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## The 'Liverpool model(s)': cultural planning, Liverpool and Capital of Culture 2008

Within the UK, the 'Liverpool model' is being celebrated as the new template for Capital of Culture festivals, and culture led urban regeneration in general. This paper will question this celebration and argue that there are, in fact, two 'Liverpool models': the first, outlined in its bid and developed within its initial planning strategy, represented the apogee of a New Labour informed 'cultural planning' framework for urban development; the second, developed post-2008 within the impact analysis Impacts08, is a more sober and realistic reflection of the role of culture in urban regeneration. This paper will demonstrate how this first model, while politically expedient and rhetorically seductive, was both theoretically unstable and practically unrealizable. Its subsequent abandonment represents an indictment of cultural planning as a nostrum for the complex structural, social and economic problems of the post-industrial city.

Keywords: cultural planning; Capital of Culture; Liverpool08; social instrumentalism; economic instrumentalism; New Labour cultural policy

### **Introduction**

Cultural planning, in its initial formulation, is an urban regeneration strategy conceived in terms of city rebranding through cultural industry development. As the 1990s progressed and the vogue of cultural planning increased, so too did its suggested economic and social outputs. These outputs were celebrated by a network of primarily British consultants closely involved with the formulation of cultural policy in the British New Labour government (Stevenson 2004) who spun engaging, politically seductive narratives, which seemed to offer a policy panacea for the problems of post-industrial cities. It was within this context that, in 2002, New Labour initiated a competition for a British city to host the European Capital of Culture 2008 (COC08) (DCMS 2000). Within its bid for this accolade and its subsequent policy development, Liverpool not only advocated, but extended the already overextended social and economic reach of a cultural planning strategy. However, as the second half of this paper will illustrate, a cultural planning strategy, as originally adopted and developed in Liverpool, was never realizable nor deliverable. This was acknowledged in the impact study commissioned by the Liverpool Culture Company and undertaken by the city's two leading universities – Impacts08: Liverpool had very high aspirations for its ECoC year and made ambitious promises at the bid stage, including a strong emphasis on economic and social regeneration goals. This led many to judge the city's ability to deliver EcOC and success in doing so, on the basis of measures that were far beyond what is realistic to expect from a programme of cultural events. (Garcia et al. 2010, p. 60)

This admission represents, at best, a retreat and at worst a complete repudiation of the cultural planning approach on which the Liverpool cultural planning model was conceived and developed: as the then leader of Liverpool Council Mike Storey explicitly asserted, '08 is not about culture but about regeneration' (interview with author). It serves neither policy making nor academia to breezily dismiss such a striking volte face as being the product of 'too high aspirations' which led others to judge Liverpool's successes on incorrect criteria: the cultural planning model established by Liverpool demanded to be judged on such criteria – though, as Stevenson (2004) presciently highlighted, and as Liverpool discovered in its turbulent preparation for 2008, a cultural planning approach would, inevitably, be seen as a failure if judged on its own inflated terms. While this paper will not engage in detail with the revised model offered by Impacts08, it is imperative that there is clarity as to what the much touted original Liverpool model actually is and what motivated the retrospective distancing within the subsequent impact assessment.

The empirical work within this paper is drawn from an Economic and Social Research Council sponsored qualitative study into New Labour cultural policy, the bidding for COC08 and the genesis and evolution of the Liverpool bid and strategy. The initial phase of analysis involved archival research in relation to Glasgow's European City of Culture year in 1990, which was conducted in the city's Mitchell library: this research traced the evolution of Glasgow's cultural regeneration strategy through newspaper clippings, council minutes, promotional literature and Glasgow's 1990 bid documentation. The next set of documents analysed were the New Labour cultural policy documents *Create the Future: A Strategy for Cultural Policy, Arts and the Creative Economy* (Labour Party 1997); *Creative Britain* (Smith 1998); *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (DCMS 1998); *A New Cultural Framework* (DCMS 1999a); *Cultural Policy Mapping Document* DCMS (1999b); *A New Approach to Investment in Culture* (DCMS 1999c); *Policy Action Team 10* (DCMS 1999d) and *Government and the Value of Culture* (Jowell 2004). From this, the study moved to analysing documentation produced by the European and British government in relation to COC08 itself: these were European directive (EU decision 1419/1999) which initiated the European Capital of Culture Scheme and the document produced by the British government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) setting out the criteria for those cities bidding for the 2008 award which, under EU decision 1419/1999, had been granted to a British city (DCMS 2000). Following this, the bids forwarded by each of the competing cities were analysed: this analysis began with the initial 12 bid documents – Belfast (Belfast City Council 2002); Birmingham (Birmingham City Council 2002); Bradford (Bradford City Council 2002); Brighton (Brighton and Hove Council 2002); Bristol (Bristol City Council 2002); Canterbury (Canterbury and Kent Council 2002); Cardiff (Cardiff City Council 2002); Inverness (Inverness and Highland Council 2002);

