?

What value does a cultural city title have?

Written academic responses are included in pages 32-42, reflecting the inherent challenges and research opportunities presented by the 'cultural city' phenomenon, including the perplexities of 'culture' as a public policy narrative and strategy; local versus global tensions in the process of 'cultural validation'; the (disconnected) relationship between the cultural city and the creative economy; the need for greater consideration of the science of the city and its constituent parts, including frequently marginalised sub-cultures; and the socio-economic conditions, cultural distinctions and transformative illusions of the cultural city. There then follows a response to 'part one' of the report from the Independent Advisory Panel for the UK City of Culture programme.





Dr Jonathan Vickery is Associate Professor and an MA Director in the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies at the University of Warwick. He has been a Henry Moore Post-Doctoral Fellow, Director of The Aesthesis Project, and co-editor of the journal Aesthesis, as well as contributing editor to Art & Architecture Journal. His research is currently focusing on the cultural politics of urban cultural policy, cultural space and urban intervention. He has published on art theory, organizational aesthetics, urban regeneration, with recent articles for Ixia public art think tank and LabKULTUR.tv. He is working on a book Creative Cities and Public Cultures: art, democracy and urban lives.

I am responding to both the AHRC/Institute of Cultural Capital 'Cultural Cities Research Network' report by way of three questions: What motivates the cultural city? Who defines the cultural city? What value does a cultural city title have?

Our three questions are both positive and normative, and given that the first UK City of Culture is yet to happen (in 2013) there is a level of speculation to our discussion. The very concept of a 'City of Culture' implies that cities are not normally defined through culture – urban culture, civic culture, sub-cultures, artistic culture, and so on. But why not? The 'why not' question is diagnostic. As the Network report indicates, the City of Culture project can instigate a diagnostic inquiry into the City's cultural deficiencies, or lack of coherent urban cultural formation and identity. I would contend, however, that the way the UK City of Culture is framed by government cultural policy, it is more likely that 'culture' will function as a lesser significant heuristic, or device for identifying segmented social and economic deficiencies, many of which are not constitutive of culture at all.

The UK City of Culture accolade (Is it an accolade – perhaps it is surreptitiously corrective?) assumes that 'culture' requires investment (if not civic 'wealth'), extensive programme management, government directives, countless strategies, special events, and so on. On one level this is a puzzle. Why do tourists flock to places like Marrakesh, where they have no such programmatic approach? It also embodies a paradox – national cultural policy is shot through with demands for 'social inclusion', outreach and social engagement. Yet, culture is conceived in terms of a complex strategic urban

management, thus already abstracted from the condition of its social interconnectedness.

Yet 'culture' is indeed a perplexing issue, and a social as well as economic problem for public policy. Culture is not one coherent sphere of activity; it extends from the base-level practices of social life (food, clothes, leisure, the urban environment) to the discursive sophistication of the global art world. The Network report is right to state that the UK City of Culture title will galvanize communities of practice and policy-makers within a city to think 'culture' as a single (if necessarily hybrid) public-policy project. As the UK has never had a national cultural policy (only institutionally segmented policies, like 'arts policy' and so on), so this is surely a constructive move. And beyond the macro-economic frameworks of the Olympiad and the European Capital of Culture, the UK City of Culture will also demand a re-thinking of the city itself as a cultural entity, not just a platform for a series of arts projects, or a platform for the global economy, or a series of interlocking regeneration projects (ameliorating the socio-industrial cost of the globalization of the city). Thinking the city as a cultural space (a place and state of inhabitation as much as a series of practices) is the first step in thinking critically about the conditions of culture and its lack (or seeming absence). The DCMS Bidding Guidelines, possibly thanks to UK City of Culture Chair Phil Redmond, is careful not to define culture in terms of 'the arts', and not to define the 'city' in terms of a dominant metropolis (UK City of Culture Working Group, 2009: 7; UK City of Culture 2013, 2009: 2).

I'll discuss our three questions as I continue to respond to the Network report:

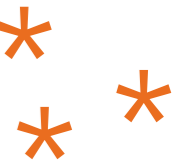
1. What motivates the cultural city?

