# Chapter 7 – What ever happened to the Liverpool model? Urban cultural policy in the era after urban regeneration

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## Introduction

This chapter seeks to chart the rise, dissemination and limits of a specific model of urban governance, namely the use of ‘culture’ to further urban regeneration. This usage of culture is exemplified by the 2008 European Capital of Culture programme held in Liverpool. This example is shown below to have been highly influential on subsequent urban interventions and governance arrangements within the UK. We argue that this influence is a direct result of the intersection of social scientific practices that privilege the production of evidence of ‘impact’, and the continuation of a public policy settlement associated with broader urban regeneration practices of the 1990s and 2000s.

Mirroring the concerns of the other chapters in this collection, we thus seek to identify the role of social science expertise in bolstering policymaking narratives, to consider ‘street level’ understandings of governance, and so to highlight the disparities between apparently rational narratives and the ‘lived realities’ of those involved with the rendering these narratives into practical action. As such, we seek to emphasise the need to add nuance to any totalising policy narrative and draw out local specificities which risk being lost in such accounts.

We begin by exploring how cultural policy has been disseminated, considering the case of policy regarding the support and promotion of ‘creative industries’ as an exemplar, with a focus on urban settings. We then move to discuss the specifics of the take-up of a “Liverpool Model” of urban cultural policy, along with critiques of the use of this type of urban intervention. Following this, we present and discuss empirical data generated through engagement with the research team responsible for the social science practice which is used to underpin narratives regarding the nature of this “Liverpool Model” of cultural regeneration. In so doing, we seek to demonstrate the importance of academic practice to making the case for this model, highlighting the ‘social life’ of economic impact figures against the more complex understanding of culture and urban policy offered by the academic team. These data come from interviews with five key researchers from the ‘Impacts08’ research programme commissioned by local government to run alongside Liverpool’s European Capital of Culture. We conclude with a comment on the prospects for success, or otherwise, of municipalities using urban cultural policy in this way.

## What do we mean by the “Liverpool Model”?

Before turning to the substantive discussion, it is worth pausing for a brief note on the terminology in use here. The “Liverpool Model” of urban regeneration is the product of academic and policy discussions – it has, in a sense, a social life that has been constructed by critical academic work (Connolly 2013), academic evaluation (García *et al.* 2010), and by public policy entrepreneurs, competitions and documentation (e.g. Redmond 2009). It should be noted that this specific term, ‘the Liverpool Model’ has a varied history, having been applied to a recycling scheme (and its impact on local employment and raising revenue (Brennan and Ackers 2004)), an approach to preventing an HIV epidemic in IV drug users on Merseyside during the 1980s and early 1990s (Seymour and Eaton 1997), and a modelling of the entire UK economy for forecasting purposes (Minford *et al.* 1984). There is a linguistic story to be told about these antecedents, in particular the Liverpool Model of economic forecasting that was important at a time of extreme economic violence inflicted on Liverpool by British central government in the early 1980s (Beckett 2015). That task is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, and for present purposes the “Liverpool Model” is a way of capturing the process of taking social scientific evidence of a policy outcome in one urban setting and using that evidence to justify applying superficially similar policies in other areas. In so doing, it uses a range of social science practices to bolster the pre-existing ‘Glasgow Model’ of culture-led regeneration. We thus aim to reveal the ways in which this model is both constructed and contested.

By using this “Liverpool Model” of urban regeneration as a case study, we seek here to add detail and nuance to existing accounts of the leveraging of culture in the urban policy setting by engaging with the narratives of elites, and specifically the elites responsible in this case for producing the social scientific evidence of the ‘impact’ of Liverpool’s European Capital of Culture 2008. In so doing, we aim to offer four substantive contributions: Firstly, to demonstrate how this use of urban cultural policy is an approach that, in keeping with wider policies seeking to promote urban creativity and/or to bolster the creative industries sector, has been transferred across and between urban settings as a potential fix to a range of policy problems; Secondly, to use this demonstration as the basis for a discussion of the tensions between elites who are often enmeshed in a coherent project of urbanism; Thirdly, to suggest the need for careful consideration regarding the production of social scientific knowledge for use in policymaking, as shown by the negotiations of institutions and identities experienced by the team responsible for the academic evaluation of Liverpool 2008; And finally, to cast doubt on the potential for the future efficacy of urban policy following the “Liverpool Model”, in the era after urban regeneration in which levels of government funding at both the local and national level are being significantly curtailed.

A key feature of discussions of urban regeneration in general, and of the culturally-inflected varieties in particular, is a lack of focus on the practices of individuals involved in specific varieties of urban arrangements. Indeed, following Bevir’s (2013:56) critique of recent state theory, there is a danger that most readings of urban cultural policy applied to urban regeneration see this activity as the product of “inexorable and impersonal forces”, structurally determined at a macro level, and unrelated to any decisions made by an identifiable individual, organisation or governmental actor. In order to counter this tendency in the literature, here we seek to establish the situated agency of elites involved in the construction of the social science deployed to support the efficacy of a specific model of urban governance, and to demonstrate the tensions involved in occupuying such a role.

