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# **Liverpool on the Map Again:**

Liverpool stakeholders' reflections on the  
Liverpool European Capital of Culture

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## Executive summary

This report outlines the findings of a research project investigating the views and understandings of Liverpool, European Capital of Culture 2008 (Liverpool ECoC), held by key stakeholders in Liverpool's civic life at the end of the event's year and early 2009. The project explored the way various stakeholders were involved in Liverpool ECoC and their perceptions of Liverpool ECoC's influence and impact on the city and their organisation or institution, as well as discussing their thoughts on the future of Liverpool following the end of the ECoC year.

The research involved interviews with many individuals and organisations from three main groups, chiefly local developers and investors involved in regenerating the city centre, and those working in the statutory and the voluntary sectors within the city (including the major religious groups in Liverpool). This work complements interviews conducted with other event stakeholders, such as Liverpool ECoC sponsors and representatives from the city's maintained arts sector and creative industries, which are reported elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The research findings of this report can be summed up in three central themes:

- That hosting the European Capital of Culture in Liverpool was seen as a success.
- That Liverpool ECoC added value to existing programmes and trends already taking place in Liverpool since the end of the 1990s.
- That there is great potential, but also great risk, associated with the legacy of Liverpool ECoC.

The first theme was the most prominent within the research interviews. The perception, shared universally by all interviewees, was that Liverpool ECoC had been a success. What this success constituted was understood in several different ways: the way Liverpool ECoC had raised aspirations and confidence within the city; the transformation of external perceptions of Liverpool, particularly within the UK; the quality of the Liverpool ECoC programme and specific cultural events within the year; the legacy of the changes to the city's infrastructure which took place alongside the Liverpool ECoC, especially the Arena and Convention Centre Liverpool (ACCL);<sup>2</sup> and the influence of Liverpool ECoC in supporting Liverpool's response to the current economic climate and potentially alleviating the impact of the recession in the later part of 2008 and into 2009.

The second theme is more complex and difficult to define, as it was a source of a considerable divergence of opinion across the interviews. Essentially, Liverpool ECoC was described as 'adding value' to Liverpool, whether this was in terms of individual organisations' structures and programmes, or in terms of the overall regeneration taking place in the city centre. However this theme was not narrated in a universal, coherent manner by the interviewees, and there was a strong distinction observable between two particular narratives. The first stressed the importance of Liverpool ECoC in the city's regeneration, seeing it as a crucial factor for focusing the developments that culminated with the opening of ACCL and the Liverpool ONE development.<sup>3</sup> The second drew attention to the value which Liverpool ECoC added to infrastructural and environmental developments, but in addition to, rather than as a fundamental driver of, regeneration programmes which were, interviewees emphasised, unconnected to Liverpool ECoC.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/.htm> for all currently available project reports, including: Impacts 08 (2009) *Liverpool Arts Sector, Sustainability and Experience: how artists and arts organisations engaged with European Capital of Culture 2008*, Impacts 08 (2009) *Liverpool's Creative Industries: Understanding the impact of Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008 on the city region's creative industries* and Impacts 08 (2009) *Who Pays the Piper? Understanding the experience of organisations sponsoring the Liverpool European Capital of Culture (2008)*.

<sup>2</sup> The ACCL opened in January 2009 and was funded by English Partnerships (now Homes and Communities Agency), the EU Objective 1 Programme, Northwest Regional Development Agency, and Liverpool City Council. Liverpool's Economic Development Company, Liverpool Vision, co-ordinated the delivery of the project.

<sup>3</sup> Liverpool ONE is a 42-acre retail and mixed-use development in Liverpool city centre which opened in May 2008, developed by Grosvenor.

The split between the two narratives did not reflect the particular group from which the interviewees were drawn, although there was a connection between those interviewees who were not directly involved in decision making or the operational concerns related to urban regeneration, and their belief that the Liverpool ECoC had been the most significant influence in Liverpool's urban renaissance. For those interviewees who played down the importance of Liverpool ECoC's role in their organisations or in Liverpool's regeneration, there was still the recognition that Liverpool ECoC had 'added value' to already existing developments, or had acted as a focal point or catalyst for trends already occurring in Liverpool.

The final theme that emerged as a result of the perceived successes of Liverpool ECoC was a consideration of the legacy of the year. Discussions of the legacy touched on the contribution Liverpool ECoC had made to the infrastructure and cultural life of Liverpool, as well as the city's image and associations with the city's 'brand'. Interviewees all displayed a firm belief that hosting Liverpool ECoC was significant, firstly in helping to ensure Liverpool's ability to position itself to withstand the current economic downturn; and secondly as part of a significant revival in Liverpool's economic fortunes (especially compared to the situation prevailing in the city during the 1980s and 1990s). However, there were doubts raised as to the best way of capitalising on the Liverpool ECoC, along with some confusion as to the exact nature of the plans and 'next steps' for 2009 onwards; this was especially the case with those interviewees who were not part of - or did not have a strong connection to - Liverpool First, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).<sup>4</sup>

These three themes can be witnessed throughout the report. The first section of the report begins by outlining the methods and rationale underpinning the research project. It then goes on to give details of the general findings, drawn from all of the stakeholders. Section two provides discourse analysis of stakeholders' understandings of 'Liverpool', and section three details the stakeholders' shared aims for the Liverpool ECoC, while section four sets out the perception of the success of, and the lessons drawn from, Liverpool ECoC. Section five then goes on to report the specific findings and issues raised by developers and the statutory and voluntary sectors.

### **Important note on citation:**

Note this report is not to be quoted or summarised without reference to Impacts 08.

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<sup>4</sup> Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships, which match local authority boundaries. Their work is constituted by Local Area Agreements (LAAs) which are three-year contracts between central government and local authorities that are intended to state how key priorities of local people are delivered within their neighbourhoods.

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## 1. Research Aims and Methods

This research – being located within Impacts 08's 'Governance and Delivery Process' thematic cluster – aimed to explore views and understandings of the European Capital of Culture 2008 (Liverpool ECoC), as held by key stakeholders within Liverpool.<sup>5</sup> The research was designed to bring together interviewees from a wide range of sectors participating in the governance and civic life of Liverpool. Interviewees include both local developers and investors involved in regenerating the city centre, and those working in the statutory and voluntary sectors within the city, including the major religious groups in Liverpool.

Interviews with people from the arts and cultural sector were not included within this project. The Impacts 08 programme has a specific thematic cluster on the 'Cultural Vibrancy and Sustainability', which has already included work with the maintained arts sector and commercial creative industries, looking at their expectations of the year and their perceptions of its delivery.<sup>6</sup> This report has sought responses from those partners who are embedded within the city, and who had a substantial awareness of Liverpool ECoC; importantly, however, this does not include those delivery and directly funded partners, such as those from within the arts and cultural sector, who would have had a substantively different relationship – that of funder and fundee – with the primary delivery mechanism, Liverpool Culture Company and therefore different expectations and experiences of the year itself.

The research used semi-structured interviews, conducted between November 2008 and February 2009. The interview period was deliberately extended beyond 2008 to give as much opportunity as possible for interviewees to participate and give their views. Importantly, the intention of the research was to build on previous studies by capturing views *after* the programme had been delivered. Although, by necessity, some of the interviews took place before the end of 2008, overall the research period allowed for the participation of 23 individuals from 18 organisations (see Appendix 1 in section 7.1). Those interviewees taking part before the very end of 2008 were still able to cover the substantive issues raised by interviewees taking part after the Liverpool ECoC 2008 programme had finished.

Interviewees were chosen to be representative of their sector. Some were follow up interviewees from previous Impacts 08 work;<sup>7</sup> some were seen as essential because of their role in relation to the Liverpool ECoC or because of their link to a particularly important constituency or community within the city; other interviewees were chosen as representative of one of the three sectors included in this research. Thus, for example, interviewees from the statutory and voluntary sectors ranged from large central government bodies operating in Liverpool (e.g. Liverpool Primary Care Trust) to the local charity and voluntary services network (LCVS), as well as those organisations concerned with a specific part of the local population (e.g. Blackburne House Group). The statutory and voluntary sector organisations working in the city were grouped together in this research project as a result of their shared concerns and overlapping areas of expertise and interest.

The range of interviewees ran the risk of producing incoherent data because of the differences between individual organisations. However, in the analysis of the research data it is clear that there was coherence within the findings, across, as well as within, the three sectors considered by the research project.

All of the interviewees were questioned in their professional capacity and, unless clearly indicated in the text of their quotations, they were speaking on behalf of their organisation or institution. There were six sets of questions common to all of the stakeholders:

<sup>5</sup> See findings and links to related reports at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/publications.htm>

<sup>6</sup> See findings and links to reports on this thematic cluster at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/publications.htm>

<sup>7</sup> See Impacts 08 (2010) Tourism and the Business of Culture, available from <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/projectreports.htm>

- 1) *Overall impact of the Liverpool ECoC on the city, in social, economic and cultural terms:* Participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the impact of ECoC on the city's economic life and on the social issues facing the city (particularly relating to inequality and exclusion in the context of ECoC), as well as the extent to which they felt hosting ECoC has been positive for the city's cultural sector.
- 2) *Level of success in hosting the Liverpool EcoC:* As part of this question, interviewees were asked to discuss their notion of what it means to have a successful event year, and the extent to which the original Liverpool ECoC vision had been understood and delivered.
- 3) *Citizen inclusion and engagement:* One of the core issues surrounding Liverpool ECoC has been a debate over the extent to which the entire city has been included, both in spatial and participatory terms. Interviews attempted to draw out participants' views on the ways that citizens have been involved in Liverpool ECoC.
- 4) *Leadership of Liverpool ECoC:* Previous research within Impacts 08's 'Governance and Delivery Process' thematic cluster involved a particular focus on the question 'who takes the lead on issues such as the cultural strategy?' Management issues were also the subject of considerable media interest during the build up to 2008. The present research explored views about the management of Liverpool ECoC following its conclusion, as well as asking for reflection on participants' relationships with Liverpool Culture Company and Liverpool City Council. Particular reference was made to whether stakeholders discussed any problems or issues as 'part of the natural process' of delivering a large-scale event or felt those issues had had a damaging effect on the success of the year.
- 5) *Transforming the city's economy:* In previous Impacts 08 work,<sup>8</sup> many interviewees discussed ECoC as part of a wider transformation in Liverpool's economy, from a declining port city to an economy based, at least in part, on tourism, the service sector and creative industry growth. All groups were asked to discuss their views on the viability of this agenda in Liverpool, and the extent to which Liverpool ECoC has contributed to this change. Many interviewees in previous projects mentioned their perception that Liverpool would 'do a Glasgow', and research explored whether interviewees feel this has been the case. Interviews also attempted to draw out the individual impact of Liverpool ECoC in this area, as distinct and separate from the wider property and retail expansion in the city centre.
- 6) *ECoC's legacy for Liverpool:* Interviewees were asked about their perception of Liverpool's (and the city region's) future as a result of hosting Liverpool ECoC. The responses to this question and interpretations of areas of legacy varied depending on whether the organisation was 'inward' or 'outward' looking, i.e. dealing with Liverpool itself or relating to the UK, Europe and the wider world.