Liverpool (Liverpool City Council 2002); Newcastle/Gateshead (Newcastle and Gateshead Councils 2002); Oxford (Oxford Council 2002) and Norwich (Norwich City Council 2002) – plus supplementary feedback from DCMS (obtained through a freedom of information request). The final layer of documentary analysis related to Liverpool's winning bid and subsequent policy formulation and evaluation in relation to COC08: the socio-economic assessment study by ERM Economics (Sadiq et al. 2003) which accompanied Liverpool's revised bid; Building the Case for Creative Communities (DTZ Consulting for the Liverpool Culture Company 2005); The Art of Inclusion (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a) 08 What's it All About? (Liverpool Culture Company 2005b) and Creating an Impact: Liverpool's Experience as European Capital of Culture (Garcia et al. 2010). The analysis of these documents was informed by theories of intertextuality and dialogical networks (Bakhtin 1986 cited in Allen 2000) where, drawing on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995), the discourse within the documents was related to wider ideological positions.

The documentary analysis was supplemented by 40 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the bidding process and within Liverpool prior to, during and after its Capital of Culture year. These interviews included a creative director within the city of Cork which hosted Capital of Culture in 2005; a theatre director in Belfast, one of the cities which failed to make the initial DCMS shortlist; representatives from each of the final bidding cities and authors of several of the failed bids; the head of Liverpool Council Mike Storey; four councillors within Liverpool with remits for culture and/or regeneration (two Liberal Democrats, two Labour); two leading cultural commentators within Liverpool; representatives from the North West Development Agency, Downtown Liverpool in Business, Arts and Business Northwest, the Mersey Partnership; a senior researcher in Liverpool City Council; head of public relations in the Liverpool Culture Company; head of the Creative Communities project within Liverpool Culture Company; director of Merseyside ACME; two leading cultural commentators within the city (follow-up interviews were conducted during and after COC08); five community arts practitioners (again follow-up interviews were conducted with two of these interviewees following COC08); a leading theatre director in the city and two political activists within the city.

### **New Labour, cultural planning and creativity**

As Stevenson (2004) illustrates, cultural planning, rather than being a coherent, cohesive and clearly articulated policy strategy is, in fact, a loose policy template readily and enthusiastically endorsed at a local level by urban planners throughout the western world. Within the UK, this approach, fostered by the ruling New Labour party, matched its much heralded 'Third Way' politics, in that it seemed to

offer 'post-ideology', politically appealing rapprochements between antithetical concepts: art/culture; social justice/economic development and city centre boosterism/community development. Rather than representing a rapprochement between first of these dualisms – art and culture or culture as product and culture as process – the approach advocated within both New Labour cultural policy and urban cultural planning strategies, created a theoretical fault line which would destabilize Liverpool's plans for COC08. Exploring the theoretical tension between definitions of art and culture is essential to understanding the essential instability within a cultural planning approach: Stevenson et al. (2010, p. 250) illustrate the obvious fact that it is 'within the construct of culture that the parameters of cultural policy are forged'. However, within the approach developed under New Labour, and expanded by Liverpool08, this definitional issue was never resolved, resulting in an approach to culture that was without parameters, whereby cultural policy became both a surrogate social and economic policy.

Reconciling what Eagleton (2000, p. 32) describes as 'disablingly wide or discomfortingly rigid notions of culture' has engaged academics from Eagleton to Bourdieu (1986) and, of course, Raymond Williams, who once somewhat ruefully remarked that he wished 'he had never heard of that damned word culture' (Williams 1979, p. 154). Rather than engaging with these debates, a cultural planning strategy endorsed the rhetorical collapsing of the 'rigid' art into the 'disablingly wide' culture, resulting in a democratic, though freewheeling definition of culture: as Rowe (1995, cited in Stevenson et al. 2010) argues, the vast assemblage of symbols, practices and institutions which fall under the rubric of culture render its actual operationalization impossible. In addition, while rhetorically endorsing such a collapse, this approach often draws upon the philosophical assumptions which underpinned an understanding of culture as 'Art', resulting in conceptual antinomies, strategic confusion and operational discord.