This is a question concerning 'agency' – Who is empowered to express a motive? And which motives are legitimate in public policy contexts? It seems that the DCMS Bidding Guidance has defined the motive – an integrated urban regeneration plan. Where in the original UK City of Culture Working Group Report of June 2009, urban regeneration is one of a series of possible frameworks (pp. 6, 9); in the Bidding Guidelines that followed, it is an imperative (p.1). This raises questions on the frameworks through which culture can only find legitimacy in national public policy. And yet,

urban regeneration can be a good policy mechanism that both admits to the material conditions of cultural production, as well as place a political obligation on major city actors to participate in a common project. Furthermore, culture-led regeneration can re-orient the standard local plan or city development plan away from civil engineering to the intangible – the people's experience of the city, the image of the city, the cultural content of urban life, public space and public culture, the aesthetic values and beliefs embodied in urban design, the symbolic language of civic historicity and identity, the creativity and distinctiveness of the spaces of social community.

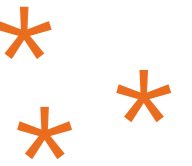
2. 'Who defines the cultural city?'

The Derry-Londonderry City of Culture Bid (Derry City Council, 2009) is highly imaginative; its conceptual architecture is genuinely impressive. The visual design of the bid document proclaims that policy-making for city cultures should itself be a creative act. Against bureaucratic urban cultural policy, policy-making should be a discursive and critical process and should exhibit the same imaginative, participatory and risk-taking of art making itself. For the Bid, the UK City of Culture project equally forces the question of democracy in public policy-making and of public culture in urban development. Admittedly, given the politically explosive history of this region, the Derry-Londonderry Bid does not elaborate too adventurously on the problematic nature of urban governance, autonomy, and the political constitution of culture in the face of national mainland policy agendas. However, it does face two policy challenges head on: how we construct a compelling, active and critical urban culture in the face of globalization; and how we construct mechanisms of collaboration and involvement – where the city itself becomes the site of cultural (re) production and reinvention (not a platform for imported global art world celebrity).



One issue articulated by the Network report was the structure of the UK City of Culture bidding process – the competitive element can demand an opportunistic approach to city cultural development (i.e. not sustainable). For the 'losing' cities the damage to cultural policy aspirations, not least stakeholder motivation, can be adverse. Derry-Londonderry made the Bid a part of their non-negotiable medium term strategic cultural development, fleshed out in their urban regeneration plan (Ilex URC, 2010). Derry-Londonderry obviously conducted some kind of City 'cultural audit', revealing pressing needs and requirements.

The nature and methodologies of 'cultural audit' as part of cultural policy requires further research attention. An audit should define and assess what city urban regeneration strategies routinely refer to as 'cultural infrastructure'. What is telling is that it is assumed (both by DCMS and the bidding cities) that such an 'infrastructure' would not have the capability itself of managing a bid, let alone the process of urban change that should follow. Indeed, the 'cultural infrastructure' of even the most cultural active city (Glasgow, Manchester, excepting London, but we all know why) is weak in urban policy-making participation, public projects management and civic-political capability. UK cities are usually punctuated by a small series of arts and heritage silos, each that all too often take as their immediate framework of validation national policy, or the international art world, or global heritage - it is rarely 'the city' – their city. There are a lot of disincentives in the contemporary art world, for example, for making 'the city' the focus and primary site of your art. The rhetoric of national cultural policy celebrates the global and the international (how often do you hear 'world class' as a term of validation); it thus so denigrates 'the local' (as in the audible groan that accompanies the term 'local authority'). It denigrates the civic and the city, as well as those citizens who have no cultural-economic access to the global or international at all.



3. What value does a cultural city title have?

Value – as it features in the Derry-Londonderry bid, takes after the character of literature, not policy descriptors and their criteria of measurement. It is expressive, communicative and responsive, with its validation found in the extent to which the city finds the means of its own self-reflection and capacity to change. The city is subject and agent, and itself citizen in a global civil society. Urban policy all too often locates the nexus of social empowerment-disempowerment in institutional, environmental and infrastructural facilities ('official culture'), and not in the relational (sometimes anarchic or chaotic) dynamics of social interaction. The UK City of Culture can play a valuable role in redefining value for national cultural policy – less in terms of economic ROI than the creation of an active citizenry, enfranchised in a newly constituted civic polity. The economic is a means, not an end.