## Governance, cultural policy and modernist social science

Cultural planning (Evans 2001, Connolly 2013), cultural regeneration, culture-led regeneration, and culture with regeneration (Evans and Shaw 2004) are all identified variants of the use of culture to address the issues confronting contemporary cities, most notably around the transitions, enforced or not, away from Fordist forms of manufacturing and associated patterns of stable, mass employment. Here cities were seen to have become competitive in their attempts to respond to the reconfiguration of national and global modes of economic and social production (Brenner 2004, Harvey 2007). Cultural policies, in this context, have become one means of competing. These policies have seen distinct phases, from a European leftist project, through to one more closely associated with transnational capital investment and emerging urban class formations. Whilst the originators of the cultural planning approach (Landry and Bianchini 1995, Landry 2000) and the associated creative cities discourses had specific associations with a broader European New Urban Left, Florida’s ‘Creative Class’ era of theory (and practice) around culture and creativity decoupled the variety of approaches associated with cultural policy in the urban context from their specific political location. Similarly, the rise of city branding approaches, selling places through narratives of their cultural production, (Evans 2003, Richards 2000, García 2004) removed cultural policies from attempts to create voter bases in Northern Europe’s ‘new times’(Bianchini and Parkinson 1993).

These planning and branding approaches can all to some extent be nestled under the umbrella of creative economy discourses. Here the ‘creative economy’ was (and continues to be) a type of ‘economic imaginary’ (Taylor 2013, Campbell 2014), allowing policy makers, particularly at national level, to promote a reoriented form of production, associated with the creation and control of intangible goods, such as intellectual property. In the urban setting this has resulted in a proliferation of policy interventions, publications and projects. These are usefully summarised by Mould’s (2014) critique of discourses associated with the ‘creative city’. This critique demonstrates both the high levels of academic engagement with these developments in urban cultural policy, but is also clear regarding the limitations of these discourses. By identifying the undoubted problems associated with the spread of ‘creative cities’ discourses and the attendant urban policy prescriptions, Mould (2014) points towards the importance of a range of specific urban theorists and consultants in spreading the idea and conception of the creative city (see also Peck 2005). It can be noted, however, that the specific mechanisms of policy development, and the experience of key actors in response to the various policy and knowledge creation dilemmas they experience, is an area of research that is underdeveloped. In exploring this perspective we may gain valuable insights into the process of elite production of knowledge for policy, how this knowledge is de- and re-contextualised (or de- and re-territorialised, as geographers would say), alongside clues as to the struggles within hegemonic urban elites and the fractious and often conflicting nature of what are usually constructed as homogeneous neoliberal urban politics.

The intertwining of creative industries, cultural funding and urban regeneration is vital to understanding how urban cultural policy travels. Whilst there has been much work that has aimed to untangle these strands (e.g. Campbell 2011a, 2014; Comunian and Mould 2014), here we begin with the assumption that policy has not sought to separate them. Indeed, one of the key elements of the economic imaginary giving underpinning the creative industries is precisely this conflation of potentially disparate elements. Here, the well-established story of international policy transfer, both in relation to creative industries (e.g. Ross 2007, Flew 2013) broadly conceived, and also to the use of culture for the purposes of urban regeneration can therefore be further elaborated. In political science, the approach would be to identify the process of ‘policy transfer’ (see Benson and Jordan 2011 for a recent review of the post-Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) literature). More fruitful work, however, particularly in the context of theories of governance discussed in this volume, has been conducted in geography. This is for two reasons. The first is that the theoretical framework of cultural geographers is much more closely aligned to the concerns of governance scholarship (Bevir 2013). The second is the nature of the specific topic under consideration here, namely cultural policy. Thus, although the literature on policy transfer is extensive, the work of Prince (2010a, 2010b, 2012a, 2012b, 2014a, 2014b), in geography, is most pertinent to the concerns at hand.

Prince’s work has focused on explaining how New Zealand came to adopt the ‘creative industries’ as an economic category, opening the possibility for policy intervention into economy and society in order to better support this sector. Prince details how the bridge between British conceptions of creative industries were facilitated by a range of state and para-state actors, such as the British Council. This is a familiar narrative (e.g. Mould 2014). Alongside these mechanisms Prince explores the role of academic and quasi-academic actors in the construction and promotion of the category of creative industries, a category under which various forms of urban intervention have been enacted.