Beyond these general sets of questions, there were some areas of specific emphasis depending on the type of stakeholder interviewed: developers and investors, or the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Specific questions for developers and investors took place in the context of the recession currently affecting the UK. As such, questions explored the legacy of Liverpool ECoC against the backdrop of the potential decline in the service sector and creative industries. Attention was given to the extent to which Liverpool ECoC has encouraged investment and business relocations. Interviews also discussed the relationship between the sector and Liverpool City Council. Questions investigated the networks within the sector and the effect Liverpool ECoC may have had on relationships between developers and investors, and also between the sector and external bodies and funders, such as the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and

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<sup>8</sup> For example Impacts 08 (2008) *European Capital of Culture and Liverpool Developer's Market: Impacts and Interactions* [http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/seminars-and-events/Business\\_Impacts.htm](http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/seminars-and-events/Business_Impacts.htm) and Impacts 08 (2008) *Who pays the piper?* <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/projectreports.htm>

English Partnerships. Finally, interviewees were invited to consider the role of culture and the relationship between their sector and the arts and cultural organisations in the city, with particular emphasis on the way Liverpool ECoC may have changed perceptions of the potential offered by cultural programmes and events, as well as links across sectors.

Interviews with the statutory and voluntary sectors contained three elements. The first of these elements was 'what is the role of culture?' This question referred to the way in which the statutory and voluntary sectors talk about culture, and relate it to their policies. Interviews then went on to look at the way Liverpool ECoC may have embedded culture and culture-related policies within their respective organisations. Interviews also discussed the extent to which Liverpool ECoC was responsible for any increase in culturally focused or motivated policies or programmes within an organisation, as opposed to other trends across the statutory sector. The second element made particular reference to policy networks across the city, concentrating on organisations' relationships with Liverpool City Council (LCC), relationships with funders and relationships with each other. The focus was on the way Liverpool ECoC had brought organisations together, created new partnerships, raised awareness of the potential uses of culture, created new practices, and potentially opened new funding streams. The third element was, in addition to the general questions about Liverpool ECoC's legacy, a discussion of the future of the statutory sector in Liverpool following Liverpool ECoC. The role of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in advancing the cultural agenda was used to discuss the Liverpool ECoC's legacy for the statutory and voluntary sectors.



## 2. Stakeholders' Perceptions of Liverpool

An important starting point for this research was how interviewees constructed and described ideas of 'the city' and 'Liverpool', and the way in which terms such as 'we', 'us' or 'our community' were used by interviewees. On some occasions it was difficult to discern the *precise* meaning of an interviewee's use of references to 'the city' or 'Liverpool'. Hence, it was important to understand the *various* ways that interviewees understood Liverpool.

A discourse analysis of the interviews produced four differing, yet interrelated, understandings and uses of 'Liverpool' within the interviews:

1. Liverpool and the city understood to mean Liverpool City Council and governance/'city delivery' agencies (such as Liverpool Vision or the Local Strategic Partnership).
2. Liverpool as the buildings and physical infrastructure of the city centre.
3. Liverpool as an image and brand to attract visitors, investors and publicity.
4. Liverpool as the population of the city, particularly the native 'Scouse' population.

These four categories are 'ideal types' showing the general trends surrounding the use and comprehension of 'Liverpool' within the research data, as opposed to covering every specific way that the term surfaced within discussions.

The first use, which was actually the least common, understood the 'city' as the government arrangements in Liverpool, particularly the City Council. Two interviewees showed this view in their discussions of the Liverpool ECoC programme:

'It was the city and partners, key stakeholders, working together to deliver certain things and make sure certain projects were on time and delivered.'

'We allowed the city to use our buildings and we contributed towards the cost of the banners and stuff like that.'

The second is connected to the physical infrastructure of the city centre specifically. Interviewees used the city to mean Liverpool's city centre, usually in connection with the regeneration programme taking place, and particularly around Grosvenor's Liverpool ONE development - for example:

'...And we've made a big investment into [The Port of Liverpool] building which is probably the largest privately funded refurbishment of a listed building. So all those things have made the city what it is today and has given us all the confidence collectively to do these things.'

And regarding the infrastructure in the city centre:

'I was saying, "what is going to happen to all the infrastructure and advertising around the Capital of Culture which festoons the city, on all the major gateways and approaches?"'

The third use of 'Liverpool' and 'the city' is perhaps the most complex and difficult to disaggregate. Interviewees all touched on the shift to an economy with a strong service and tourist sector, describing Liverpool as an image to sell to visitors and attract investment, or referring to attempts to construct a 'brand' attached to Liverpool (this topic is discussed more extensively in section 4.1.2.). The concept of the city as an image, or having a particular brand associated with it was, in the main, implicit within the majority of interviewees discussions:



'I think that the excellent exposure that the city's had this year means that it will stick in people's mind.'

As might be expected, those interviewees with a background or interest in marketing the city to visitors or investors were more specific:

'Liverpool is the brand. It's nothing to do with Merseyside or any other name associated with the North West. ... [O]ur brand, par excellence, is Liverpool and everything needs and must be focussed on that if we are to maximise the benefits of Capital of Culture.'

Whilst the implicit nature of Liverpool having a particular image or associated brand was a common theme, there were also comments about Liverpool as a place with the potential to attract a particular audience because of the symbolism and mystique attached to the city:

'Liverpool has always been ... has always had an allure for the rest of the country. Whether it's the Beatles or the football club, I don't know. And I think we've brought so many people here this year who have been surprised and I think they'll keep coming back.'

Moreover, this might be a mystique comparable to that garnered by other places on the global map:

'if we positioned ourselves so that Liverpool was the place that if you really wanted to get going in the arts and cultural world, the best place to start was Liverpool, like Greenwich Village was in New York in the '70s and '80s...'

Finally, and tying in with the discussion of the city's image and its potential 'brand', was the use of 'Liverpool' and 'the city' to refer to the local citizens, particularly the Scouse community of 'native' Liverpudlians. Two quotations are instructive for this theme, showing the way that interviewees viewed the transformation of confidence and self-image within the local population:

'In terms of the city, when we were actually bidding to be Capital of Culture, it was almost as if there was a sort of wave of optimism and real hope that we would get it.'

'I think we made the Scousers just realise that it's there and they've remembered it, you know? So I think it's been a marvellous sort of reinvigoration of the city, but it's also made them, or made us, more confident.'

There was no definitive connection between the particular group being interviewed and the four understandings of the city of Liverpool, as all interviewee groups used the terms interchangeably. Indeed, it was rare that an individual interviewee understood Liverpool to refer to a single meaning or idea within their comments. Interviewees often intertwined several meanings in the same discussion. The example below shows various ideas about Liverpool (in terms of LCC and the city's governance, as a brand and image to attract visitors, and regarding the 'offer' of the city centre) intertwined in the same paragraph:

'Certainly opportunities will be lost unless Liverpool develops a coherent and aggressive events strategy because the one thing that has changed is the credit crunch and people have hit that brick wall almost in the last few weeks and months and things have got to change as a result of that.... [M]y personal view is that people's discretionary income will be constrained and people won't make ad hoc visits to Liverpool because of the brand. I think there will be a curtailment of the opportunity of people just coming to Liverpool because they've heard it's a nice place to come for the weekend. I think what the credit crunch will enhance is that people will come if they are coming to an event.'

### 3. Ambitions Expressed for Liverpool ECoC

As a result of the diversity of interviewees' organisations and institutions, a broad range of aims were discussed in relation to Liverpool ECoC, with specific aims reflecting the concerns of individual organisations and their sectors. However, there was consensus amongst interviewees on two points: regarding Liverpool ECoC as a way of transforming the city's image and particularly perceptions of the city across the UK; and in respect of Liverpool ECoC's potential to develop, improve and accelerate the transformation of the city's economy, especially in connection with the growth of tourism to Liverpool. Often interviewees articulated a specific desire to see Liverpool 'put back on the map' in relation to the perceptions of: 1, decision makers; 2, the media; and 3, popular perceptions of Liverpool within the UK and as a European and global tourist destination. Two examples, from interviews with members of two of Liverpool's statutory bodies, illustrate these themes:

'A great opportunity to change the wider perception of Liverpool and its people, a massive commitment to undertake...How would we achieve this culture step change with so much at stake? To show that Liverpool is a city worth inward investment with the capacity and skills to accommodate new businesses and in this current climate are seemingly better equipped to cope with the economic downturn.'

'I wanted Capital of Culture to be more than just a party in the city centre, and on a professional basis we were talking about Capital of Culture as being an opportunity to boost the economic engine of the city and to boost tourism and to put the city back on the map ... Now whether or not we've managed to achieve all of that in one year, it would be fantastic, wouldn't it, if you could?'