With Liverpool 08 as a now mandatory exemplar, a city-title project is not just a year-long festival after the manner of the ubiquitous global art biennales; it is a social re-articulation of the city's entire *raison d'être* (Garcia, Melville and Cox, 2009). For Derry-Londonderry, that entails making the reality of its historical violence one of the conditions of its reinvention. Narrative is at the centre of this reinvention, and the means by which the city locates the means of its own autonomy and self-determination. It articulates a form of cultural literacy that is as social as artistic, and infinite in possibility. Whatever bureaucracy will ensue, this is a great place to start a UK City of Culture project.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2009) Equality Impact Assessment: UK City of Culture, London: DCMS.

Derry City Council (2009) Derry-Londonderry Candidate City UK City of Culture 2013: Our Bid, Derry-Londonderry.

Garcia, B., Melville, R., Cox, T. (2009) Creating an impact: Liverpool's experience as European Capital of Culture, Liverpool: Impacts '08 European Capital of Culture Research Programme.

Ilex URC (2010) ONE: One City One Plan One Voice – A Regeneration Strategy for the City of Derry, Derry-Londonderry Strategy Board/Derry City Council.

Redmond, P. (June 2009) UK City of Culture Vision Statement, London: DCMS.

UK City of Culture 2013 (2009) Bidding Guidance, London: Regeneris Consulting/DCMS.

UK City of Culture Working Group (June 2009) UK CITY OF CULTURE Working Group Report, London: DCMS.

UK City of Culture Working Group (2009) TERMS OF REFERENCE, London: DCMS.

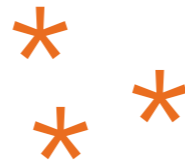
Dr Roberta Comunian is Creative Industries Research Associate at the School of Arts, University of Kent. She holds a European Doctorate title in Network Economy and Knowledge Management. She is interested in: relationship between public and private investments in the arts, art and cultural regeneration projects, cultural and creative industries, creativity and competitiveness. She has been Marie Curie Fellow at University of Newcastle investigating the relationship between creative industries, cultural policy and public supported art institutions. She has also undertaken research on knowledge transfer and creative industries within an AHRC Impact Fellowship award. She is currently researching the role of higher education in the creative economy and has recently explored in various papers the career opportunities and patterns of creative graduates in UK.

Mind the gap: the cultural city and the creative economy

After reading this insightful report, I wish to contribute to the discussion by focusing more closely on the relationship between the cultural city and the creative economy. Of course there are many definitions of both the term cultural city and the creative economy. With respect to cultural city, for the purpose of this conversation, we can simply limit ourselves to consider this from a policy perspective: those cities that aspire to / compete for a cultural title or invest in flagship cultural building and events. Although this is a very limited definition, it highlights the urban policy perspective towards the cultural city. The creative economy is of course also a much debated term, however, for the purpose of this discussion, I simply want to consider the creative economy as the fabrics of cultural and creative producers and practitioners that inhabit our cities. This includes the artists, producers and makers across a variety of creative sectors that make a living or develop their own career around creative and cultural production. I believe that the three questions put forward to the panel for discussion provide a useful framework in which to consider the relationship between cultural city and the creative economy. Furthermore, I will try to address them with reference to my own research in the context of Newcastle-Gateshead in 2008-2009 (Comunian, 2011).

What motivates the cultural city?

When looking at what motivates the cultural city, there is always a strong economic argument made by policy makers about the importance of cultural titles and flagship cultural developments for the local creative economy. This argument is misleading in two ways. Firstly, they are based around the view that the creative economy is a booming sector for growth and jobs. This view has been considered by many to be overrated (Oakley 2004; Comunian 2009) and often misleading. It seems to present a distorted understanding of the working dynamics of the sector. For example in 2004 Northern Film and Media, the film and media development agency for the North-East had commissioned a report trying to assess the size, economic contribution and jobs created by the sector. The report included many of the traditional economic measures of growth but the most striking finding was that "90% of the SMEs surveyed have no commercial goals (...) Less than half have an up-to-date business plan. (...) most currently choose to apply that talent to building cultural or social capital rather than making money" (Northern Film and Media, 2004, p.7). These contractions highlight the difficulty in capturing the value (economic or other) of the sector. Secondly, in the cultural city titles and investments the kind of economic growth that is promoted is centred around creating tourism and cultural consumption (new shopping centres and night-time economy areas). Therefore, the majority of jobs created tend to be low-end service jobs. The arguments do not focus on promoting the growth of economies of creative production (supporting small creative businesses or developing spaces and opportunity for them to reach market). Fuzzy arguments are used to emphasise that investing in cultural consumption will impact on creative production but often, the large developments promoted in large scale regeneration projects end up pushing out cultural producers from those urban areas. So although the creative economy argument is used as a key motivation for the development of cultural cities, it is often misunderstood or used in instrumental ways.