Prince is clear as to the successful transfer of creative industries policy:

‘the transfers have been successful not only because they have been politically driven but because they have revolved around the constitution of the creative industries in self-referential, technical terms. The transfer of technical systems that defined, codified, delineated, and measured the creative industries made them knowable and thinkable in different contexts. These apparently apolitical techniques constituted them as a sector.’

(Prince 2010b:182)

Whereby,

‘…this technical aspect makes the creative industries into a universal category, present anywhere measurement of them is conducted […] This effect is important: it strips policy objects of the context of their initial conception (in the case of the creative industries, post-Thatcher Britain). It makes them appear not as the contingent, politically motivated policy devices they were in that context but as objective, even scientific, representations of phenomena potentially present everywhere. This global validity makes their transferability conceivable and actionable.’

(Prince 2014a:9).

Fundamentally, we see how the rendering of an object as ‘technical’ and measurable renders it apparently apolitical, and so universal. Global validity is a product of specific gatherings of academic and consultant expertise. To give one example (Prince 2010a), the *Forum On Creative Industries* in the UK was able to shape government understandings of the creative economy and the role of specific forms of cultural production, such as film, within the constructed conception of creative industries as a coherent whole. The experts in this example were part of the broader assemblage of creative industries as both an object of policy and a statistical category, a category that was reassembled in the New Zealand context with the assistance of some of those same experts. Social science evidence here thus does not so much identify categories for governance so much as re-create these categories in different settings.

This approach to thinking about creative industries and the creative economy has also been recently deployed by Pinheiro and Hauge (2014) in Nordic economies, and Rindzeviciute *et al.* (2015) in Lithuania. Here the role of the British Council, British experts (including consultants and academics) along with funding from the EU and George Soros’ Open Society Fund, was crucial in propagating the *‘British model of urban regeneration through creative industries’* (Rindzeviciute *et al.* 2015). Ultimately the propagation of this approach for urban regeneration in Utena and Alytus was unsuccessful – despite the establishment of some apparent form of technical universality, these specific areas did not fit the circumstances prevailing in the UK, both in terms of local context and the broader national policy frameworks of 1997-2010 that were able to channel large amounts of funding into physical cultural infrastructure and more intangible social and educational impact programmes. Moreover, the Lithuanian experience exposed the questionable assumptions underpinning the British approach. Creative industries were supposed to stimulate small and medium sized cultural and creative enterprises (SME) to replace declining heavy industry. However, as Communian (2009) has demonstrated, much of this SME activity is underpinned by working patterns that are directly dependent on British state institutions, including the regional civil service, or state-funded cultural organisations, such as libraries or museums. There was, therefore, little prospect of this form of cultural policy in the urban setting succeeding. In terms of understanding the prevailing policy climate, it may be instructive to consider Van Heur’s discussion of the prevailing practice of ‘fast’ policymaking that can result in this site-blind reapplication of concepts and practices (2010: 190). Nevertheless, what is clear from this example is how policy narratives may not apply in external settings, nor even have a large degree of internal coherence.

One important element of the Lithuanian experience was the distance between the artistic community’s understanding of the role of cultural and creative activity and the perceptions of business in Utena and Alytus. At the same time as the limited traction of British approaches to using creative industries for urban regeneration was evidenced at local level, national circuits of cultural policy making were formed, most notably to access and draw down EU funding. This process saw a redefinition of culture as a sector with economic potential, allied to EU funding, thus creating the circumstances whereby cultural policy using urban creative industries could take root. As Rindzeviciute and her colleagues (2015: 595) conclude, in a comment that takes us back to a more direct consideration of the “Liverpool Model”*,*

‘…policy transfer is not limited to the dissemination of the method of statistical representation of the economic value of culture. It is also a complex process where new networks and actorial identities are forged, which unleashes local transformations.’

Here, the transfer of creative industries policies gives rise to new governance arrangements, grounded on social scientific knowledge. The distinct irony highlighted by Prince’s various analyses of creative industries policy is the way in which cultural policy is shown to be heavily dependent on certain forms of social science, whilst simultaneously attempting to deny or distance itself from this form of knowledge. Specific forms of expertise have, therefore, been central to cultural policy, particularly as it has been deployed in the context of urban governance, as Rindzeviciute *et al.* make clear.

Statistical social scientific evidence, often backed by the academic status of those who have been involved in the production of mapping documents or standardised statistical measures of economic performance for creative occupations, has been crucial to claims concerning the impact of cultural interventions in the urban setting. This emphasis on the need to generate evidence of the ‘impact’ of cultural activity was greatly increased during Liverpool’s tenure as European Capital of Culture which resulted in many subsequent claims of economic and social return on cultural investment, which continue to form the backdrop to cultural policy up to the present day (Murphy 2016). Moreover, in order to understand the limitations of this approach (and the decreasing likelihood of success when it is applied to the current urban context, for example in the ‘UK City of Culture’ next hosted by Hull in 2017) it is necessary to chart the rise of discourses citing Liverpool 2008, the implications of this rise, and the disjuncture between the current approach to urban policy and the prescriptions offered within the Liverpool Model.