The note of caution sounded by the second quotation, concerning the potential of Liverpool ECoC to fulfil the twin ambitions shared by all of the interviewees, was echoed by another member of the statutory sector, who pointed to the way in which expectations for the Liverpool ECoC had become problematic, particularly during the build up to the year:

'I remember being really pleased – but in terms of clear expectations, they probably emerged in the years after Liverpool won. I do think, in general, expectations got quite unrealistic.'

However, this caution was generally a minor concern when interviewees were asked to comment on the extent to which Liverpool ECoC had realised the aims that existed when ECoC status for 2008 was awarded to the city in 2003.

## 4. Successes, Lessons and Legacy

### 4.1. The success of Liverpool, European Capital of Culture 2008

The most obvious point raised by interviewees was the universal perception that the Liverpool ECoC had been successful. There were five elements of this success highlighted by most stakeholders: 1, Liverpool ECoC's role in raising aspirations and confidence within Liverpool; 2, changes to the way Liverpool is perceived, particularly within the UK; 3, the quality of the Liverpool ECoC programme and the cultural events in the year; 4, the legacy of physical changes in the city that occurred alongside the Liverpool ECoC, especially the Liverpool Arena and Conference Centre (ACCL); and 5, Liverpool ECoC's influence on the city's response to the current economic climate. Each of these elements is analysed below.

#### 4.1.1. Raising aspirations and confidence within Liverpool

Despite the range of interviewees there were common themes that emerged. The first was the influence of Liverpool ECoC on raising the aspirations and confidence of Liverpool. This perception took two forms: the first focused on a general improvement in the usually vaguely defined concept of 'confidence'; the second (and less common) form concerned detailing specific facets of Liverpool ECoC, such as raising local awareness of Liverpool's existing cultural offer. The importance of not overstating Liverpool ECoC's influence on the transformation of confidence in Liverpool was also an idea shared by many of the interviewees.

In the first instance, changes in confidence were bound up with changes in local people's perceptions of Liverpool, a theme discussed by several participants and across sectors. The quotation below is evidence of this general perception:

'I think the Capital of Culture has changed Scousers' perceptions of their own city, which is probably the most crucial element of it.'

More specific comments, which were less widespread than the general perception that Liverpool ECoC had improved Liverpool's confidence, drew attention to the way Liverpool was 'reminded' of the range of cultural institutions within the city, as well as other aspects of the city's 'offer':

'We've always had the best set of galleries outside of London; we've got the best architecture outside of London, and I think we made the Scousers just realise that it's there and they've remembered it, you know? So I think it's been a marvellous sort of reinvigoration of the city, but it's also made them, or made us, more confident. I think the confidence is back now and I think that makes a hell of a difference.'

Other comments drew attention to local involvement in Liverpool ECoC projects and events:

'People quite often say "Well this Capital of Culture's pretty good you know. I didn't realise until too late what was on offer and now I'm starting to go to things I'm really enjoying it." So we could really do with an extension of another year really!'

This change in perceptions was also a reflection of the impact of Liverpool ECoC on perceptions of Liverpool in the UK, as the sense of a decline in the negative stereotypes of Liverpool held across the country filtered through into the city itself:

'In terms of the city, when we were actually bidding to be Capital of Culture, it was almost as if there was a sort of wave of optimism and real hope that we would get it. During the course of the year and the comments you hear, I've never heard those sort of comments in Liverpool before and they're

proud, I think, that the outside world is watching the city, that the events and that part of the culture has been properly delivered.'

The impact on the 'confidence' of the people and the city was not viewed entirely as a result of Liverpool ECoC. In a theme which is discussed more extensively in section 4.2.1, one interviewee stressed the way in which economic, social and political changes in the city were already beginning to alter the mood in Liverpool. Whilst not the sole driver for this change, the Liverpool ECoC added value to these existing trends:

'[T]hat was quite straightforward really because there was already an atmosphere of optimism and hope starting to materialise and confidence, and therefore I think the political focus, that it gave the city something to aim for, something to strive for was... the timing was absolutely bang on.'

And another interviewee drew attention to the difficulty of judging the relative importance of other regeneration projects, such as Liverpool ONE, as compared with the Liverpool ECoC:

'If we'd had no regeneration and you'd had Capital of Culture, it would be easy then to say what's a cause and effect but I think it's quite difficult. But I do think it continued that process of establishing confidence in the city and confidence that we could actually do things and confidence that the city had changed from most people's perception of the city.'

#### 4.1.2. Changing national perceptions of Liverpool

Interviewees all discussed the problems associated with Liverpool's image, particularly the perception of the city of Liverpool commonly held within the UK. This perception was seen to be particularly problematic because of its currency in UK media representations of the city, as well as the influence this perception has on key decision makers in Britain. This 'image problem' was discussed in terms of the city itself, as well as the city's attempt to construct a 'brand' for itself, although, more often than not, those interviewees who were not directly involved with marketing the city used the idea of a brand and branding as a synonym for the city's image. One interviewee summed up the general usage of the terms, and the overall understanding of the negativity associated with Liverpool:

'I think Liverpool as a brand has ... there are two facets to that: one, in the UK it's got rather a negative image as a brand, but outside the UK it's the opposite; it's extremely positive.'

As a response to the difficulties associated with Liverpool's image, Liverpool ECoC was seen as a resounding success; it was viewed as having helped to transform the images and perceptions traditionally associated with Liverpool. All of the interviewees shared the view set out in the quotation below, irrespective of the sector from which they were drawn:

'It was all to do with trying to make Liverpool's image more positive and the perception of the city more positive, that was certainly a key priority and I think, to be fair, it's done that. I think without a doubt the city has been shown in a good light, it's put on some good events through the year and I think is back on the map and is recognised now across the country.'

This theme can be further illustrated by a quotation that demonstrates the changing perceptions offered by the national media, particularly as a result of specific Liverpool ECoC events - events that have brought media attention (and media personnel) to Liverpool.<sup>9</sup> The change in media perceptions was also seen to have generated additional attention which has influenced the perceptions of those who may not have visited the city or taken part in events. The quotation recognises that positive press for the city would not immediately diffuse

<sup>9</sup> Impacts 08 has also conducted research on local, national and international media narratives on Liverpool. More details are available at: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/projectreports.htm>

the issues surrounding Liverpool's image within the UK, but did accent the positive contribution made by the city hosting ECoC in 2008:

'The fact that Liverpool has done things like MTV, has done things like [the BBC] Sports Personality [of the Year], it has done things like the Spider and the Klimt Exhibition and all those other highlights of the Capital of Culture year has, even for people who haven't visited Liverpool during Capital of Culture, it's made them sit up and think "what is going on in Liverpool?" So I think even in the UK, where black curly wigs and people stealing hub caps is still a generational thing that we will have to work through, even amongst that fraternity and particularly amongst the London-centric national press, there has been a huge recognition that Liverpool has made a good fist of Capital of Culture and I think it has enormously enhanced Liverpool's reputation.'

Although the importance of the programme, and the associated message that the city of Liverpool was capable of hosting a year-long festival which included major international events, was recognised by all interviewees, the importance of winning Liverpool ECoC status was also discussed by a minority of respondents. One participant spoke at length about the transformative effect winning the award in itself had, both within Liverpool and across the UK:

'I don't want to talk the Capital of Culture programme down, they've done a good job but ... just winning it did an enormous favour for the city because it was lovely to see people in Liverpool who, because they'd been told they'd won it, it wasn't just the council who won it, everybody in the city played a part, and I'm sure that's true, had their tails up. You know – we'd won something; it was great, Liverpool back on the map again. So just winning it had a huge impact, getting journalists up to actually see what they were writing about, as opposed to just whinging about it in absence, has had a great impact and the understanding of what's available here. The chattering classes around the outskirts of central London, because I have lots of contacts there, the view of Liverpool has changed, it's no longer dangerous; it's a great place to go – they've got the Tate up there, they've got the Walker up there and they know about it now whereas four years ago, five years ago, not true. So it's done a great job for Liverpool, no doubt about that.'

Finally, there was discussion of the effect that hosting Liverpool ECoC had on international views of the city. Although restricted to those interviewees with international links, where interviewees could comment, there was a general sense of the effectiveness of Liverpool ECoC in adding to the alterations of Liverpool's international standing:

'I got to meet ... a very interesting cross section of the global business environment from America, from Europe, from the Far East. It was great to hear really genuine and sincere positive feedback of Liverpool and our delivery of Capital of Culture and how the city has visibly changed over the last few years.'

#### 4.1.3. *The Liverpool ECoC programme*

The expectation of instrumental outcomes from - and the value of - Liverpool ECoC was perhaps the overriding narrative which developed across the research interviews. Nevertheless, there was recognition of the importance of Liverpool ECoC as a *cultural* festival, and all of the interviewees recognised the success of this feature of the year. In this context, the success of the Liverpool ECoC programme was discussed, often in response to questions investigating the interviewees' perceptions of the specific events that took place during 2008.

In the first instance, those interviewees with a strong commitment to, or links with, the cultural sector described the specific importance of the arts and cultural programme (in addition to Liverpool ECoC's impact on

perceptions of the Liverpool or its association with regeneration in the city more generally). As an example, this quotation shows the concerns of those stakeholders closely related to Liverpool's cultural sector:

'I think it is very important that the economic impact of culture to the city is acknowledged and understood – at the same time I don't want culture to be instrumentalised. Culture is important. Quality artistic experiences have untold impact on many other areas like distinctiveness of place, community cohesion, health and well being. But just because culture delivers on all these different areas doesn't justify it – it is important because it is part of being a human being.'