Who defines the cultural city?

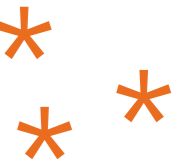
The disconnection between the cultural city and the creative economy is even more evident when it comes to the negotiation of who defines the cultural city. Cultural cities titles and events – as the report highlight – have the power and potential to bring together different cultural and policy agencies together to define / progress the cultural development of cities who apply for a title or investments. However, while large cultural institutions, local cultural partnerships, universities and investors find easy access to committee and planning discussions, this is often not the case for local creative industries and practitioners. As the sector is formed mainly by small and medium size companies, freelancing and sole-trading are very common, therefore it is almost impossible for the voices and needs of the sector to be heard or to play a role in shaping the cultural city. It is sometimes the case that local networks of creative companies can enable some representation and local clusters or producers can take part in defining the cultural city, but more should be done to guarantee that the small creative and cultural producers or practitioners are involved in defining it alongside the community and other interest groups. In the case studies investigated in the literature until now – Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle-Gateshead, Bilbao - there is very little evidence of the presence and contribution of local creative and cultural producers in shaping and defining cultural cities.

What value does a cultural city title have?

Finally, it seems clear that cultural city titles and flagship cultural development might deliver very little value for the local creative economy (Campbell, 2011). Of course, local creative practitioners recognise that the improved image of a city has an impact also on them. It is easier to associate oneself with a cultural city than non-cultural city, however image boost aside, it seems that there is no particular attention or specific initiative that aims to link the awarding of a cultural city title with creating value for the local creative economy. A cynical view from the representative of a media support agency I interviewed in Newcastle-Gateshead said to me “these cultural assets are the kinds of things that it’s good to have. It doesn’t make factories go faster or it doesn’t make computer games easier to program”. However, it is possible for planning and policy to try and create value for the local creative economy, by promoting local producers, by commissioning work, by directing visitors also to smaller workshops and not just to major institutions.

Conclusions

Thinking about the disconnection between the creative economy and the cultural city can help us to deconstruct a rhetoric discourse fuelled by ‘fast-urban policy’ (Peck, 2005) about what the cultural city can do for local creative economies. Rather than taking for granted that large cultural investments and cultural titles help local creative industries, it is important to consider what kind of benefits they can provide and verify and evaluate if these benefits are real rather than theoretical. As one of the leaders of a local cultural community organisation in Newcastle suggested “my worry is that the public might start to consider culture just as the big shiny buildings ... there are fantastic things happening in pubs, there are fantastic things happening in workshops, in the middle of nowhere, there is some great work which is not seen by the public”. It is important that the cultural city places attention on Culture with a capital C but also on the smaller creative and cultural producers that work in the city.



Campbell, P (2011) Creative industries in a European Capital of Culture. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 17 (5), 510-522.

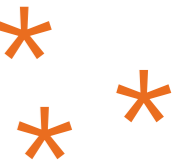
Comunian, R. (2009) Questioning creative work as driver of economic development: the case of Newcastle-Gateshead. *Creative Industries Journal*, 2, 57-71.

Comunian, R. (2011) Rethinking the creative city: the role of complexity, networks and interactions in the urban creative economy. *Urban Studies*, 48, 1157-1179.

Northern Film & Media (2004) The moving image sector in the North East of England: mapping, benchmarking and economic impact report. Report commissioned to Pembridge partnership Limited.

Oakley, K. (2004) Not so cool Britannia: the role of the creative industries in economic development. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7 (1), 67-77.

Peck, J. (2005) Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29 (4), 740-770.



Dr Oliver Mould is a Human Geographer at the University of Salford with a passion for the creative practices of cities – both those that contribute to capitalist accumulation and those that seek to resist it. He has researched urban subcultures, the creative industries, urban cultural policy and the visualisation of cities. He blogs at tactiy.co.uk

The. Cultural. Cities. Research. Network.

Five words, four of which have an element of contention and are, in essence, controversial and loaded terms. Here's why...