## The Liverpool Model

The previous section suggested the international life of specific kinds of cultural policy, notably creative industries policy, is dependent on global circuits of government agencies, consultants and academics. It is also dependent on the specific forms of social scientific knowledge, such as the mapping of particular parts of the economy as creative industries and the aggregated claims about their economic performance (Campbell 2014, Campbell *et al.* 2015). Urban governance, in the cultural case, thus follows the entanglement of institutions, actors and knowledge. This process has been well covered in the literature in this area e.g. Mould’s (2014) recent summary. However, as indicated above, the work of Prince aside, there has been little substantive engagement, with the narratives and voices of actors, notably the academic actors, entangled in these global trends. It is here that Bevir’s (2013) approach to governance affords both a different approach to research questions and research participants, as well as giving important insights into the specific role and purpose of elite actors and elite institutions. If patterns of rule, in this case the application of cultural policy to urban issues, have emerged as the result of modernist expertise (Bevir 2013:222), then it is vital to engage with the intentionality of those creating, producing and validating that expertise (Bevir 2013:208).

It is unnecessary here to fully rehearse the policy story of the Liverpool Model (see Cox and O’Brien 2012, O’Brien 2014 for further detail). Rather, a brief summary of European Capital of Culture in Liverpool will reveal the origins of the sustained engagement with the empirical data from academics that follows. In its original guise, the European Capital of Culture programme was aimed at celebrating both the local and European elements of a host’s culture, as part of the broader project of European Integration. European Capital of Culture host cities were tasked with organising:

‘…a programme of cultural events highlighting the city’s own culture and cultural heritage as well as its place in the common cultural heritage, and involving people concerned with cultural activities from other European countries with a view to establishing lasting cooperation.’

 (Palmer Rae 2004:42).

By 2008, the European Capital of Culture had also become closely associated with urban regeneration policy following the ‘Glasgow Model’ (O’Brien 2014). García and Cox*.,* in a 2013 review of the literature on the history of the entire European Capital of Culture programme since 1985, identify five types of impact associated with the approach adopted by Liverpool in 2008. These are around the idea of using European Capital of Culture as catalyst for change in the image of an urban area; growth of grassroots cultural activity, underpinned by social programmes; enhanced media attention associated with the repositioning of a host city as a cultural hub; increases in the diversity of the cultural audience; and tourism impacts.

These elements are part of the narrative of Liverpool’s European Capital of Culture 2008 that was taken up by subsequent UK policy. However, they are also related to a specific, social scientific, story concerning the demonstration of a (mostly) economic impact. To understand this it is important to contextualise Liverpool as a site for urban policy interventions in the post Fordist period. As Sykes *et al.* (2013) usefully summarise, the Atlanticist economic geography of Liverpool bequeathed the city an important global position and the wealth associated with cotton, sugar, slaves, maritime insurance and rest of the trappings of the British Empire’s commercial hub. Indeed, Sykes *et al.* (2013: 299) describe how this wealth

‘…manifested physically in a plethora of grand architectural landscapes and the early development of the characteristic urban infrastructure of the modern city, most notably the world’s first inter-city railway (George Stephenson’s Liverpool and Manchester, opened 1830), but also public parks, mass housing, planning and sanitation. The legacy of this era is reflected in UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and the city’s contemporary claim to have the most architecturally ‘listed’ (protected) buildings in the UK outside London.’

Whilst the cultural infrastructure reflected pre-Victorian wealth, it formed the backdrop to almost a century of decline following the First World War (Wilks-Heeg 2003). As a result, Liverpool was the testing ground for a wide range of central government interventions, from the cultural, such as the International Garden Festival of the 1980s, through to an Urban Development Corporation and the City Challenge Programme. The city was also subject to a major tranche of EU Objective One funding; funding that was associated with the very poorest areas of the pre-expansion EU (Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004, Couch 2003). Indeed, it is east to read Liverpool as a longstanding site for urban experiments, whereby ‘lessons’ from Liverpool 2008 were coming from a location that had a long history of being experimented upon and evaluated. This point notwithstanding, it is important to stress how Liverpool had long been in need of a policy fix to its seemingly entrenched economic and social issues (Cocks 2009).