When discussing particular cultural highlights, the most striking aspect of the participants' comments was the diversity of responses. The Spider (La Princesse)<sup>10</sup>, the Klimt exhibition at Tate Liverpool<sup>11</sup> and the Go Superlambananas<sup>12</sup> were cited by many of the interviewees, although events such as 'One step forward, one step back'<sup>13</sup>, Simon Rattle's concerts<sup>14</sup>, the Liverpool ECoC opening ceremony at ACCL in January, and Paul McCartney's 'Liverpool Sound' concert at Anfield were also mentioned as standout events in 2008. Four quotations describing La Princesse show the intertwining of the manifold understandings of community involvement, visitor numbers, potential investment and artistic and cultural merit:

'I guess the thing that I enjoyed the most, simply because it was imaginative, unexpected and it was free and it appealed to people of all ages who turned out in the pouring rain to watch it, was the Spider.'

'I suppose, for me, that just because it was so spectacular was the Spider.'

'I was waiting for everyone to knock that Spider, especially when people understood the cost, but I think people have got it, you know, the fact that all right there was a huge cost to it but it's likely to bring in... the whole package brings in a lot of investment.'

'I've never seen so many people in town in all my life, do you know what I mean? So that in itself was a good one.'

#### 4.1.4. Liverpool ECoC and regeneration in the city centre of Liverpool

Alongside praise for the Liverpool ECoC's cultural programme, a core theme in all interviews developed from discussions about Liverpool's physical regeneration, particularly in the city centre. This theme was not described in a consistent way; indeed, the interviews featured two distinct narratives. The first focused on the importance of Liverpool ECoC for Liverpool's regeneration, particularly for ACCL and the Liverpool ONE development. The second highlighted the added value of Liverpool ECoC to infrastructural and environmental developments, but it also stressed that existing regeneration programmes were unconnected and often preceded the Liverpool ECoC, so were not reliant on the ECoC title specifically.

The split between the two narratives was not based on the particular area from where the interviewees were drawn, although there was a connection between those interviewees who were not directly involved in decision making or operational concerns related to urban regeneration and a belief that the Liverpool ECoC had been

<sup>10</sup> *La Machine's* 50ft mechanical Spider, in Liverpool, 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *Gustav Klimt*, Tate Liverpool, 30<sup>th</sup> May- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2008.

<sup>12</sup> *Go Superlambananas*, 125 replicas of the original Superlambanana public art sculpture, distributed around Liverpool, 16<sup>th</sup> June- 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

<sup>13</sup> *One Step Forward ... One Step Back*, site-responsive theatre experience at the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, April 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Sir Simon Rattle conducted performances with the Berliner Philharmoniker on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2008 and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008, both at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.



the most significant influence in Liverpool's urban renaissance. The quotations below outline the first narrative, while the second narrative is analysed in section 4.2.1.

A key feature of the first narrative is summed up by the following quotation, displaying the strong belief that Liverpool ECoC was of vital importance to urban transformation in Liverpool:

'I think what the Capital of Culture badge certainly did was drive forward a growth agenda in and around the city and I think that was positive. And whether or not we took full advantage is open to argument but certainly some of the things that happened I'm sure wouldn't have happened had we not had the Capital of Culture. I'm not convinced that we'd have got the Arena if we hadn't have had Capital of Culture for example. There's certainly a number of bars and restaurants and apartments that have been developed on the back of 08 so I think that it did act as a catalyst for development and regeneration.'

Reinforcing this sentiment, ACCL was described as the obvious legacy of hosting Liverpool ECoC:

'I actually think the Arena and particularly the Conference Centre is probably more significant in some ways because it actually brings people from a wider area internationally into the city who then benefit from the other things.'

Other interviewees stressed the strong interconnection between regeneration and the ECoC title, indicating they influenced each other's success.

'The ECoC title has been one important driver to regeneration coming at a time of increased private sector confidence on the back of significant public sector grant funding, in the form of Objective 1, SRB, and NRF.'

#### 4.1.5. *The recession and Liverpool's future*

The final theme that emerged concerning the successes of Liverpool ECoC was the belief that hosting Liverpool ECoC had played a significant role in ensuring Liverpool is able to position itself to withstand the current economic downturn. All of the interviewees felt that Liverpool had seen a significant revival in its economic fortunes, especially compared with the situation prevailing in the city during the 1980s and 1990s. This response was a very common remark on the city's economic health:

'They used to say, when the world got a cold, Liverpool got double pneumonia. I don't think Liverpool will get double pneumonia; I think Liverpool will get a bad cold like everybody else will get a bad cold.'

All discussions of the economic issues facing the city took place against the backdrop of a generalised uncertainty surrounding the prospects facing the global economy over the short to medium term. This quotation, although specifically discussing the property market, reflected the prevailing observation on the contemporary uncertainty:

'The impression that I got was that Capital of Culture had been a bit of a cushion for us in this environment that we're in, the economic environment. And although clearly we've got a lot of these flats that have gone up on the waterfront, probably most of them are empty waiting for tenants or whatever. So there's issues there about the housing market, but I did get the impression that the sort of momentum that had come with Capital of Culture had either delayed the impacts for Liverpool or had cushioned them in some ways.'



This confidence surrounding Liverpool's future was most often put down to the way in which the completion of major infrastructure and development projects had some relationship with the scheduling of Liverpool ECoC. Even the most cautious remarks suggested the city was better placed because of hosting the event:

'That rather depends what the economic form for the whole country is. If the economy of the country retrenches, Liverpool will have a tough time again. If it stays as it is, I think Liverpool will grow and prosper. Its reputation is up, its tourism is up; if it continues to behave well towards the tourists, and all the signs are that it is, they'll keep coming. All these things go by personal recommendation of the people who've been here and so far that's very good. And I'm hoping that the self confidence that you see in Liverpool, that certainly wasn't there when I came here ten, no, eight years ago, will continue and will drive it. It's confidence and all the buildings that have been put in, which were not planned to go in entirely for 2008, will come to fruition and people now have good facilities now.'

Meanwhile, the more optimistic indicated the way that the focus of Liverpool ECoC had provided the necessary impetus for changes that will secure the future for the city:

'I think we're in for a hard time and therefore, it's a digression, but I think the Capital of Culture and the regeneration works that were focussed to finish around 2008 has given Liverpool a fighting chance of survival, whereas without it, yes, we would have had the regeneration work but they would have rumbled on; there wouldn't have been any sort of real, almost celebration, or focus to it. And I think we've got Liverpool on the map, we've got some better connectedness, we've got some plans in around infrastructure, second, third, whatever, Mersey bridge and so on in. So there are things that will happen because they've been agreed and planned to happen that will give Merseyside, Liverpool and Merseyside, a fighting chance to come out of this recession with something better than a desert.'

However, those interviewees involved in tourism and business sectors, or with remits to attract visitors, were particularly concerned about the future. In any case, they gave a very positive recognition of the importance of Liverpool ECoC's cultural programme in attracting visitors, and the need to continue the momentum generated by 2008:

'People's discretionary income will be constrained and people won't make ad hoc visits to Liverpool because of the brand. I think there will be a curtailment of the opportunity of people just coming to Liverpool because they've heard it's a nice place to come for the weekend. I think what the credit crunch will enhance is that people will come if they are coming to an event and that event could be another Spider, it could be another exhibition at the Tate, it could be something at Liverpool Football Club, it could be events anywhere. So people will come because they are coming for an event and what that therefore needs is a coherent, aggressive events strategy to attract events right across the city'

The perceived need to build on and sustain the programmes begun as part of the Liverpool ECoC, and the wider questions of planning for the legacy of 2008, are discussed in section 5.

## 4.2. Lessons from Liverpool ECoC

As is to be expected in any discussion of a major event, interviewees raised significant issues regarding the Liverpool ECoC's programme and delivery. These can be divided into three themes: 1) doubts over the perception that Liverpool ECoC was the driving force behind Liverpool's current renaissance and other existing programmes; 2) debate around the governance and management arrangements leading up to the festival, and then discussion of the positive influence of specific board and staff appointments and finally 3) uncertainty as to the extent to which Liverpool ECoC (and the associated changes in the city centre) had reached out to the geographically and socially peripheral sections of Liverpool and had involved local people.

#### 4.2.1. Liverpool ECoC's relationship with existing programmes

Along with extensive discussion of Liverpool ECoC's success and the range of praise for the Liverpool ECoC programme and its role in the city's regeneration, there was significant divergence over the extent to which Liverpool ECoC had been the driving force behind the transformation seen to be taking place. The contrary narrative to that discussed in section 4.1.4 (perception that the Liverpool ECoC was the key catalyst for other physical developments) was summarised by an interviewee close to decision making on major physical infrastructure projects in Liverpool:

'In some respects it didn't, they were two separate projects.....What has happened, particularly in the minds of most of the people in Liverpool, is the two projects have coalesced in some respects; not in any formal way but just because it was decided as being beneficial for both projects that they fed off each other to some degree and certainly things like the [ECoC] opening ceremony, which was in January 08 in the Arena, the formal opening ceremony of the Capital of Culture and things like that, were presented as kind of non-negotiable and we all decided we were going to do it come what may and that's what's happened. And I think it's then continued.'

Another interviewee's observations on the process of linking the regeneration in the city and Liverpool ECoC together illustrates the positive benefits of this combination, to show the way that Liverpool ECoC did not motivate major developments or infrastructure projects, but expanded and encouraged the city's renaissance:

'I think it has all knitted together. It's difficult to say whether one led to the other, in a sense. I think if the city hadn't started its regeneration in 2000, if Grosvenor hadn't been involved, if other key developers hadn't begun to look at the city, I think it would have been difficult to secure Capital of Culture status. I think it was because we were regenerating, we needed the impetus and culture was part of that impetus. But I think the two have worked extraordinarily well together and I think the relationships have been good; like all relationships there can be issues, etc, but by and large I think everybody has thought "this is the biggest thing Liverpool is ever going to get, we've got to deliver it".'

A significant proportion of interviewees felt that the programmes or projects initiated and managed by their organisations would have carried on regardless of Liverpool ECoC coming to Liverpool:

'You're going to hear me say several times it hasn't hurt....It's helped create a climate where it's actually very front of mind but it hasn't affected our strategy because we were doing it anyway.'