Let's start with **Cities** – half the world's 7 billion people now live in cities, and the UN predict that 75% of the world's population will be urban by 2050. So more and more people are flooding into our cities, particularly the megacities of the Global South, and as a result, there will be more beliefs, opinions, cultures and modes of expression fighting for space and fighting for their voice to be heard. Perhaps we are seeing the kernels of this with the recent Occupy movements? David Harvey's recent book, 'Rebel Cities' certainly argues that this is the case. And so urban scholarship, and getting our cities right – will be more critical than ever – the science of the 21st century will be the science of cities.

Next, **Cultural** – Raymond Williams noted that culture is one of the most difficult words to define within the English language, and ever since the Enlightenment and the work of Van Humbolt, through the controversies of Environmental Geographies in the 20s, cultures have been difficult to capture and define, and used as a means of justifying hegemonic power relations.

And of course now, in the context of a cultural cities research network, it can refer to the cultural industries, which is an equally tricky concept. Whether they are distinct from that other definitional minefield, the creative industries is a debate for another arena, suffice to say that the cultural industries are often heralded as a panacea for the economic difficulties we find ourselves in.

Evangelists of the cultural economy, and the related concepts of the creative class and cultural cities often proclaim the benefits of being cultural and creative, but as Jamie Peck would argue, it is personified by a rather narrow, neo-liberal characteristic. The latest policy fad of urban regeneration planners is often used as an excuse to carry out existing development programs, but under the rubric of cultural-led development instead of business-led or transport-led.

So urban cultural policies are rarely properly interrogated in political realms, and what is even more rare, is the recognition of those cultural practices 'outside' this rather narrow neo-liberal purview of what constitutes cultural or the cultural city, for example urban subcultures (parkour, skateboarding, yarn-bombing etc.) These people practising (sub)culture in a meaningful (in that they adhere to a belief or set of cultural norms that are based on something beyond capitalist accumulation), creative and playful way, are often marginalised from the cultural city paradigm altogether. Therefore, while culture can be a wonderful and essential addition to the capitalist accumulating processes of the contemporary city, it is important to recognise that it can also be a state that is in opposition to it as well.

Then we have **Network** – it's a term that has been somewhat overused in social science literature and within public policy, but again, the idea of a network is one that is not without its problems. Often, the network paradigm is predicated upon an exclusively associative ontology - a hangover from the preponderance of Latour and Actor Network Theory. But what happens when a network does not always add or enrol? The cultural sector is heavily predicated on social networking. The large amount of freelancers and SMEs creates a vast 'pool' of contacts which means that having a 'good' network is critical. But what happens when a cinematographer is working on a film for example and does a really bad job? What happens if bad management of a SME means they fail to deliver their part of a project? Networks also nonwork, and notwork. There is disassociation and latency, dysfunctionality - and these characteristics are chronically under-theorised within the social scientific literature.

And finally **The** – from a social theory perspective the word 'the' when applied to phenomena – 'the' city, 'the' creative industries etc is inherently problematic, as it implies one-ness and uni-directionality, which can belie the multiple worlds that we live in and can ontologically restrict pluralistic urban practices. So from a philosophical point of view, the word 'the' should not be used to curtail our understanding of complexity, heterogeneity and multiplicities.

Research, there is no issue with.

So, The Cultural Cities Research Network - it contains a whole host of fascinating departure points for research and study. And through the contestation of these terms, and the themes they coagulate together, we are here to think about the cultural city in terms of 3 ideals:

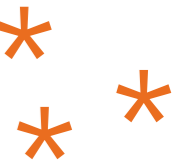
In terms of **motivation**, it is clear from some of those ideas above (and those discussed at length in the report), that there is a clear economic and regenerative motivation underpinning the cultural city mandate and the bidding process more generally. This is of course an important rationale, but can it be the only one? Being motivated to regenerate a deprived area and to upgrade the economic potential of an area is commendable, but are they cultural motivations? It is important to balance out the economic and political motivations with more community-based, and people-focused approaches, this I believe gets closer to a city's culture...

...and therefore allows you to think more carefully about who **defines** a cultural city. For example, Cultural Quarters in the UK are a key tenant in the cultural city mandate. Some have been successful, and they tend to be ones that have been more 'organically' developed through the right balance between private interests, community involvement and government intervention. Oldham is a good example of a CQ that is small, but designed with the needs of the community in mind, which was badly affected by racial tensions and rioting; there is a library for young adults, and an art gallery/exhibition space that focuses on the celebration of minority culture.