New Labour's justification for cultural policy was based upon a combination of both economic instrumentalism – expressed through a discourse of 'creative industry' – and a form of social instrumentalism drawn from policy initiatives formulated around social exclusion (see DCMS 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d) (the differences between social justice and social inclusion are key to New Labour's approach to cultural planning and will be illustrated below in relation to Liverpool's social instrumentalism within its COC08 plans). Despite being a particularly New Labour policy approach, cultural planning has its roots in Old Labour, and an approach to cultural policy formulated within the former GLC (for an account, see McGuigan 1996, Stevenson 2004) and developed by the highly influential Comedia research group (Mulgan and Worpole 1986) from which a cultural industry, and finally 'creative industry' strategy adopted by New Labour emerged (for a detailed consideration

of the impact of this work in the development of cultural planning, see Stevenson et al. 2010).

The move to 'creativity' and 'creative industry' within cultural policy discourse, far from being an inconsequential semantic adjustment, instead signalled a fundamental realignment in how cultural policy is theorized: however, as Hesmondhalgh (2007) and Garnham (2005) illustrate, while being virtually hegemonic within policy, what is actually being referenced is problematic. As Garnham (2005) demonstrates, what the definition forwarded by the DCMS (1998) does, is cleave cultural industry to the 'new economy', thus giving culture its long sought after economic justification: Chris Smith, New Labour's first Culture Secretary, defended this on pragmatic grounds, arguing that 'if it helped to get more funds into the arts, the argument was worth deploying' (Smith 2003, p. 2).

New economy thesis and ICT revolution theory (Bell 1973) originally informed New Labour thinking through the New Times project (Hall and Jacques 1990). These authors were writing within the left tradition and were highly influenced by Gramscian hegemony theory, seeing the successes of Thatcherism not in terms of classical Marxist analysis around struggle or exploitation but, instead, as a hegemonic project which managed to construct a sense of unity out of social and economic difference which they related to the economic structures of the period (Hall and Jacques 1990, p. 11). Fundamental to this thinking was that there was now a new phase of economic development due to the impact of IT on industrial organization and consumer lifestyle (Hall and Jacques 1990, p. 25). Within the cultural sector, ICT revolution theory challenges the basic assumptions over the political economy of the production of cultural goods. Central to the New Times thesis are theories of post-industrialism (Bell 1973) and human capital theory with Schumpeterian ideas where technological innovations in ICT are seen as the driving force of capitalist growth. However, as Garnham (2005) highlights, the roots of such innovation are in science and not the artistic sector, which he argues has appropriated creativity to provide an economic justification for its interests. It is through the appropriation of high-tech industry within the discourse of creativity that culture became central – indeed as Mirza (2006) argues a mantra – to the country's economic development and instrumentalist justifications within the artistic sector. While there have been attempts to limit the definitional reach of 'creative industry' to those sectors which produce cultural artefacts (Hesmondhalgh's [2007] production and circulation of symbolic texts for example), the latitude of definition employed by the DCMS has been criticized (see, e.g. Garnham 2005, Pratt 2005). While this redefinition may have realized Smith's goal of moving culture from the periphery to the centre of economic policy both in the UK and beyond (see Wang 2004, O'Connor and Gu 2006), it also created fundamental definitional problems:

as O'Connor (2010, p. 53) argues 'the price paid for the rebranding of the creative industries was a lack of clarity as to their specificity and distinctiveness'. Although academics sought to place boundaries around this 'new industrial sector' (Throsby 2001, 2007, Hesmondhalgh 2007), the latitude of definition offered by the DCMS – this was actually extended within Liverpool's COC08 policy formulation – resulted in creativity being used for marketing and rhetorical purposes, rather than as the basis for a coherent economic strategy.

Within New Labour policy, culture and creativity not only drive economic but social policy as well (see, e.g. DCMS 1999d). Again deriving from an appropriation of New Times theory, New Labour's social policy focus moved from the structural to the 'cultural' as a key locus for policy analysis and (non) intervention. Within this framework, social policy changed from being concerned with social justice, based on a structuralist analysis and a commitment to redistribution of resources, to social inclusion/exclusion, where 'exclusion' can be seen as a result of 'cultural' deficit rather than structural inequality (it must be noted that this social instrumentalism has an economic inflection since within a social exclusion discourse – which displays an almost Orwellian linguistic contortion – the ultimate evidence of inclusion and engagement is 'engagement with the economy'). The impediments to such 'engagement' with the labour market are often seen as insufficient social capital, articulated as a cultural (personal and social) deficit, which in her influential essay *Government and the Value of Culture* (Jowell 2004), Tessa Jowell describes as 'poverty of aspiration'. Within New Labour cultural policy discourse generally, and in urban cultural planning strategy specifically, culture is seen to be the key to rebuilding social capital and thus regenerating 'excluded' communities; however, when mobilized within cultural policy, the normative assumptions within aesthetic theory derived from Platonic conceptions of catharsis are invoked, whereby 'cultural deficit' can be addressed by access to Art.

