Making an impact

Liverpool has long been recognised as a city of pioneers and innovators, people who dare to be different and lead the way among their peers.

The city’s universities, epitomised by Liverpool City Council, aims to look at why and how activities are carried out and how participation is measured.

Impacts of regeneration

The aim of Impacts 08 is to develop a research tool which can be used to evaluate the effects of culture-led regeneration programmes. One example is the London 2012 Olympic Games, which will also incorporate a four-year cultural programme, Cultural Olympiad, starting in 2008. Future European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) can also build on this research programme.

Impacts of culture-led regeneration programmes offer an innovative approach to measuring impacts that go beyond the usual quantitative indicators which are focused too single-mindedly on narrow and out-of-context economic measures alone.

Accepting that culture-led regeneration programmes have economic as well as social, cultural and environmental impacts ensures that, to evaluate them as essential components, we do not focus too single-mindedly on easily quantifiable measures. This approach underestimates the strength of culture-led regeneration as qualitative studies show that some of the main legacies of culture-led programmes go beyond (2009-10).

Impacts 08 is also developing a model for measuring non-ECoC impacts which will be an ongoing challenge for Impacts 08 and will live at the heart of our theoretical framework and methodology development.

Allowing specificity and portability: Impacts 08 has the dual role of measuring the impacts of the ECoC for Liverpool and its stakeholders, while also developing a model for measuring the impacts of other major cultural events and culture-led regeneration programmes. To establish a robust research model, we will protect key elements of cultural impact research such as the need for evaluation to be tackled locally and within a client-led framework.

The need for policy oriented research: Impacts 08 is a partnership between the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University, with close links with all, and international counterparts across the cultural, regeneration and urban studies fields. While drawing on the strengths of academic research, Impacts 08 is also developing a four-year cultural programme to evaluate the impacts of culture-led regeneration projects. To establish a robust research model, we will protect key elements of cultural impact research such as the need for evaluation to be tackled locally and within a client-led framework.

An holistic research model: In assessing the four dimensions of regeneration, Impacts 08 moves away from the trend towards evaluating individual indicators and instead formulates the research programme in terms of the key factors through which impact can be contextualised and measured.
Economic Impacts and Processes:
The impacts of ECoC on the economy of Liverpool, Merseyside and the North West. Sub-themes include impacts on inward investment, tourism, employment and productivity; and the strength and quality of the business sector. We also consider relevant social dimensions to economic impact, such as potential inequalities.

The City’s Cultural System: The vitality and sustainability of the cultural system and creative economy of Liverpool in comparison with the rest of the North West. Sub-themes include a profile of the sector including the number and type of organisations, facilities and jobs; sustainability of the system, for example, development in the cultural sector; the Liverpool Culture Company’s contribution including direct investment/diffusion of the city’s cultural system; and contribution of other relevant institutions to the creative economy of the North West.

Cultural Access and Participation: Demographic and geographic data on participants and non-participants in cultural activities and access to opportunities for cultural involvement. This theme places particular emphasis on the impact of direct or indirect participation and engagement with the ECoC, on people’s well-being and quality of life.

Identity, Image and Place: Sub-themes include the positioning/repositioning of Liverpool before and after becoming ECoC, its access to the strength of local identity and self-confidence.

Physical Infrastructure and Sustainability of the City: Sub-themes include impacts on the public realm, the heritage environment, quality and type of the physical infrastructure of culture, such as buildings, venues, parks and public art; physical access issues including transport and parking; and the environmental sustainability of the programme.

The Philosophy and Management of the Process: The impacts of the processes and philosophies underpinning the management and development of the ECoC and how the strengths of these can be replicated in other culture-led regeneration programmes.
The Impacts 08 research methodologies are longitudinal and will adapt to need and findings. The programme combines an assessment of existing data collected by established agencies and the generation of new datasets. Key strands include:

Benchmark indicators: Clusters of key indicators for each ‘theme’ across the four dimensions of impact have been selected and are being collected from baselines in 2000 through to 2010.

Secondary data analysis: Existing data, and that collected for and by the cultural programme organisers, is being monitored and analysed to reflect the multiple impacts of the ECoC. This includes information from Liverpool City Council and the Liverpool Culture Company, as well as external evaluations of specific elements of the programme and general tourism, economic and cultural development figures.

Contextual data collection and analysis: Additional research will be carried out to fill relevant data ‘gaps’ and to shed light on the figures given by indicator mapping. This will include interviews with key stakeholders, local people and event participants; surveys; analysis of media clippings; participatory mapping techniques; and case study research.

Research Elements

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The Impacts 08 team

Dr Beatriz Garcia, Director, brings expertise in the fields of urban cultural policy and major event impact assessment. She has completed a major retrospective study on the long-term cultural legacy of Glasgow 1990 and acts as academic advisor to the London 2012 Olympic Organising Committee.

Ruth Melville, Senior Research Fellow, brings expertise in the fields of regeneration, social inclusion and the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Peter Campbell, Programme Assistant, leads on data and resource administration.

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