Can Oldham then be considered a cultural city? Would it have any **value** if it was? Given the scale of its CQ this is unlikely, but what about the other cities? Norwich? Birmingham? Is there value in labelling them cultural cities? The value comes in forcing city governance (both private and public) to hopefully think about culture in a way beyond regeneration and economic recovery. Recognition of the value of cultural participation as going beyond purely an economic benefit to a social and community one, is the key to unlocking the true value of the cultural city.

And just finally (as a brief epilogue), in many ways, the term cultural city can perhaps be seen as a bit of a non-sequitur as a city is always defined by its culture; as Sharon Zukin noted, culture is a heterogeneous and fluid 'dialogue' within the urban environment between its citizens. But to give a city a label of culture is to describe that city in one way; whether that's a culture of business, a culture of heritage, a culture of sport, even a culture of hedonism; limiting a city to just one of those cultures is a risky strategy because it has the potential to marginalise and obfuscate the multiple cultures that exist in every city. This is not to say it cannot be done, it just requires more care and attention than is currently observed. And to really get to grips with which part or which aspect of a city's culture to focus on (without the risk of alienating the rest), requires a great deal of research.

Which is why for The Cultural Cities Research Network, the most important word is **research**.



Dr Peter Campbell is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Liverpool. His work currently focuses on issues to do with cultural policy, the creative economy and urban regeneration. He has worked on the assessment of a number of cultural festivals, including the 'Impacts 08' programme examining the multiple effects of the 'European Capital of Culture' award on the city of Liverpool.

In conducting this research into the experience of cities that bid for the UKCoC title, the ICC raises important questions regarding the continuation of the 'culture-led regeneration' paradigm. The ICC's findings suggest that an important aspect of the UKCoC competition is its acting as something of a beacon around which attention can be focussed within cities, uniting disparate institutions and agendas. This focus may then enable a coherence of activity which serves to attract external attention, which may in turn prove beneficial to the host city. As the stated goal of the UKCoC award is, in part, to replicate the success of Liverpool's ECoC year (Burnham 2009), this motivation seems like a natural continuation of Liverpool's experience; O'Brien (2010) notes how local institutions with a historical antipathy to cultural policy cohered to varying degrees around the Liverpool ECoC bid, and the ICC research is not the only project to note the high level of external media coverage generated by Liverpool's ECoC programme (cf. Garcia et al. 2010).

What is also rightly noted by the ICC, however, is the need to exercise caution when considering the extent to which Liverpool's success in these areas may be replicated. On the face of it, the cultural sector may seem to be an especially malleable one, and so any of the benefits which are associated with cultural practice could be understood as being potentially available to any city that chooses to adopt the cultural agenda. This agenda may thus seem to provide an especially appealing source of value to cities which are contending with difficulties in the face of transformations in global economic organisation. Yet it has long been noted (e.g. Scott 1999; Oakley 2004) that, whilst it may not rely to the same degree on topography or climate or other physical factors, successful culture practice can be just as dependent on the specificities of place. The mixed fortunes of ECoC cities (Palmer-Rae 2004) attest

to the fact that a city of culture title does not provide a replicable model of success in and of itself. Indeed, unlike the award of a major sporting event, there may be little to link one city's tenure to the next other than the title itself, and so we should perhaps be especially wary of aims to repeat success in this arena.

Indeed, the inability of UKCoC bidding cities to name current ECoC award holders noted in the ICC research seems a testament to the wide range of outcomes possible for host cities. Given the level of investment in its 2008 programme, combined with a well-developed historical cultural infrastructure and an internationally renowned cultural reputation, the extent to which any UK city may replicate the success of Liverpool's ECoC year remains questionable. For the 'beacon' of the award to remain lit, factors like these must be present to act as its fuel. Whilst only time will tell the extent to which the first UKCoC in Derry-Londonderry manages to draw in external attention and any associated benefits, however, UK newspaper coverage in the first half of 2012 suggests that interest is currently relatively localised, with 70% of stories mentioning the award being of Irish origin, and much of the coverage beyond mentioning the award only in the context of wider social and political difficulties.

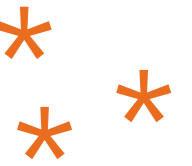
Whilst the availability of suitable cultural resources may differ from location to location, this competition clearly provides a focus for cities to comprehensively consider the resources they have available, and how these may best be deployed. Yet the ICC research suggests that variability in these resources is matched by variability in the level of commitment to their promotion and exploitation. It is noted that after bidding, "momentum is seemingly lost as time passes", and that this can happen even in a period of time as relatively short as that elapsed between the ECoC and UKCoC bidding process within the UK - it is noted that "Birmingham's cultural strategy had "lacked purpose" since the ECoC bid". Were there a deeper commitment to the role of culture, shared over many sites and stakeholders, it is likely that this topic would not fall off the agenda as swiftly as it seems to.