Fundamental to New Labour's social justification for cultural funding was Matarasso's (1997) then groundbreaking work *Use or Ornament: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. This work was based on research conducted between 1995 and 1997 for the Comedia research group, while Matarasso chaired the influential Policy Action Team 10 committee (DCMS 1999d) which linked cultural policy to the government's social exclusion agenda. Despite its methodological weaknesses (Merli 2002, McGuigan 2011) this work was readily and enthusiastically endorsed by government and evidence of 'the political use of research, however flawed, to justify an ideological distortion that deflects attention away from the main thrust of public policy' (McGuigan 2011, p. 85). It must be acknowledged, however, that Matarasso (1997, p. 85) himself was more than aware of the limitations of culture, and in a forthright and at times self-deprecatory section

within this report, satirizes arguments which seek to use the Arts as a surrogate for social policy, by asserting that Britain's social problems will not be solved by making large objects out of papier mache. However, when the arguments forwarded within *Use or Ornament* are fused with discourses of social exclusion, New Labour's cultural policy does indeed become a surrogate social policy.

### **Creative cities**

The focus on creativity within New Labour policy generally was matched by theories around creativity in the urban sphere specifically. Central to this in a British context was the work of Landry (2000) and his seminal *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. According to Landry, urban innovation and regeneration can be achieved through the culture of a city – meaning its artistic infrastructure – which can attract tourists and inward investment (this is an established position within a neo-liberal urban entrepreneurial approach, although the argument that companies and individuals make locational choices on the basis of culture is disputed [see e.g. Nathan 2005]). Drawing on an 'anthropological' definition, Landry then cites culture's supposed social benefits: it fosters social capital; strengthens social cohesion; increases personal confidence; improves life skills; improves mental and physical well-being; strengthens people's ability to act as democratic citizens and finally develops employment and training routes. Within such an approach, culture and creativity are without doubt a panacea for contemporary urban problems. As will be illustrated later in relation to Liverpool 08, when one goes beyond the beguiling rhetoric and asks for practical solutions, the lure of creative cities becomes somewhat less seductive.

Landry's thesis resonates with and has been married to work emanating from the USA by academics Florida (2002, 2005a, 2005b): in a speech the then creative industry minister Purnell (2005 p. 1), ties New Labour's ideas on creativity to Florida's thinking and suggests that it has real implications for policy in that 'cities can regenerate themselves through creativity'; while DEMOS (Florida and Tinagli 2004) created a British version of his creativity index. Florida's thesis was readily received within Britain – certainly at the local level. The cultural regeneration discourse which emanates from this amongst British urban planning authorities, development coalitions and urban marketing agencies, is that diverse, tolerant or 'cool' cities tend to perform better economically. This is a further development from the work of Landry in that it extends the established, though contentious, argument that the cultural infrastructure of a city can attract investment and people, to argue that a 'cool' city cannot only attract but actually foster the creative bohems whose 'blue sky thinking' will regenerate the city. A close reading of Florida's work reveals that



his specious arguments are, as McGuigan (2009, p. 292) suggests, 'seriously flawed or merely trite'. There is a wealth of criticism of the work of Florida and of those 'Doing a Florida thing' (McGuigan 2009) from various academic disciplines on methodological as well as theoretical grounds: see amongst others McGuigan (2009) in relation to the facile utilization of Florida's work in urban cultural policy; Nathan (2005) in relation to worker migration; Markusen (2005) with regards to Florida's sampling and delineation of cities as 'creative'; Champion and Fisher (2004) question the differential outcomes in attracting a 'creative class' to a city and Peck (2005, p. 766) offers an acerbic and witty critique, concluding that 'the tonic of urban creativity is a remixed version of this cocktail: just pop the same basic ingredients into your new urbanist blender, add a slug of Schumpeter lite for new-economy fizz and finish off with a pink twist'.

A cultural planning approach is thus claimed to offer a solution to urban economic and social problems. Within this approach, culture and creativity are seen as having a multitude of economic benefits: market a city; attract creative people (in some versions foster creativity), and thus revive local economies. In addition culture and creativity can have the following social benefits: tackle social exclusion; nurture community; develop creative skills and tackle unemployment. To draw these arguments together, a cultural planning strategy proceeds by arguing that creativity is fostered, which develops creative industries, which in turn creates a vibrant economy, culture based, which helps rebrand the city; this is achieved by the development of the creative capital of the population who, through newly acquired creative skills, become socially included – primarily through engagement with the economy. Thus though social inclusion is achieved through economic development, this development is realized through fostering creative industries and the cultural capital of communities – this is usually articulated through the intrinsic assumptions of an 'Arts' discourse, but discursively invokes an 'anthropological' definition of culture; in either sense it is pivoted on an understanding of culture as a force to civilize the 'socially marginal' (Stevenson 2004).