Allied to this context was the perceived lesson from the UK’s other ‘model’ European Capital of Culture, as noted above, Glasgow 1990. This case has generated an extensive literature (e.g. Bianchini 1993, Boyle and Hughes 1994, Mooney 2004) around the success, or otherwise, of Glasgow’s year, with critical voices stressing the uneven geographical and social distribution of the effects of city centre building projects and city marketing exercises. What is certain is that policymakers in Liverpool, in the run up to bidding for European Capital of Culture 2008, felt that Glasgow offered a model for urban transformation that they could emulate. In turn, allied to the academic evaluation of 2008, Liverpool policy makers would present their experience as superseding Glasgow as the appropriate way to use cultural policy for urban transformation. Crucially, it was academic evidence that was seen as necessary to make this case, with a consortium of local universities being tasked with providing evidence of longitudinal impact for the very first time alongside an European Capital of Culture programme (the name of the research programme: ‘Impacts08’ speaks clearly to the prominent role for considerations of the impact case).

As García *et al.* (2010) describe, Liverpool seemingly offered a model of success from its European Capital of Culture activities, with data demonstrating more visits to cultural institutions and activities, along with a high number of ‘first-time’ visitors (and their new, first-time spending); substantial, if not universal, local audiences and participation; and improved internal and, most importantly for Liverpool, external perceptions of the city, based mostly on media analysis and survey data. Liverpool also developed a narrative about its own experience, the story of ‘the Scouse Wedding’ (Cox and O’Brien 2012), of initially getting the event wrong, of teething and organisational problems, which eventually gave way to a successful year. This generation of data regarding success can be considered to be at the root of the Liverpool Model. Whilst success has been contested, both before 2008 (Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004) and after (Campbell 2011b, Connolly 2013), the evidence from both the local and regional government impact assessment (NWDA 2008), alongside the academic project ‘Impacts08’, allowed for key policy entrepreneurs to claim Liverpool pointed the way to a new mode of using culture in the urban setting.

The reality of this claim has been usefully scrutinized by Cox and O’Brien’s 2012 assessment of the use of a Liverpool Model in cultural forms of regeneration in the UK, specifically the UK City of Culture programme in Derry/Londonderry 2013 and Hull 2017. The UK Capital of Culture programme was established post-2008, according to government narratives, specifically to replicate Liverpool’s success (Burnham 2009). Cox and O’Brien found a highly contested use of the idea of a Liverpool Model, which was grounded in two, inflated, claims about 2008: economic impact and the idea of a ‘step change’ in the local area. These claims draw on the conflation of a Liverpool Model drawn from the academic research project associated with European Capital of Culture 2008 with the conception of a transferable approach to urban cultural policy designed to deliver multiple impacts.

The idea of a replicable, successful Liverpool Model seems to have embedded itself in the narratives attached to UK Capital of Culture host cities (and, it should be noted, also to international European Capital of Cultures such as Aarhus 2017 (2015)). Hull, when it was revealed as the host for the UK Capital of Culture of 2017, suggested that there would be a transformation in the city’s economy (notably in terms of employment) alongside a transformation in perceptions of the city. This, of course, replicates the headline outcomes of ‘success’ from Liverpool. It does not, however, engage with the substantive circumstances that gave rise to that good news. O’Brien (2013) identifies how Hull’s claims are all grounded in data from the social science evaluations of Liverpool 2008. This dislocates the narrative of success in Liverpool from its specific circumstances and assumes it can be transferred into a wholly different urban context, in the form of a more modest policy intervention. Moreover, as Cox and O’Brien state (2012:98), ‘this dislocation of narrative from evidence is all the more problematic because it appropriates the language and approach of evaluation and science, validating itself in the public policy sphere by doing so’. The remainder of this chapter offers some detail regarding this dislocation, assessing the role of academic research and the contemporary university in the creation of these urban economic cultural imaginaries (Campbell 2014).

## Elite Social Science, Expert Governance?

Cox and O’Brien (2012), O’Brien (2014), O’Brien and Miles (2010) and Campbell (2011b, 2014) have all argued for caution with regard to the transferability of lessons, or indeed models, from Liverpool to other urban settings. In Campbell’s work this caution is related primarily to the nature of creative industry activity in the city. For O’Brien and his co-authors, the issue is associated with the specific dynamics of Liverpool’s cultural, tourist, and thus economic, offer. This is notwithstanding the thorny issue of ‘proving’ the impact of any model to be copied (see Gray 2010 for a detailed discussion of this problem).

Here, we might tell a story of neoliberal policy activity associated with culture. This may lead to a marginalization of expert narratives, even in the attempt to foreground them. For example, the potential limitation of Prince’s focus on experts and expertise is how it marginalizes the specific experience of those producing the modernist social science necessary for the technical case that has underpinned the global raise of creative industries:

‘The case therefore shows how experts co-constitute with objects of government, producing the governmental assemblages that give those objects their objective existence. Given this distinction, it is argued that expertise can usefully be conceived as, first, a social relation based on one party having access to knowledge which gives them authority over another; second, as distributed across a governmental assemblage in a particular way, with some expert relations being positioned to have more influence, in other words more expert power, across the assemblage; and third, as a matter of strategic engagement on the part of experts located in particular epistemic communities seeking to gain expert power.’