The ICC research thus assists in highlighting the numerous paradoxes in this arena. Where such a deeper commitment to culture does exist, there is also the suggestion that the UKCoC may not be seen as an especially useful tool, as is found in the case of Brighton. In terms of the allocation of this award, what Brighton may also be missing is a sufficient level of deprivation; winning cities are often united in terms of the socioeconomic challenges they face. At the time of its ECoC programme, Liverpool was ranked as the most deprived area in the country, and in the city's bidding documents for the UKCoC, it is noted of Derry-Londonderry that "until recently two thirds of the city was derelict as a result of conflict and economic underperformance" (Derry City Council 2009: 5). Whilst the UKCoC has the potential to unite local institutions around programme delivery, and potentially provide positive external coverage of this programme, then, it is important not to overstate the extent to which such awards can ameliorate the problems faced by host cities, or in celebrating culture to draw a veil over these persistent challenges.

Despite it becoming an oft-cited reference point for the success of the ECoC programme, relative levels of deprivation in Glasgow in the wake of its 1990 programme remain high, as they do in Liverpool post-2008. Whilst it would be naive to expect a short-term cultural programme to reverse inequalities in educational achievements or life expectancy levels, grand claims are nevertheless often made in just such areas as these regarding the potentially transformative nature of cultural engagement. This over-optimism may arise at least in part from the fact that it is often assumed within the discourse around programmes such as the UKCoC that cultural practice of any kind is a universal good, and equally open to all; that 'culture' will unite disparate communities, open up the economic potential of the creative economy to diverse actors, build confidence, and so on. On the available evidence, however, it must be acknowledged that the kinds of activities involved in programmes such as the UKCoC - which, regardless of statements around wide-ranging, holistic definitions of culture, tend to focus on what can reasonably be joined under the heading of 'the arts' - have just as great a tendency to divide as they do to unite.

This perhaps does not need noting when referring to research by the Institute of Cultural Capital, sharing as it does a name with Bourdieu's conception of the means by which social groups and classes maintain thresholds of distinction via cultural practice and competence. From one perspective, these processes of distinction are not necessarily problematic if one is using a cultural programme to attract tourists who have the means to introduce economic capital into a host city as a means of bolstering their own cultural capital. If, on the other hand, one is trying to unify the shards of a fractured city, the use of cultural practice to do this might be more problematic; certainly it would be ambitious to hope that a cultural programme would serve to maintain distinction and dissolve it simultaneously, and this paradox may serve to help explain the seeming difficulty noted in the ICC research of connecting diverse interests and groups together under the aegis of the UKCoC.

In designating a city of culture, however, it is possible that such divisions may be smoothed over in the implication that the city, and its cultural practices as a whole are being celebrated. But are we, in fact, largely celebrating something different - the ability of a city to be a host to culture rather than its home? There is certainly evidence to suggest that the greater successes of the ECoC in Liverpool often relied on creative work originating outside the city; the puppetry of France's La Machine, the 'Go Superlambananas' event based on work by Japanese artist Taro Chiezo, and the exhibition of the work of Gustav Klimt (McEvoy and Impacts 08 2010). Without such international work, a city of culture title risks being parochial; with such work it risks being only in a city rather than of it. Importantly, the ICC research encourages us to continue questioning these paradoxes, and to acknowledge the complexity involved when dealing with the cultural realm.



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Response from the Independent Advisory Panel for UK City of Culture

To begin with, it is important to re-emphasize the two key guiding principles behind the UK City of Culture programme, which are embodied within the invitation to bidding cities to:

1. Define your culture – and outline how you would use that culture to bring about step-change – in your city;
2. Describe how you would achieve these changes using existing resources alone.

Such an invitation gives individual cities the freedom and flexibility to control their own approach to and management of their city of culture experience, avoiding any typical, centralized 'top down' bureaucratic limitations or conditions. Perhaps this is best illustrated by responding directly to the 'Summary of UK City of Culture recommendations' provided in the report:

Increase visibility of title-holding city, including sustained connections with shortlisted cities and greater media presence, in order to overcome issues of 'lost momentum', and provide reassurance to future bidding cities regarding the credibility and viability of the title.