### **The Capital of Culture scheme and Glasgow 1990**

The European Capital of Culture is a scheme in which a European city is awarded the accolade of Capital (formerly City) of Culture, initiated to celebrate shared European cultural traditions and promote European integration. The award is made on a rotational basis with each member state nominating a city to represent them during their allocated year. Within this rotational system, the UK was first allocated the award in 1990 (Glasgow) and, most recently, in 2008 (Liverpool).

The initial interpretation of the award by the host cities – Athens (1985) Paris (1989) – was consistent with the formulation articulated by its originator, the then

Greek foreign minister Merlina Mercuri, who saw it as a celebration of the European cultural tradition aimed at fostering cultural and social harmony amongst EC countries (Garcia 2002, Palmer Rae Associates 2004). However, the 1990 award marked a shift in emphasis away from the original model, rooted in a liberal humanist approach to culture, to one where culture was seen as a tool for urban marketing and economic regeneration (Garcia 2005, McGuigan 2005). Unlike the previous holders, but in line with the urban entrepreneurial drive associated with the then ruling Conservative Party, the UK government initiated an inter-urban competition for the 1990 accolade, which was won by the city of Glasgow. Although the approach taken by Glasgow to the European City of Culture has been lauded as the template for successful urban cultural regeneration (Bianchini 1990, Bianchini and Parkinson 1993, Gomez 1998, DCMS 2000), its strategy was not the result of some visionary policy making, but a series of marketing exercises born out of the perceived need to reposition the city in the service economy due to the collapse of its traditional industrial base.

Debates over the successes of Glasgow 1990 still reverberate. Cultural commentators celebrate its successes in raising the cultural profile of the city (e.g. Sayer 1992, Bianchini and Parkinson 1993); urban marketers laud it as a template for image change (see Gomez 1998); the economic successes of Glasgow's year was highlighted in the key report into its year (Myerscough 1991) and the city now has a very successful tourist and service based economy – 83% of its workforce are working in the service sector (Mooney 2004). In opposition to this are commentators who question the Glasgow 1990 success narrative: there were astringent critiques emerging from 'dissident' voices of the left before, during and after the year (Kelman 1992, McLay 1998); academics who question the silencing of working class voices (Boyle 1997, Mooney 2004) and, to a lesser extent, those who question the 'top down' approach of the city which resulted in a perception that international cultural events were being prioritized over the indigenous culture of the city (see Garcia 2002). The espoused economic successes of Glasgow stand in stark contrast to contemporary health and poverty statistics which suggest that the approach adopted by the city has resulted in social and economic polarization: Glaswegians have the shortest life expectancy in the UK at 72.9 years (Shaw et al. 2005), with the life expectancy of men living in Glasgow's poorest constituency, Shettleston, being 63 years, 10 years less than the Scottish average and 14 years less than that for the UK (NHS Scotland 2004). Poverty afflicts many in areas of Glasgow: half of the city's electoral wards are in the poorest 10% for Scotland as a whole; around 55% of the entire population live in areas classified as deprived and Glasgow accounts for 16 of the 20 most deprived areas in Scotland. What is apparent then, is that Glasgow has been cited, critiqued and lauded without any sound or robust methodological evaluation of the outcomes of its year (Garcia 2004, p. 105). Both

Garcia (2004) and Mooney (2004) are correct in asserting that the type of quantitative analysis offered by Myerscough's seminal study ignore the deep social and economic impacts – positive and negative – that both supporters and detractors of Glasgow 1990 claim that its City of Culture year has had. Although not conceived within a cultural planning framework, Glasgow has been cited by those promoting this approach and Gibson and Stevenson (2004, p. 2) correctly assert that despite the mythological status of Glasgow as 'proof' that cultural planning can cure all ills, there has to date been no research to investigate the cultural, economic, political and social effects of Glasgow's reconstruction of itself as 'a creative city'.

The Glasgow success narrative was celebrated by the then culture secretary Chris Smith within the document issued by Department of Culture, Media and Sport which initiated the bidding process for the 2008 award (DCMS 2000). This paper framed the competing cities' approaches to 2008 and illustrated the antinomies at the heart of New Labour cultural policy which would find expression in Liverpool's original cultural planning model. Fundamental to this – as discussed above and outlined by Stevenson (2004) – was the unresolved tension over the actual definition of culture itself; in fact, defining culture became the first question to which competing cities were asked to respond. This question resulted in the bidding cities attempting to 'out anthropologize' one another to counter potential accusations of elitism and project an egalitarian ethos and commitment to social inclusion: at an exchange at an Urban Renaissance Conference in Manchester in April 2003, the leader of one of the bidding teams claimed that 'Culture is everything that takes place in our city on the weekend except throwing up on the pavement', only to be outflanked by a rival who countered that 'Culture is everything that takes place in our city including throwing up on the pavement';<sup>1</sup> while a member of the Oxford's bidding team fulminated against the BBC for using Magdalen Bridge when profiling the city's bid as it projected the kind of elitist image they were trying to avoid (interview with author). As is discussed in detail below in relation to Liverpool's aborted cultural planning strategy, such an expansion results in a homology between the cultural and the social and, consequently, cultural policy becomes both economic policy and a surrogate social policy.