 (Prince 2010:876)

In a situation where the production of objective knowledge is the goal of those producing the tools for policy to be able to make calculations, Prince (2014:754) argues that:

‘With regard to the calculative knowledge they produce, their relational work is around the production of objectivity. By presenting themselves, and so the calculative knowledge they produce, as objective, they effectively purify it of self-interest, and so give it power as a form of scientific authority.’

In much of the work on the intersection between academic practice and policy transfer (for example Mitchell 2002, Mirowski 2013 and Davies 2013) elite policy is seen to move through networks of right wing economists and think tanks. However, this plays down the perspective of the academics themselves. Here we see the utility of postfoundational approaches to understanding governance (Bevir 2013). As the analysis below indicates, the quest for expert power is actually fraught with insecurity as the social relations between institutions, of universities and municipal governments, between individual conceptions of academic identity, and between client and researcher, are all dilemmas which must be negotiated.

As noted above, the ‘Impacts08’ programme (archived at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/>) was a research project commissioned by Liverpool City Council (LCC), executed by academic staff at both Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Liverpool. The project aimed to evaluate the impacts of the 2008 European Capital of Culture, in fulfilment of LCC’s commission, whilst also contributing to the development of a model for evaluating the multiple impacts of culture-led regeneration on host cities more broadly. The aim was to go beyond the specifics of the European Capital of Culture and create an academic-led approach that would capture the impacts of a range of different urban cultural strategies, including the use of Olympic or Commonwealth Games, as well as cultural festivals and events. Alongside the initial funding, the programme was part of Liverpool’s cultural organisations’ funding bids, and attracted support from the EU, the UK’s Arts and Humanities and Economic and Social Research Councils, and Arts Council England.

The research programme is clearly not only enmeshed within the governance network of Liverpool, but also within the broader mechanisms for creating social scientific knowledge in the UK. Indeed, part of the purpose of the present discussion is to consider the situated nature of the programme and thus the potency associated with its findings when deployed by policy makers at national, regional and local levels.

The programme aimed to be holistic, self-reflective, longitudinal and collaborative, focused on providing academic insights into an area of policy usually dominated by consultant driven research (as the discussion of Prince’s work above demonstrates). This aim was addressed with seven core themes around management, physical environment, social capital, image and identity, cultural participation, cultural vibrancy and economic growth. These seven core themes are important as they show the distance between what sorts of knowledge ‘travel’ in policy and what themes are thus excluded. As the previous section indicated, in a focus on economic impact, coupled with narratives of city image, city branding and an (ill-defined) idea of ‘step-change’, certain elements of Impacts08’s research were easily translated into policy, for example the establishment of the UK Capital of Culture and its terms of evaluating success. The more cautious elements of research, stressing the local specificity of 2008’s impact, were more easily forgotten.

## The role of the university and the role of the academic

This translation was sustained by the power and position of the academic institutions housing the research. The joint venture between the universities was promised on the academic organisations owning the research – they jointly underwrote the costs, they employed the staff and they owned the intellectual property produced by Impacts08. When discussing the research with members of the team, it became clear that this was a central part of the way the research findings travelled into policy and underpinned the structures discussed above. One interviewee from the research team captured the sense of ‘credibility’ given by Impacts08 base at the University of Liverpool:

“…the integrity of the researchers…and also a university makes it, if you don’t know the programme and you see it’s from a university it’s, it gives it a bit more credibility.” (Interviewee 1)

The University was seen, by all of the interviewees as an ‘independent’ institution with its own values. Those values were, at times, in conflict with the LCC, but also gave rise to strategic dilemmas for the researchers themselves.

The conduct of the research within a university allowed the researchers to negotiate their position vis-à-vis LCC as a client:

“They would say ‘this is what we want’, we’d suggest a compromise with more imaginative solutions, and to be fair some of those imaginative solutions were taken on board, but they never took their eye off demonstrating the value of European Capital of Culture to Liverpool.” (Interviewee 1)

But, to reiterate, what was very clear in interviews was the importance to researchers of their position as *academics*, as distinct from policy officers or consultants:

“That was very clear from my point of view – you are appointing us, we are the experts, and it’s my job to convince you that what I’m proposing is the best option of all. You can tell me what your questions are, and I will tell you what are the techniques and the appropriate ways to address those questions.” (Interviewee 2)

Expertise positions the researchers as an important elite within the policy context of Liverpool and, most crucially, beyond. This can be very clearly illustrated from the original vision statement developed by Phil Redmond, a key figure in 2008’s governance and subsequently the chair of the panel awarding the UK Capital of Culture, and also of the ‘Institute of Cultural Capital’ established within the two universities which housed the Impacts08 programme to further research cultural activity. Redmond’s deployment, but crucial distortion, of Impacts08 findings helped make a simple case to establish the UK Capital of Culture:

The statistics surrounding the outputs and outcomes are included elsewhere and as impressive as they are the two key measures are the almost 8:1 return on public investment and the improved confidence of its people. The latter being any city’s most valuable raw material.