There was also the view that the changes in relationships with other organisations, both public and private sector, were also developing irrespective of Liverpool's status as ECoC for 2008:

'...[A]s things change I think the links develop themselves and it's not because of Capital of Culture; I think it's because people can see that they need to do certain things to survive and grow, really.'

Interviewees playing down the fundamental importance of Liverpool ECoC to the regeneration of the city gave rise to the narrative of Liverpool ECoC 'adding value' to longer term trends in Liverpool; these interviewees attempted to emphasise the way in which Liverpool ECoC accelerated existing programmes or gave new opportunities to capitalise on existing trends within Liverpool. One interviewee commented on the national and European policy context as a way of showing the 'added value' created by Liverpool ECoC:

'I think you've also got to recognise that we've had an unprecedented amount of cash come into cities, not just Liverpool. If you go up to the North East, people in Newcastle will tell you the same; they were battered by the last recession far worse than they have been in this one. And the same in Leeds, the same in Manchester, and I think that's on the basis that you've had a government whose policy has been to invest in cities and Liverpool has been a great beneficiary of that. In addition to the extra cash

that we got from central government, we also had a big wedge of cash from the European Union and so I think all of that combined, the Capital of Culture, the image improvement, the investment that we've had from Europe and from central government, all of those things make Liverpool a far more robust place now than it was 20 years ago or even ten years ago.'

#### 4.2.2. *Liverpool Culture Company and the governance and management arrangements during the build up to 2008*

The governance and management arrangements associated with the years during the build up to 2008 was one subject attracting specific and widespread, though not universal, criticism from interviewees. Controversial issues in the build up to the event - including high profile resignations, critical media coverage (especially in the local press) and event cancellations - were seen as unfortunate occurrences that had largely been forgotten as a result of the successes in 2008. Nonetheless, there were many participants in the research who still shared the view that, before 2008, management structures had been problematic:

'I do think that there was a genuine belief that we were on the verge of shooting ourselves in the foot big time ...[S]o I think the fear really was we're going to put this year together and it's just going to all fall apart and we're going to be a laughing stock. And that was really because the preparation in the preceding years had been awful.'

The most commonly mentioned manifestation of the problems in the run up to 2008 was the cancellation of the Mathew Street Festival in summer 2007.<sup>15</sup> A significant minority of interviewees focused on this moment as the pivotal point in the 'story' of Liverpool as ECoC, both to show the failings of the arrangements in the build up to 2008 and to identify the turning point where changes were made to ease the tribulations in the preparations for the year:

'Well it was a big... I don't like to look back, but yeah, it was a big cock-up and a bad... you know, when it was missed that time.'

'And so I think the fear really was we're going to put this year together and it's just going to all fall apart and we're going to be a laughing stock. And that was really because the preparation in the preceding years had been awful....the Matthew Street Festival cancellation, you know just on and on and on and so, as I say, against that background I think there was a lot of pessimism around.'

The problems were seen to have a range of causes, from the level of expectation surrounding 2008 to the lack of clear messages over the reality of hosting Liverpool ECoC coming from the organisers (in particular, the Liverpool Culture Company, which was the main body responsible for event delivery):

'The only thing I think needs emphasising, because people don't understand it, is that the honour of having won the European Capital of Culture title and the responsibility that brings with it, brings no money with it. It all had to be done out of our own resources and sponsorship and so if any criticism comes towards the Capital of Culture Company, and I was at one time very critical of it, as you heard, it needs to be tempered with the fact that they've done a remarkable job in a very difficult situation where they had to do things without knowing what the money was, where it was coming from and knowing that it was limited. And I think they did listen to advice, I hope they listened to the advice I gave. The advice I gave very strongly at the very early stages when the Chief Executive of the council at the time and the Leader of the council at the time had a group of people round the table and said "How's it going?" So early days and I said ... and everybody was silent and I said "Well everybody's

<sup>15</sup> The Mathew Street Festival is an annual music festival which takes place at indoor and outdoor venues across Liverpool city centre each August Bank Holiday Weekend. In 2007 there was relatively late cancellation of the large outdoor stages on health and safety grounds, due to the significant road works and other physical developments taking place in Liverpool at the time.

silent so let me open my mouth first because I'm prepared to do it. You need to understand that I, me, me personally, won the Capital of Culture bid and there are 400,000 people in Liverpool that think the same as me because you've told them that's the truth. Don't leave them behind. You've got to carry the people with you, you've got to engage them from the very beginning." And I think at the early stages we lost that and recovered it later and I think actually it turned out okay.'

There was also the view that there had been a lack of leadership in the years preceding the Liverpool ECoC:

'Leadership is a very interesting question. There was a lack of leadership. I feel very strongly that it's not defined by position – just because someone has a certain role doesn't mean they are an effective leader, much less a visionary one. There's a lot of space in Liverpool for entrepreneurial individuals to be very influential. I felt a lot of the ECoC planning was very reactive – rather than reflecting a core vision and the difficult decisions that go with that.'

This went along with the 'structural' problems undermining governance of Liverpool ECoC, especially in terms of the size of Liverpool Culture Company's board:

'We needed to pull something out of the bag and I think a key to that was really streamlining the number of people who were on the committee, on the Culture Company committee, because at one time I think there was over thirty people, wasn't there, on the Board and they reduced it to around, I think, less than a dozen. I think that was the start of a more efficient use of the way the Culture Company operated and I think an effective way of actually getting things done.'

The above was also linked to confusion about the role of that board:

'That a board of thirty-odd was a recipe for disaster because how the hell you can get any decision making process in place that is going to be efficient when you've got that many number of people around the table just didn't bear thinking about.'

The changes following the furore over the Mathew Street festival in 2007 were lauded by all of the interviewees who commented on the theme of leadership and governance. Phil Redmond was appointed as Deputy Chair of the Liverpool Culture Company Board, responsible for Creative Direction, in November 2006 and later appointed Creative Director in September 2007. He was personally cited by many interviewees as being a major influence on the transformation of the governance and management arrangements for 2008. This quotation is representative of much of the praise of his role:

'Yeah, one thing changed is that I had a much more closer working relationship with ... Phil Redmond. Yeah, obviously Phil is Phil and Phil has got his own very particular views on what he wanted to do and was a powerful force of credibility and focus for Capital of Culture and was well connected and well respected on a national, if not international, basis. So I think his personality and his profile did bring to the outside world a huge degree of credibility to what was going on with Capital of Culture.'

However, Phil Redmond's role was not seen in isolation, as displayed by these descriptions of the changes following the final reorganisation of the Culture Company before 2008:

'Well, Phil injected a load of pace into it, without a doubt ... because of his connections to media, connections to the cultural side of things in Merseyside and Liverpool in particular ... And then what you've got then is, you've got Bernice [Law]<sup>16</sup> sorting out the budgets and Bernice sorting out all of the

<sup>16</sup> Bernice Law was appointed as Chief Operations Officer at the Liverpool Culture Company on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2007, on secondment from the Northwest Regional Development Agency.

business end of it and I think it was a really powerful combination. Kris Donaldson<sup>17</sup> – great front man, did a lot of work, not just here but also in London. ... So I think the relationship changed.'

#### 4.2.3. Was the Liverpool ECoC and Liverpool's regeneration confined to the city centre?

Interviewees expressed doubt over the extent to which Liverpool ECoC had reached the entire population of Liverpool, and had involved all of the areas outside the city centre. Where this view was expressed, it was either reflecting the concerns of particular communities with links to the individual organisations being interviewed, or it was a general perception offered as an overview of the year.

The first set of concerns is seen in this comment by an interviewee from an agency in the statutory and voluntary sectors:

'The poorest parts of the city tend to be north of the city. And I think there's still question marks over how much impact it's had on some of those poorer parts of the city and how those people have benefited from it.'

The second is reflected in two interviewees' worries over the way that the Liverpool ECoC had been perceived as just a party in the city centre:

'You can see this flourish within the city centre but it's the outer communities that I think need to be developed more. I think, yeah, we're getting people in to the city and yeah, we've been very successful in that but I think now it's looking at what can we develop, what can we do to develop the residents of Liverpool?'

'I suppose this is a criticism that was inevitably going to be levelled to an extent, but if you speak to people outside of the city centre there is a feeling that it was Liverpool city centre's Capital of Culture. Now I don't know what you can do about that.'

However, one interviewee did sum up a general trend which recognised that the success of Liverpool ECoC had lessened the force of many criticisms of the year's attempt to reach out, both socially and geographically:

'They worked hard in terms of trying to get community projects and this, that and the other, but the focus, I think, was always going to be on the city centre and rightly so, I suppose. But there will be that feeling around the rest of Liverpool "Well we weren't really involved in that"...

It is difficult, you know, I think the schools have been encouraged to come into town to see the different exhibitions that have gone on; as I say, I know there have been community projects. You just wonder what more could have been done and, as I say, I haven't got the answer but if you were going to say what criticisms will be levelled then I think that will be one of them. Other than that, as I say, I think people have been pleasantly surprised by the way in which the programme has been managed and the coverage has been positive and so on and so forth. And overall I think it's been a very positive experience for the city.'

### 4.3. Securing the legacy of Liverpool ECoC

The final section of general comments from interviewees concerned the legacy of Liverpool ECoC. These discussions focused on plans for carrying on the success of 2008, with particular emphasis on the need for a coordinated approach to events management.

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<sup>17</sup> Kris Donaldson started work at the Liverpool Culture Company in March 2004 as Marketing Director, moved on to act as interim CEO in late 2007, and was the Liverpool Culture Company Director throughout 2008.



There was trepidation amongst the interviewees as to how to build on Liverpool ECoC, and not all of the interviewees were aware of the Local Strategic Partnership's cultural strategy. This type of concern, for instance, was not uncommon:

'I think the main things that I'm concerned about are to see two things. One is something really visionary about where we go from here in terms of developing Liverpool's legacy as a major cultural centre. Not just because of the Year of Culture, but because it is a major cultural centre in Europe, let alone the UK. But also that being earthed in a very pragmatic approach to how do we develop new artists, new up and coming artists? How do we find the funding to commission work? And I think also, how do we do that in a really radical and interesting way? So not just...not only music, painting and commercial stuff, but, for instance, around drama, around information and the use of information technology in the arts and the development of that side of things. How is that going to go forward? How is it going to be funded?'