### **Liverpool, cultural planning and the 'people's bid'**

The avowedly economic and social instrumentalist orientations of the winning bid submitted by the city of Liverpool can be seen as an apogee in urban cultural planning: it both endorsed an entrepreneurial strategy around infrastructural development, rebranding and marketing the city (or doing a 'Glasgow'), while simultaneously denying an entrepreneurial approach through the promotion of a discourse of local ownership and 'community based regeneration':

Regenerating the industrial landscape is top of the agenda. Culture, with its potential to drive both tourism and inward investment, as well as deal with the enormous challenges of regenerating communities, is a key tool in dealing with this. (Liverpool City Council 2002)

This bid was written by the Liverpool Culture Company which was established by Liverpool City Council in 2000. The choice of the name 'Culture Company' (also chosen by Derry for its 2013 celebrations as British City of Culture) was deliberately intended to link the city's bid to economic regeneration: head of the council, Mike Storey, claimed it was chosen to show that 'Liverpool's Capital of Culture would be about regeneration' (interview with author); the head of public relations within the organization claimed that the name was chosen to 'show that we meant business' (this could be read both metaphorically and literally) (interview with author), while a Liberal Democrat councillor putting forward the same economically instrumentalist argument claimed that 'we didn't want to seem like just an arty organisation' (interview with author). However, the commitment to economic and social regeneration within Liverpool's approach proved to be both a blessing and a curse: a blessing in that it contributed to its winning the award; a curse in that the tensions and incompatibilities within such an approach inevitably destabilized Liverpool's plans for COC08.

As with all other cities competing for the COC08 accolade, Liverpool adopted the widest view of culture possible and, according to the bid, 'was better for it'. These moves to the broadest definitions of culture facilitated a discourse of local ownership; to the extent that Liverpool's winning bid was successfully marketed as 'the people's bid'. The potential tension between top-down marketing and branding – or 'shaping of place' as a rival bid leader described his job – and maintaining local support (which destabilized Glasgow's year) was tackled in the foreword to the Liverpool bid where it was argued that rather than being the result of a top-down public relations exercise, the Liverpool bid was part of a bottom-up, organic process: building on Jung's famous description of our city as 'the pool of life', we have identified 10 major features of that life which underpin our claim now to be 'The World in One City'. That claim is not an abstract construct of a PR agency but the genuine expression of our people. (Liverpool City Council 2002)

It goes without saying that 'The World in One City' was a public relations company construct, developed by John Egan of the October Communication Agency in the city. The justification for promoting the notion that the bid was owned by the people was the consultation process undertaken by the Culture Company (Liverpool City Council 2002). Central to establishing this broad definition was the city's 'Bottle your Culture' scheme, where Liverpoolians – generally schoolchildren

– were encouraged to express what they viewed as the culture of their city by filling a bottle with personal artefacts. What emerged from this project was, according to the bid, a broad view of culture that encompassed the Art of the centre and the culture of the periphery, expressed throughout the bid in terms such as ‘highbrow or pop’; ‘theatre or football’; ‘the Royal Philharmonic to Kirsty Jones from Speke’ or ‘Tate Liverpool to Amy Leatherbarrow of Norris Green’ (Speke and Norris Green being the most socio-economically deprived areas of the city).

This art/culture, city/periphery pairing was reflected in the institutional structure of the Culture Company itself, with the ‘culture’ half being served by the Creative Communities programme which was initially conceived in terms of delivering a social instrumentalist agenda. The social and economic instrumentalist orientations within Liverpool’s bid made the traditional ‘arm’s length’ principle between politicians and arts organizations anachronistic. Consequently, the Culture Company was originally formulated as an adjunct of the council, rather than an ‘arms length’ cultural body: the company was limited by public guarantee – the guarantee being made by the council – a structure usually used for a non-profit making organization with no share capital, while most of its employees were seconded from the council. In addition the political, social and economic aspirations resulted in a bloated board which reached 21 members with various and often conflicting expectations. With such exposure to the vicissitudes and machinations of local politics, it was of no surprise that the Culture Company would later become embroiled in local political controversies which would further serve to destabilize its plans for 2008.