- * Under the 'it's your culture heading', responsibility and authority is handed to the city itself to handle its own marketing strategy and/or relationship with the media, and therefore control over its own 'visibility'.
- * Similarly, within a city's self-determined existing resources, they can choose if and when to collaborate with other cities and organisations – there are no additional resources available to facilitate this.
- * The 'lost momentum' point is taken, and will be overcome when the 'UK City of Culture 2017' process is announced, which in itself will promote the on-going credibility and viability of the title. It is up to bidding cities to decide how to maximise the 'badge of authority'.

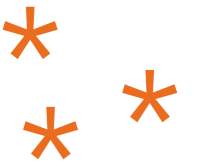
Review bidding framework to ensure that the 'transformational' potential of the title is not lost or subsumed by economic demands, and to allow for more flexible and equitable definitions of the cultural city.

- * The two guiding principles described above are in place to enable "flexible and equitable definitions of the cultural city". The primary aim of regeneration is a reason for continued central Government support, with the caveat that the programme is working towards a re-definition of regeneration that includes the full spectrum of socio-economic experiences and outcomes, such as better cultural offers, education, health care, quality of life etc. This was incorporated or at least implied throughout the bidding framework for 2013.

Reconsider the 'competitive' bidding element, and how this may impact upon or limit collaborative working and knowledge sharing on a national basis.

- * The programme can only succeed if it is considered to be 'special' and used to bring people together to share a common goal – it is the idea of 'your city' or 'their city' winning that unites communities. The 'competitive' description is also inaccurate and misleading – the staged (shortlisting) selection process was established to limit risks and expenditure for bidding cities. The bid process in itself is designed to encourage people to come together, form alliances, partnerships and relationships that may not have existed previously. There is a bigger risk that other, non-competitive models would involve cities being 'gifted' the title subject to political agendas and lobbying.

REFERENCES (Part one)



Make the bidding and selection process more consistent and transparent, in order to facilitate a more discernible 'level playing field' for all future bidding cities based on their own contexts and conditions.

- * **At every stage of the bidding process for the first (and so far only) award, it was made clear that this is a developing, transparent model with the purposeful intention of 'levelling the field'. Following reported dissatisfaction with the bidding process for European Capital of Culture 2008, applicants are asked to complete the same form and are each given two hours to give a pitch or presentation in a standardised format, therefore reducing the opportunity for larger cities to utilise greater resources and exert greater influence.**

Consider the creation and support of a UK City of Culture network or community of interest to enable greater opportunities and a platform for national cross-sector learning and knowledge sharing.

- * **This is not the role, function or responsibility of the UK City of Culture programme – however, participating cities can form networks if they so choose, mindful that there are no additional resources to support this. This brings us back to the main overarching principles of the programme – it provides a four-yearly opportunity for one city to find itself in the media spotlight. What they do with this opportunity should be left to them to decide. Any regulatory structure or system, or prescribed obligations, would defeat this purpose.**

Many of these issues were considered and discussed by the Working Group before arriving at the adopted framework; however we acknowledge that the model is still developing after only one award. Any parameters beyond the two key guiding principles would undermine the purpose of the programme, which is simply to give something extra to the UK's existing cultural landscape.

Adapted from correspondence with Prof. Phil Redmond, May 2012

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ⁱ The UK City of Culture competition was launched in July 2009. The then Culture Secretary Ben Bradshaw commented: 'Culture is something that we are incredibly good at in the UK. But excellence and innovation in the arts does not begin and end inside the M25 and I believe we have been too London-centric for too long in our cultural life. So this competition aims to find a city or area outside London that has the wow factor, with exciting and credible plans to make a step change in its cultural life and engage the whole country'. Derry Londonderry was announced as the inaugural title-holder in July 2010 (UK City of Culture 2013). The programme will run on a four-yearly basis, and cities will be invited to bid for the 2017 title in late 2012.

For more information on UK City of Culture programme please go to: http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/communities_and_local_government/6015.aspx

For more information on Derry-Londonderry 2013 please go to: <http://www.cityofculture2013.com/Our-2013-Bid/Home.aspx>

ⁱⁱ For more information on the AHRC, please go to: www.ahrc.ac.uk

ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on the AHRC-led Connected Communities programme, please go to: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/connectedcommunities.aspx>

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