‘For every pound spent there appears to have been a measureable eight fold impact on the local economy. The confidence of the people has improved not just because it had a fantastic year long festival of world class cultural events, but because they realised that great things could be done in their city. That great things had been done in their city and that great things could be done again in their city. And they could do them.’

 (Redmond 2009)

This stress on economic return, however, was not mirrored in academic interviewees’ view of the impact of 2008 and the significant findings from the Impacts08 research. The academic researchers all stressed they were *‘not great believers in numbers’* and clustered their interests around three themes, of image change, change of perceptions of culture within Liverpool, and governance. Whilst the ‘confidence of the people’ can be derived from evidence around perceptions of culture and the governance arrangements in 2008, there is considerable distance between the stress on economic impact by Redmond and the researchers’ narratives of their findings.

The extraction of the economic impact figure, albeit in a cruder form than that discussed by the Impacts08 report (García *et al.* 2010), is part of why we are able to discuss a Liverpool Model for urban regeneration. The irony here is that the realities of this model may be more about the dislocation of academic research from its specific circumstances. For example, the 8:1 ratio mentioned above had a clear ‘social life’ (Campbell *et al* 2017, O’Brien 2014) , moving beyond its original setting to appear in a range of speeches and embed itself within public policy documents and practice. By contrast, the academic research team all expressed a relative disinterest in the economic impact figures, given how particular and contingent they felt these figures were, and stressed the wider importance of the complexities revealed by their research. As Stevens (2011) has noted, the pace and pre-existing imaginative structures of policy making make the penetration of complex and nuanced ideas into policy difficult. Indeed, policymakers often seeks clarity over costs, effects and, above all else certainty of impact that fits with the traditions in which they operate. For the academic researchers, the question of what a potential model might be was much more important than economic ratios or survey numbers.

Connolly (2013) speaks of two distinct models within the Liverpool experience, that of community involvement, and subsequently the superseding of this involvement by an elite, consumer driven, regeneration project. Within policy discussions of 2008, it is positioned as a model for a major cultural event and a model for urban policy (summarized by Cox and O’Brien 2012). However, for the academic team it was more about an analytical framework to understand the impact of cultural events, or a set of research practices. The latter two understandings come from the take-up of Impacts08’s research approach by other European Capital of Culture host cities, with the associated view of what research and evaluation is, or could be (Allam and Thompson 2010, García *et al.* 2013:15).

The conflation of several versions of ‘models’ can be seen in two comments from two researcher interviewees. For one, the Liverpool Model was a model of doing research in partnership, and actually moving beyond economic impact as a way of narrating cultural events:

“I wouldn’t say it’s a static model, its more a concept, a framework sounds very static, looking at the impacts over a time period, looking at not only the economic impact, which is the most popular one from the delivery agencies and to be able to justify their funding they receive, that’s the model that Liverpool has brought to the discussion with a broader set of themes. And also the model being that you don’t deliver the research on your own, you deliver it in partnership with a whole lot of stakeholders and that became very apparent.”

This view was replicated by another interviewee, but with emphasis on the idea of the model as a model of the *practice* of research and the idea of a new form of academic emerging beyond the consultant:

“I think there is a model of practice that is different from what most, every, consultants’ practice and most academic practice, I think there’s something about the, there’s a model of practice, it’s not rocket science but then nothing is rocket science once it’s been done….this model of practice is effectively new in the sector, unfortunately and hopefully it will be replicated and used as it worked quite well.”

This comment shows an ongoing attempt to draw boundaries between academia and consultancy, with the implied distance between academic and policy rationality. It also points towards important questions for the role and status of the academic. Policy entrepreneurs such as Phil Redmond were able to justify claims about economic impact and community transformation, hardening these claims into expectations for urban policy interventions, because of the academic status of the social scientific knowledge. The ‘dislocation’, as Cox and O’Brien (2012) call the social life of the Liverpool Model, raises important questions for the role of the university, the role of the academic and the responsibilities associated with social science as a collective enterprise, both in the UK and beyond. Where then, does this leave the academics producing this knowledge? As complicit in urban interventions that are, in the era after urban regeneration, doomed to irrelevance or, worse, damage?