### **The Liverpool bid creativity and economic development**

Fundamental to both the city’s initial bid and subsequent social and economic policy development was the notion of creativity. Creativity as the central plank of Liverpool’s economic regeneration was outlined in the economic impact study contained within the bid, conducted by ERM Economics (Sadiq et al. 2003). Liverpool’s bid vigorously promoted the idea of Liverpool as a ‘creative’ hub by following New Labour’s approach of joining cultural industry to the new high-tech industry: thus forming a new industrial sector, creative industry. The importance of role of creativity in convincing the judging panel of Liverpool’s regeneration potential was highlighted by the chairman of the judging panel, Magnus Linklater, who claimed that Liverpool would follow the successes of other post-industrial cities who have had to reinvent themselves as factories and plants closed down. They have done so by switching the emphasis from commerce to culture to transform their image and encourage the creativity that they see as the key to the next stage of their development.’

(Linklater 2003)

Due to the need to represent Liverpool as a creative hub, this report then utilized a broad definition of culture to create a new industrial sector which included the service sector within its projections. This then formed the basis of the ebullient economic projections which accompanied Liverpool's winning of the COC08 accolade. It was reported locally and nationally that the Capital of Culture accolade would lead to 14–16,000 creative industry jobs within the city: the broadsheet Guardian newspaper proclaimed that it 'sealed a renaissance for a city once seen as a 'basket case' (Carter and Hetherington 2003), and in a later article, compared the city to Barcelona claiming 17,000 new jobs would be created (Carter 2004). A detailed deconstruction of the recategorization of industrial sectors under cultural and creative industry will illustrate how the discourse of creativity owes as much to a marketing as to a coherent industrial strategy.

The report claims that it takes a 'broad' view of the cultural industries. This 'broad' view encompasses the 'creative industries' – which the previous section has demonstrated, were the original cultural industries conjoined to high-tech industry – combined with 'tourism, sports and heritage' (p. 19) (where within a DCMS definition, creative industry is cultural industry plus ICT, the ERM definition of 'broad cultural industry' is creative industry plus tourism, sports and heritage – see Figures 1 and 2). This is not a matter of semantics: it has huge implications, since one of the main generators of employment within Liverpool's economy, tourism, is now cast within the 'creative' sector. This leads the report to claim that 'the broad cultural industries accounting for 14% of the total workforce in 2001' (Sadiq et al. 2003, p. 21)

Thus using this broad definition of culture, the ERM report argues that the projected economic returns for the cultural sector, based on 'detailed analysis of the Liverpool bid and employment trends', would be '13,200 new jobs by 2012 as a result of trend growth, new cultural investments and a successful Capital of Culture bid' (Sadiq et al. 2003, p. 2). This much cited 13,200 figure in fact reflects economic growth that was incidental to COC08, and even given the latitude of

## **Categories of Employment**

### **Numbers of Jobs**

Series1

Figure 1. Employment breakdown in Liverpool using ERM's definition of 'Broad Cultural Industries'. This diagram would seem to indicate that Liverpool is a 'creative city'.

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definition of the 'cultural sector', the actual number of jobs created directly by

COC08 was estimated as 1380. Using this number and taking ERM's dataset of the sector's breakdown (obviously more jobs will be created in certain areas – in all likelihood primarily related to tourism – than others and these projections are merely illustrative), the projected jobs created directly by COC08 might be tourism 579; sport 231; and media 48. Within the boosterist discourse that exists in relation to such bids, headlines such as '600 service sector jobs' as opposed to '14,000 cultural industries jobs' is less likely to catch a subeditor or, more importantly, a government appointed judge's eye. These projected economic returns from the Capital of Culture, however, were rarely questioned and Impacts08 fails to present any detailed breakdown of the numbers or types of jobs created by Liverpool's hosting of COC08.

### **Liverpool creativity and social development**

While the economic instrumentalism and creativity discourse within Liverpool's bid and initial strategy was questionable, it is within the initial social objectives of Liverpool's approach that a New Labour inspired cultural planning strategy's unresolved tensions become most obvious: this admixture of broad definitions of culture, local ownership, local engagement, holistic community regeneration and, perhaps most importantly, creativity, are drawn upon to provide the socially regenerative arguments upon which Liverpool08's 'holistic regeneration' strategy is built. The analysis of Liverpool's social instrumentalism will demonstrate the way in which this turn to the cultural and creative as part of a social inclusion discourse, marks a profound ideological shift in that it disallows an engagement with the structural – which underpins a social justice approach – and endorses an essentially neo-liberal conception of exclusion that focuses on the cultural as the key locus of social marginalization. The section will also demonstrate how the rhetorical adoption of the anthropological definition of culture, and the equally nebulous concept of creativity, expands the reach of cultural policy, thus allowing for virtually all policy areas to fall under its purview.