There was widespread acceptance of the need for some way to coordinate arts and cultural policy and major events in Liverpool to maintain the role of culture in the city's economic and social life. The quotations below are representative of the general trend amongst those interviewees who commented specifically on this theme:

'But I think potentially what is lacking is a co-ordinated city-wide collective that is saying "Right, what events do we want and why do we want them?"'

'Some co-ordinating body to make sure that everybody knows what's going on, not after it's happened or the day before it happens but some time in advance, would be very good indeed, to co-ordinate it and just make sure people from outside the area have, in one document, a feel for what actually is the offer here because that would be tremendously helpful to us selling people to come to the city.'

Coupled with the need for a co-ordination body to plan and promote Liverpool's upcoming events, interviewees expressed more general concerns. One interviewee feared that the benefits of working in partnership, as well as the collective vision for Liverpool ECoC, would be lost if there was a return to 'normal' business in the city:

'I said right at the start, let's not go back to ... let's not breathe a collective sigh of relief and get back to the way we did things before. Let's just, you know that 'can do, let's work together' attitude you know, we have got MTV coming on, we've got the Spider on the streets, let's just solve it. Don't give me the problems, give me the solutions ... I don't know what the word to describe it is, but it was real and there was that attitude and we've seen what we can do by following that attitude and somehow the trick is to just keep that going into '09.'

Another interviewee voiced apprehension that there would be a similar return to the relationship between Liverpool's local government and the cultural sector that existed before the bid for Liverpool ECoC:

'The fear we have is that the money that the City Council will be able to put into arts will be less than it started off with before Capital of Culture. If that happens it will be a disaster.'<sup>18</sup>

Overall, there was seen to be a need for a body or institution to carry on the ECoC 'effect' in Liverpool. As a concluding point it is useful and interesting to note the positivity surrounding Liverpool's future (also described by the themes set out in section 4.1) – positivity which, it was felt, would continue with the right kind of leadership:

<sup>18</sup> In terms of confirmed funding for arts and culture, the Liverpool City Council announced an allocation of £8.45m over two years in February 2009, after these interviews were conducted.

'I think where we could be, which is much more interesting, with really visionary leadership, is we could be with some... I think with... I'm trying to find the right words because I can see it in my mind but I'm just trying to square what I'm seeing. A really strong artistic quarter, probably around this end of the city, the central city part, so going up in towards Toxteth, where things are a bit cheaper, and down towards the docks - a really stimulating artistic quarter with a couple of new almost street theatres, but very improvised theatres in warehouses and places like that, where people can come and try out new dramatic ideas. With critics coming up from London a lot because this is where it's happening and they want to be able to report it; with art shows at the Tate, the Tate North, and the Walker that attract national press attention because they're exciting. I hope with the Cathedral deeply involved in all that; with some very exciting new music of different styles and different approaches, but particularly modern music coming out; with the sort of drama, with the very edgy, rather sharp incisive kind of Liverpool wit in it; with a major new television and film studio getting going and beginning to make progress, and with a number of IT companies feeding into this and drawing on it for producing games and other high tech products for sale who are employing people; with more graduates, therefore, staying on in the city because property is cheaper and there's interesting jobs, and that's feeding on Liverpool ONE and it's creating a very crucial part of the economy.'

Interviewees felt that effective leadership would be able to make the most of the advantages of which both the local population and potential investors and visitors had been made aware a result of Liverpool ECoC. Indeed, one interviewee summed up the task, and the opportunity, for Liverpool:

'And just in parting, if we don't get this right, because of those advantages, we all want taking out and collectively shooting really, because there's a wonderful opportunity here.'



## 5. Other Sector-specific Findings

The following sections offer an overview of other findings that are specific to each of the areas represented by our interviewees - developers and investors, and the statutory and voluntary sectors.

### 5.1. Developers

Building on previous Impacts 08 work with the sector,<sup>19</sup> this research revealed four points for discussion that were specific to the developers being interviewed. Their broad overview of Liverpool ECoC considered the possibilities offered by the nomination and event year, the influence (or lack of influence) of Liverpool ECoC on investment decisions, the challenges posed by the run up to the event, and the sector's relationship with Liverpool City Council. In keeping with the views of the other stakeholders, Liverpool ECoC was generally seen as positive and successful, particularly in terms of its influence on Liverpool's image.

However, interviewees were keen to stress the negligible influence of Liverpool ECoC on investment decisions, as well as pointing out how a cultural festival or event did not tend to have the same impact on developers, investors and the wider private sector as it would on other stakeholders. As part of the sector's attempt to downplay the role of Liverpool ECoC, there was a general perception that hosting the event had improved the relationship between developers and LCC, but that this was part of broader improvements that had been ongoing, irrespective of Liverpool ECoC, since the end of the 1990s.

#### 5.1.1. How did the sector view Liverpool ECoC?

It is particularly important to understand how developers viewed the Liverpool ECoC, as they were the group most clearly underlining the separation between Liverpool's broad physical regeneration and Liverpool ECoC as a programme of cultural events. Two quotations reflect the general views of the sector. One stresses the confusion between the Liverpool ECoC programme and the transformation of Liverpool's physical environment, much of which was carried out by developers and was occurring irrespective of the Liverpool ECoC:

'I think there are people in high places who genuinely think that having Capital of Culture has regenerated the city. It hasn't. What it has done is publicise and stimulate some aspects of the cultural life of the city.'

The other quotation, meanwhile, details the reasons for limiting the claims that Liverpool ECoC transformed and regenerated Liverpool:

'It makes it sound a bit silly if you say that the Spider, for example, has played a major role in the regeneration of a city. Things do not, in the real world, happen like that. They might be great fun, they might raise the spirit of the place, which is important; they might make people feel optimistic, which is important. So I don't want to belittle them as those things, public entertainment, but if you make a direct connection, anybody makes a direct connection, between that and large scale investment and economic growth and job creation then they're deluding themselves.'

After developers had stressed the need to see the difference between Liverpool's regeneration and the Liverpool ECoC festival, they moved on to describe the sense of opportunity offered by Liverpool ECoC. This type of comment was not uncommon:

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/publications.htm>

'I think '08, and I don't feel I'm alone by any sense, I think there's a whole raft of people in the business community that share a view that actually '08 is the *beginning* of something.'

Even where interviewees expressed initial caution regarding Liverpool ECoC, they soon recalled how their organisations embraced the possibilities offered by the year:

'I think in the early days we may have been unsure of how it would impact on the city and whether it would have any real impact. But certainly I think we very quickly ... it was the enthusiasm for it was infectious and we very quickly got on board with that and put ourselves behind it.'

Whilst some interviewees were reticent to offer detailed narratives of their understanding of Liverpool ECoC, one interviewee brought together three ideas touched on by all of the participants in this research: 1) Liverpool ECoC helped change Liverpool's image; 2) Liverpool ECoC influenced visitors to come to Liverpool; and 3) Liverpool ECoC made Liverpool more attractive for potential staff and investors:

'So we see Capital of Culture as, and I'm putting this very simply, but first of all as something which has made a huge contribution to helping to change Liverpool's image, or establish a new image for Liverpool, a new perception of the city. Many more people now know about the city; there's a sense of it being somewhere where things are happening basically. Secondly, we think that the visitor market is going to be very important in Liverpool for the future as it is now, and so culture and tourism, we tend to talk about culture and tourism in that role, they're important in that. Culture for its own sake, I know it's important but it isn't important in my day job, but I can understand how cultural excellence in the city or popular culture in the city can add to the attraction of the city which adds to ... makes it easier, for example, for the university to attract quality staff and top students and that sort of thing; it makes a big contribution.'

### 5.1.2. Liverpool ECoC's influence on investment decisions

Previous interviews with this sector<sup>20</sup> laid emphasis on the importance of transforming Liverpool's image, an importance that was interlinked with attracting investors and attracting staff. Continuing the themes from the concluding quotation in the previous section (5.1.1) interviewees all saw the need for Liverpool to be perceived by those outside the city as a 'thriving' place. The detailed quotation below offers an outline of the general view of the importance of this aspect of Liverpool ECoC:

'Those of us who have spent our careers working in cities, me included, know that no city, no city region, no conurbation ever is successful unless, at the heart, it has a very vibrant, thriving centre. If the centre is moribund then, ultimately, the whole thing will shrink and decay and fail, relative to other places; it doesn't mean they're going to collapse and go belly up but that they will fail relative to other places. If you can get the heart of a city centre full of energy, full of optimism, full of activity, full of creativity, provocative, annoying and stimulating and a buzz about it then the process is very fast. First of all you get students; instinctively the word gets out, they start applying for the universities. We've had more students applying for our universities; they've increased enormously over the last few years. You get good academics want to go to popular universities. Funding for the universities comes. Good school teachers like to be in cities that have got a bit of buzz about them. Young actors, playwrights, artists all start going to places like that, not necessarily in that order; sometimes the artists get there ahead of the others. Entrepreneurial developers, speculative investors, shopkeepers, café owners,

<sup>20</sup> [Impacts 08 \(2008\) Who Pays The Piper <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/publications.htm>](http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Publications/publications.htm)

restaurateur; it works very fast; people are attracted to that and it becomes then self-generating. The better the university the more inward investors that will come, the more entrepreneurial ones will come.'