This question, albeit not in the context of urban policy, has long motivated cultural policy research. More recently, both Schlesinger 2013 and Donovan and O’Brien 2015 have returned to this question, both in the context of the UK’s Research Excellence Framework, but also in the context of the scrutiny placed on academic cultural policy scholars as British approaches to creative industries and urban regeneration have been exported to very different jurisdictions. As Schlesinger (2013) notes, the contemporary cultural policy academic confronts an auditing regime in the UK, that expects engagement in public policy debates and practices as a precondition for the justification of the existence of both individual academics and the university itself. An alternative scenario, detailed by Schlesinger, is one of the academic who is led, as a result of their research, to contribute to public discussion. In essence the very practice of independent research should implicate the academic in commissions, reports, boards, policy fora or in media.

Our interviewees negotiated this process in a precarious way, stressing their academic status whilst, as previous quotes have shown, placing themselves in relation to a client funding the research. They drew on narratives of what, in their view, was an emergent form of academic identity, grounded in the ‘model’ of research practice articulated through Impacts08. This identity is situated against the backdrop of broader discussions of the new ‘portfolio’ research career experienced by those currently seeking to become academics (Enright 2014, O’Brien *et al.* 2014) and the institutional changes explored by Schlesinger’s (2013) consideration of the role of the cultural policy academic.

Questions of integrity and academic robustness were thus key issue for all interviewees:

“…so, obviously, there’ve been criticisms and there have been, you know, there are issues in terms of, well you know what is this and is this just a phoney programme or, you know, are you doing a piece of academic research or is this just advocacy for, for the council.”

…as the programme confronted them with crucial dilemmas (Bevir 2013) between academic integrity and their relationship to policy:

“We would argue, yes, you know, we stand completely by, you know, our integrity as academics, but obviously, yes, we are also working and it’s a piece of commission, so you will not compromise on the quality of the results, but would agree to deliver something that they want.”

## Conclusion: After Urban Regeneration

This chapter has sought to shed light on the case of the Liverpool Model to demonstrate the complexity of a broader trend. The leveraging of social science methods and evidence, generated by university departments and institutes, enables a compelling narrative of impact and outcomes to be generated. In so doing, this narrative can become concentrated into a relatively simple narrative of success and, crucially, transferrable success. This has been demonstrated in relation to the transfer of the ‘capital of culture’ title within the UK and beyond, and also with regards to creative industries policy internationally. This ‘objective’ evidence of success however can obscure the contingency of the processes under scrutiny. By bringing in the voice and experiences of the elites involved in these processes, however, we can add nuance to our accounts of these. The quotation closing the previous section suggests elite narratives struggling to reconcile the demands of policy with their role as academics within academic institutions. Moreover, as the discussion above has shown, the demand for ‘results’ was not just about capturing the facts about 2008. Rather, it was the basis for policy entrepreneurship that went hand in hand with prescriptions for urban policy interventions. The empirical data presented here has aimed to add nuance to the narratives of neoliberal urban transformations, by showing how elites who are crucial to the rolling out of specific urban interventions, in this case those using culture, face dilemmas in their relationship to the modernist social science crucial for contemporary urban governance. Certainly, cultural policy fixes for urban problems are complex assemblages, enrolling organisations, individuals and social scientific research. They are also contested by the very organisations and individuals that are seen to be responsible for them. Despite this contestation, however, at least in its proliferation it could be argued that the Liverpool Model has been in certain senses a success.

As a concluding point, it is important to reflect on the prospects for the application of this social science expertise to contemporary urban problems. Any analysis on the promise of cultural festivals delivering multiple impacts will be clear – it is impossible to directly replicate Liverpool’s experience of 2008’s European Capital of Culture in the era after urban regeneration (O’Brien and Matthews 2015). 2008’s success was as much dependent on major property investment which occurred prior to the 2007 financial crisis, on EU structural funds (amounting to over £1Billion) and on a cultural context that was ripe for exploitation given the slow response by Liverpool policy makers to the rise of the tourist led consumer economy (O’Brien 2014). As Cox and O’Brien (2012:98) note with regard to the Liverpool Model, if it ‘becomes a recognised truth for policy-makers and commentators – independently from any available evidence or genuine reflection – then, inevitably, policy which reflects its influence will struggle to take on board the actual nature of the experience.’

O’Brien and Matthews (2015) have recently demonstrated the era of urban regeneration, in the form of large scale, high investment, built environment is over, at least in the UK. In this context, given the politics of infrastructure spending are closely related to the real politic of political parties electoral narratives, whether as large-scale cultural investment directly by Treasury into specific, marginal, Northern areas in close proximity to safe Tory seats, or as legislating to bind governments to run budgetary surpluses, the model of cultural building, whether as library, museum, concert hall, or gallery, would seem to be over. Not only do we now need alternatives to interventions such as the Liverpool Model, interventions that reflect the changed policy context, we also need the appropriate institutional contexts and occupational identities to produce the modernist social science that can be the basis for these alternative governance arrangements.

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