The above viewpoint - that the Liverpool ECoC was part of a cumulative effect on investment - was occasionally implicit in some of the interviews, where references were made to the city centre or the student population. However, the core narrative shared by all of the interviewees was that the Liverpool ECoC had not substantially affected their investment decisions, reflecting continuity between this research and previous Impacts08 findings.<sup>21</sup> Liverpool ECoC may have added to the confidence within the sector, but it did not, by itself, secure any major projects or alter business decisions:

'I don't think that there's any particular investment that we've made that's purely down to the Capital of Culture. But I think that with the coming of the Arena, which has had a major impact, the Liverpool ONE shopping centre, the confidence that the Capital of Culture accolade has given to the city, all these things must have surely built on our own confidence and we've made significant investment into our stock in the city.'

### 5.1.3. *The challenge of hosting Liverpool ECoC*

Just as interviewees spoke of the possibilities offered by Liverpool ECoC and its influence on the city's image and potential investment, the sector displayed an awareness of the challenges that came with Liverpool ECoC, particularly that of readying the physical environment in time for 2008:

'It put the delivery team under great strain to maintain that commitment, to maintain quality and to avoid spending unnecessarily money on acceleration measures. So it was a problem, it put some individuals under great strain with the inevitable consequences for some individuals.'

Associated with the challenges for specific developers' projects were the risks posed by those in the sector who identified themselves with the Liverpool ECoC, whether by hosting individual events, or by agreeing to change timetables to coincide with the year. One interviewee spoke of the potential for negative perceptions if the city was not ready for Liverpool ECoC:

'And we did realise that there would be people, journalists particularly, always looking for fault in Liverpool who would say "Look at bloody Liverpool, it couldn't get the thing finished before 2008, it's still a building site."

Another interviewee spoke of the apprehension that surrounded the political difficulties in the years preceding Liverpool ECoC:

'We did worry during 2007 like everybody else did, about delivery. It would have been very bad for us to have made a big investment if at the same time the city was being criticised for not being able to deliver what was expected. So now there were two or three aspects to delivery: one was that we should deliver a great cultural festival; secondly that everybody would get behind it, that there wouldn't be political divisions and so on that would give bad publicity; and thirdly, perhaps most important of all, that the city was ready for those things which were, as I used to say at the time, non-negotiable, like the streets must be clean, the welcome at the airport, the railway stations, along the road accesses into the city, should all be welcoming, even if there's building work going on.'

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

However, the issues surrounding negative publicity were put into the wider context of developers' strategies by one interviewee who felt that although the sector were aware of negative publicity in the build up to Liverpool ECoC, it was not fundamentally important to the sector's decision-making:

'I don't think there was a feeling in the development industry that there were serious issues here that were to do with anything that might affect them as developers. I think the general media coverage creates uncertainty and that's never good, so people who are builders or developers, they're interested in "can I deliver my product to the time and cost I've got it and will I be able to let it when it's there? And is some of this getting in the way?"'

So, whilst such publicity sometimes suggested potential instability, that suggestion did not stop the growth of the private sector in Liverpool:

'The business community was getting on with it; they were opening bars, they were buying property, developing property, there was a national property ... what's now seen as a property bubble that was materialising and Liverpool caught very much the coattails of that initiative. Business activity grew; business membership of the Chamber of Commerce has grown something ... I think it's doubled since 2002, 2003 to nearly 2,000 members now. Other business organisations ... have flourished.'

#### 5.1.4. *The sector's relationship with Liverpool City Council (LCC)*

Overall, interviewees felt the Liverpool ECoC had a positive impact on relations between the sector and LCC. This positive effect came from the need for a much closer working relationship between LCC, the Culture Company and the sector to make sure Liverpool was prepared for the beginning of 2008 and that specific projects and building work had been completed in time for the opening ceremony. An interviewee captured the general view of how the relationship stood at the close of Liverpool ECoC:

'We'd gone from the Chief Exec of Liverpool City Council back in 2000 saying "Where is the business community in this city? We can't find them, we're looking for sponsors for Capital of Culture, we're thinking it's going to be about getting business involved," to a point where a large part of the regeneration has been carried out by local business people.'

Two interviewees felt this closer relationship had developed as a result of the 'Countdown Group' set up within LCC to prepare the physical infrastructure of the city in time for Liverpool ECoC. One interviewee outlined its functions, membership and the reasons for viewing this partnership as a great success, but also highlighted the need for continued co-operation and good practice:

'So the Countdown Group was set up, met every week throughout the year and before the end, more importantly before the year, to co-ordinate, and that was a big success. It's one of the unsung stories; it was one of the big successes. The highways department of the council, the street signing department, Merseytravel, the Liverpool ONE team, Grosvenor, the Arena team, the marketing team, the Cultural Company all got together and took decisions there and then and forgot where the boundaries were; we just worked as a team to make sure that those things that needed doing were done. And they were done and now of course the challenge is to keep them going.'

However, interviewees were all keen to point out the long-term changes in the relationship with LCC, pointing out that these changes were occurring irrespective of Liverpool ECoC:

'Capital of Culture aside, the regime at the council now is a much easier one for communication and collaboration with developers. So, at the moment, I mean we all have our frustrations as developers and councillors have their frustrations with the people that they ... you know, the heritage people, but

generally it's a very co-operative relationship. The city council are very approachable. I think it's definitely got a lot easier. There's more openness and a more ... there's a definite drive to involve and work with and communicate with the private sector to move things forward. And I think that that relationship with the council has made the relationship amongst the private sector developments more open and communicative as well. There just seems to be more communication generally than there was historically.'

## 5.2. Statutory and voluntary agencies

It is important to note the wide range of stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary sectors interviewed as part of the research, as well as the varying and differing emphasis placed by each of these interviewees depending on their particular group of clients, service users or customers. Despite the differences, the statutory and voluntary sectors' discussion of Liverpool ECoC coalesced around five points: 1) the relationship with LCC and the Culture Company; 2) relationships between organisations within the sectors; 3) the involvement of their stakeholders, communities and service users in the Liverpool ECoC; 4) the use of arts and culture in specific projects throughout 2008; and finally 5) the added value of Liverpool ECoC for their work within their sector. These five points are detailed below.

### 5.2.1. The agencies' relationship with Liverpool City Council (LCC) and with Liverpool Culture Company

The general perception shared by the interviewees was that the relationship that developed with the Liverpool Culture Company and, by association, with LCC, was good. When asked about their relationship with the Liverpool Culture Company at the end of 2008, interviewees tended to employ positive terms, using phrases such as:

'We've had very, very good links with the Culture Company'

However, the relationship between the sector and the Liverpool Culture Company was not without initial teething problems, particularly as the Liverpool Culture Company attempted to knit with the existing art and cultural networks within the city. Thus, there was a narrative highlighting the perceived exclusion of important groups in the Liverpool Culture Company's initial years:

'I think it would be fair to say they [sector representatives] started feeling excluded. There were some attempts to include them and some groups got more included than others. And I think, in part, it's a tendency for people, rather than to plug in to networks that are already there, they go out and create their own. And so [the part of the organisation], which has a wide range of community based groups, felt a bit marginalised for a while.'

Interviewees also drew attention to a perceived lack of transparency surrounding Liverpool Culture Company, leading to communication difficulties with the sector:

'There was a lack of communication and transparency. The Culture Company effectively set itself up as a delivery body in competition with a lot of the arts sector – which made relationships strained between the Council and the sector. There was a controlling element and political wrangling – which made it difficult to find out what was going on.'

However, a strong relationship developed between Liverpool Culture Company and individual agencies and institutions, thus surviving these early difficulties:

'Success will hinge on relationships and there were some really good people working in the Culture Company who, for their own benefits, really, were more than happy to reach out and work with people.'

But they made it easy to work with them, so...And they brought things...I think there was a bit of scepticism at first, you know you get a load of artists together and is this going to be arty-farty and are we going to be interested anyway, you know?’

These initial challenges had unforeseen outcomes that had knock-on benefits, benefits which it was argued would continue to be felt even though Liverpool ECoC has come to a close:

‘It has resulted in a lot of the arts sector working more closely together – more a reaction to internal Culture Company problems, than initiated by it. ... the real achievement in my view will be embedding the value of culture across the Council and Liverpool First statutory partners, and seeing Liverpool really continuing to invest heavily in its cultural life. In a sense, I feel it’s a platform for the city to move forward.’

Despite initial scepticism, in the instances where a particular project emerged late in the build up to Liverpool ECoC, Liverpool Culture Company was still seen as a supportive and valuable partner:

‘We decided that, we identified the gap in the market. It was quite late on last year so it took a lot of hard work and we met with the Culture Company, we met with Jason [Harborow]<sup>22</sup> when he was there, and he particularly backed the idea but unfortunately there was no finance that we could attach to it. They were very supportive and they’ve had a representative on the steering group...so they’ve helped us with a lot of the publicity for the events and stuff like that. So we’ve got lots of in kind contributions rather than financial support, which has been very, very helpful.’

Liverpool ECoC was also seen, by a minority of interviewees, to have affected a change in the way LCC deals with art and culture, with one interviewee reflecting on a much more pronounced commitment to cultural policy within the LCC:

‘LCC officers are much more open to cultural activity – and want to find ways to champion it.’

### 5.2.2. Relationships within the statutory and voluntary sectors

Continuing the theme of positive relationships and partnership with the Culture Company and LCC set out in the previous section (5.2.1), interviewees also talked about the benefits of Liverpool ECoC for their own networks and partnerships within the statutory and voluntary sectors. The Liverpool ECoC was not seen as the main driver for the improvement in relationships with the sector, but rather it ‘added value’ and gave a focus to existing trends, particularly centred on LSP. Three quotations from interviewees show this belief, as one interviewee comments on the Liverpool ECoC as a catalyst for partnership working:

‘I think what Capital of Culture did was provide the catalyst for support agencies to come together to deliver events. I think there was a recognition that everyone from Police, Fire, Ambulance, city planning, Highways, cleaning of the streets, all those kind of agencies that have to exist and have to be comfortable with what activities and events have been brought in, that there was a coming together around the banner of Capital of Culture to create, to a large degree, a ‘can do’ mentality.’

Another area highlighted was the opportunity to accelerate existing developments across the sector:

‘But I think the relationship’s a lot more solid now, I’m not saying they weren’t effective before but they’re just...if you’ve got like once a quarter contact with an organisation and then that ramps up to

<sup>22</sup> Jason Harborow was initially appointed as Chief Operating Officer in 2004 and later as Chief Executive (2007) of Liverpool Culture Company and Interim Executive Director of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport portfolio at Liverpool City Council (reflecting the structural relationship between the local authority and the Liverpool ECoC delivery vehicle). He resigned in late 2007.



once a fortnight and you see them a lot at the different events that are happening in the city, it's bound to increase the contact, isn't it? So that's what happened, I think.'

The above was in tandem with the importance of Liverpool's Local Strategic Partnership in this process,

'There's two things that perhaps converge. One is the development of partnership within the LSP started breaking down, and has been over probably a decade now, breaking down barriers between organisations so each organisation... health realise that the police and housing are part of the health agenda and the police know that health, mental health, whatever, and other things are part of their agenda. So there's more of a sense we're all in this together.'

### 5.2.3. *The involvement of communities and stakeholders in Liverpool ECoC*

This theme built upon the concerns discussed in section 4.2.3, with very detailed concerns raised according to the particular area in which the interviewee was involved. Interviewees voiced the specific concerns of their organisation, reflecting worries that Liverpool ECoC had not reached the groups with whom they are involved. The quotes below offer different examples, starting with an individual religious group:

'One of the things that I think has been missing slightly this year from up front is some of the Islamic side, Islamic art, given what a big Islamic community we have here.'

And with regard to social housing tenants:

'Many of our tenants are vulnerable and the economic profile of them is very poor and their health is very poor and all the rest of it. And I just think that anything that was going to sort of act as an engine to boost the economy of Liverpool has got to ... I don't know how you would measure it, but it's got to have ripple effects for people living in the city and living in our most deprived communities.'

Finally, concerning Liverpool's female population:

'Well, from last year what we identified with regard to the Capital of Culture was there was a lot of things happening but because we deal specifically primarily with women we found that there was a gap in the celebrations, that there wasn't many things centred around women.'

Most interviewees therefore responded by raising their specific concerns, as well as the broader narratives described in section 4. Those interviewees who did make reference to wider issues recognised the limitations of Liverpool ECoC, and the need to make choices based on both time and financial constraints:

'I wanted to make sure that all forms of culture were embraced within Capital of Culture year, it wasn't just the high art, although it has to be some of the high art, and it wasn't just the obvious popular culture, though it should be that as well, but other things as well – I mean community activities, which they've done, the science another one, intellect – another one, just to make sure that the opportunity to present Liverpool to the outside world in a way that it wasn't used to was built upon and largely they've done that. You can always improve on things and you haven't got an infinite budget and the realities are you make choices and they've got to make choices. Now I don't quarrel about that at all.'

One interviewee summed up the perceptions across their sector, recognising that while there had been some groups who felt they had not been as involved as they might have liked (or felt they deserved), overall engagement from within the statutory and voluntary sectors in Liverpool was good, when seen in light of the need to finance the festival and prepare for a year-long event:



'There are going to be those people and groups and organisations that felt they weren't as involved as they had hoped to be; others will have felt they got a fair crack at the whip, as they say, and were heavily involved. I know from independent art and culture organisations, people are so many across the piece and some are pure voluntary, some are co-operatives and some are sort of sole traders, people working in their own right; then some of them felt locked out at the beginning and couldn't find a way in. And I guess that although there were attempts, to my knowledge, to do something about that, I don't think you'd get a broad agreement that it was as inclusive as people had hoped. But I think the emphasis on the world in one city, that it was to involve everybody, raised expectations in a very big way. And I think the other thing was people were expecting there to be lots of money available to support initiatives, and it was a bit of a shock to find that ... well as my understanding of it, that the city had to find something like £30 million itself, and that ... I think that was something that wasn't clear at the outset and therefore it hasn't ... you would get a different view, people will say "Yes it was really great, we were involved," and so forth, and others say "Well it didn't make any difference to our particular arts or cultural organisation."

#### 5.2.4. *The sectors' use of arts and culture in Liverpool ECoC*

All those statutory and voluntary sector organisations interviewed as part of this research had arts and cultural projects taking place in 2008. Some of these projects were major events drawing international participation; some were events gathering a national audience; while others concentrated on local engagement (importantly, the last of these represented comparable accomplishments to the higher profile events, when seen against the backdrop of the levels of social exclusion facing their clients and service users). Although it would be too time consuming to list the individual events, a selection of quotations can give a sense of how using arts and culture has left a lasting impression about how powerful art and culture can be when dealing with the challenges facing this sector:

'Yes, we would actually, and we have got plans and I don't know how much it was influenced by Capital of Culture but we have got plans to use theatre to effect some cultural change ... We want to develop our own culture; it's not knocking anyone else's, but we want to develop our own and we want to use some theatre. ... [The organisation] has nine focuses, one of them is equality and diversity and I'm a champion for equality and diversity. So the Executive Management team each accepts a responsibility for whatever focus, and we want to use theatre to do something on equality and diversity and for young people as well, to involve young people in what we do. So, yeah, we're planning on doing that next year [2009], so similar to some of the projects that have gone on in Capital of Culture.'

The involvement in the Liverpool ECoC arts and culture programme also left a practical legacy for many of the organisations interviewed:

'As a result of the activity this year, we've appointed one of our senior staff as Artistic Director ... which is a novelty. But that's intended to continue and to follow through and to be a permanent position, that there is always someone who has principal responsibility for developing links with the artistic community.'

#### 5.2.5. *The added value of Liverpool ECoC for the statutory and voluntary sectors*

Overall, the narrative which has emerged around the themes discussed by the statutory and voluntary sectors is one of Liverpool ECoC adding value to their work. This added value has come in three forms: expanding participation and interest in the work of statutory and voluntary sector organisations; improving the quality of life of the particular segment of the Liverpool population which they serve; and accelerating existing trends which the agencies were trying to promote. The quotations below deal with each area in turn.

First, there is the improved awareness of the sectors' work:

'Capital of Culture itself has brought, and the events that have been put on via Capital of Culture, have brought a whole new audience to Liverpool which we've been able to tap into.'

'I mean if I was to say a favourite part of the year, not in terms of calendar ...it's the sense of people being really interested in what was happening here.'

There is then the impact on the quality of life in the city:

'So we had a big meeting, it just coincided. And one of the key themes in that was about raising aspirations in Liverpool and self-esteem. So obviously at that time, we didn't know the answer, but obviously Capital of Culture was one of those kind of links really.'

Finally, there are expiating positive changes happening within the sector itself:

'So I think there isn't one answer, I think culture has given another string to the bow, which is valuable. I think the voluntary and community sector have, independently of the culture, more through the LSP process, achieved a greater recognition as a partner in the redevelopment of the city. A lot of that is because of the voluntary sector delivered a lot of the European programme up until 2008, they have struggled to do much in the next one, but they delivered a lot of grass roots development work and moved a lot of people along the skills ladder, up the skills ladder and closer to work, and a lot of people into work. So they played their part there and I think that's a role they can continue to play'.

## 6. Conclusion

The themes presented in this report offer a range of perspectives from those groups and organisations that represent the key stakeholders in Liverpool's civic life. These perspectives overlap with existing Impacts 08 research<sup>23</sup> which shows, in quantitative terms, the impacts of hosting Liverpool ECoC. What this report offers is a qualitative perspective from the point of view of Liverpool's civic stakeholders, adding richness to the already developing consensus surrounding the belief that Liverpool ECoC was a success for Liverpool.

Although each sector of the city had a different focus and emphasised individual and specific concerns, there is one overriding, theme that has emerged from this research: Liverpool, European Capital of Culture 2008 was felt to be a success. Within this perception were a variety of narratives: how Liverpool ECoC had changed perceptions of Liverpool, both within and outside the city; how and why the cultural programme had been successful; and how the Liverpool ECoC had 'added value' to the ongoing programmes transforming Liverpool in other ways. However, many interviewees questioned Liverpool ECoC's relative importance in the context of Liverpool's existing and predominantly physical urban regeneration programmes, as well as outlining the confusion that has developed in stakeholders' perceptions of separation or inter-dependency between Liverpool ECoC and concurrent urban physical regeneration programmes in Liverpool.

Whilst much of the work within the Impacts 08 programme concerns itself (often quantitatively) with additionality, and with carefully separating out the impacts of Liverpool ECoC from the impacts of other interventions and the broader context of Liverpool, the findings within this report are manifestly not suitable for such treatment. What is important within this report has been the *perception* of a coherent link, even of cause and effect, between Liverpool ECoC and the large-scale urban physical regeneration programmes taking place in the city.

This perception, although disputed by many interviewees, gives a crucial indication of the value of hosting Liverpool ECoC as narrated by the key civic stakeholders within the city, and it is as much an impact to be recognised and weighed as any other. Such a perception particularly helps to highlight the mobility and malleability of the narrative of culture-led regeneration and the multiplicity of uses to which it can be put. Through stakeholders' reflections on Liverpool ECoC, it is possible to see how embedded and sophisticated this narrative has become, and to understand its re-positioning, post-2008, in relation to a broader success story: the renaissance of the city of Liverpool.

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<sup>23</sup> Impacts 08 (2010) *Creating an Impact* <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/>

## 7. Appendices

### 7.1. Appendix 1 - List of organisations interviewed

Blackburne House Group  
Diocese of Liverpool  
Downing Developments  
Downtown Liverpool in Business  
Liverpool Community Network / Arts and Culture Network (CN/ACN)  
Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (LCVS)  
Liverpool Arena and Convention Centre (ACCL)  
Liverpool Chamber of Commerce  
Liverpool City Council (LCC)  
Liverpool First, Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)  
Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)  
Liverpool Mutual Homes  
Liverpool One  
Liverpool Primary Care Trust (PCT)  
Liverpool Vision  
Merseyside Police  
Merseytravel  
The Mersey Partnership (TMP)