The confluence of these disparate ideas is most evident in *The Art of Inclusion* document (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a), in which the Culture Company outlines its social regeneration strategies. The influence of the Landry position can be seen by the assertion that Liverpool is moving from an old style to a new style of urban governance based around 'creativity':

'Liverpool is releasing its latent energies, moving completely away from old style governance to a new model where creativity is at the core of innovative regeneration. Ours is a creative agenda. A liberating agenda, empowering the people of the city and helping to unleash their creative potential.' (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. 5)

Thus, within Liverpool's creative agenda, there is not only a denial of the structural but also the physical where any link to the material is lost in the heady ether of 'creativity'. Drawing directly from both the work of Matarasso (1997) and its appropriation within the PAT10 report (DCMS 1999d), *The Art of Inclusion* argues that 'creative activity' can have the following social benefits:

- \_ Creative activity strengthens and empowers communities;
  - \_ Creative activity encourages integration and promotes diversity;
  - \_ Creative activity effectively engages local people in the regeneration process;
- and

\_ Creative activity is vital in raising awareness of issues (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. 12).

As in PAT10, these justifications for culture are mapped to theories of neighbourhood renewal emanating from the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, in particular the document 'Smarter Delivery, Better Neighbourhoods' (ODPM 2005). The Culture Company argue that the social regenerative approach adopted within its programme fit with the objectives within this framework, in that cultural delivery can act as a third space between local populations and government (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. v). The social instrumentalist strategy within this document involves a melding of artistic and social capital/social exclusion/inclusion discourses whose reformatory agenda has clear resonance with an Arnoldian approach to culture's role in reforming the masses. However, within this version of social exclusion (and very much evidence of Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) 'new planetary vulgate'), there is an avoidance of engaging with the structural, most of all those 'bogey' concepts employment/unemployment. Consequently, policy moves away from social justice concerns with the structural causes of 'disengagement', to a New Labour interpretation of social capital theory where 'disengagement' or 'non-involvement' are rooted in social, cultural and personal deficit. Within this social inclusion approach, the ultimate expression of engagement is 'engagement with the economy'. Consequently, those who are 'least engaged' and thus those who the programme identifies as a priority group are:

- \_ Local concentrations of Incapacity Benefit recipients;
- \_ Local concentration of Income Support recipients; and
- \_ NEET's-16–24 year olds not in education, employment or training (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. vi).

The Culture Company documents offer two approaches to culturally 'engaging' with the 'disengaged' (leaving aside the fact that one might be on income support, captain the local football team on a Saturday and play the clarinet of a Wednesday evening). Within this approach the opportunity for 'connection' is there if only the excluded were willing to take it. Within this, cultural policy becomes reformatory and draws upon the normative assumptions contained within cathartic conceptions



of art, where participation in 'creative activity' – really artistic activity – is superior to other forms of participation (despite the fact that 'creative activity' is broadly defined and that sport is one of its key elements). Consequently, art is fetishized as a superior form of engagement:

'The use of creative arts and artists within the community has shown to get people involved – more so than more traditional forms of engagement.' (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. 15)

Within this paradigm the structural/social/individual linkages that underpin a social justice approach to poverty are inverted, so that the onus is no longer placed on the structural but on the individual instead: a change of 'culture' leads to higher aspirations, leads to better neighbourhoods, leads to employment, leads to prosperity. Poverty is thus a 'result' and 'symptom' rather than a cause of low peer cultures: In so-called 'problem areas', the cycle of decline is centred on negative peer cultures, limited interaction between residents and low aspirations. Poor housing and environment, unstable communities, anti social behaviour, low employability and a host of other issues are both the result and the symptom. (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. 11) The unrealizable claims for the role of 'creativity' within urban regeneration then follow in a series of overlapping causal linkages which are a classic cultural planning construction:

'The Creative Communities Programme provides the impetus that brings participation by people in creative activities. This leads to an inclusive, dynamic community and to regeneration and a sustainable cultural infrastructure. In turn, a new urban experience and celebration of diversity make the city whole and strong.' (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. 12)

Two of the sections within the Creative Communities project are 'Creative Health' and 'Creative Learning'. The theoretical justifications for the inclusion of health and learning within this cultural planning paradigm are drawn from arguments put forward by the Arts Council SE (January 2005 cited in Liverpool Culture Company 2005a), and drawing on Matarrasso's (1997) work, though ignoring his warning in relation solving social problems through papier mache. The complex relationship between social position and health and educational achievement is lost within the facile assertion that access to the arts raises educational levels and improves health. Indeed, there is a complete inversion of the social justice paradigm with the suggestion that lower educational levels and poverty are actually caused by 'less access to the arts' and that lower self-perceived levels of health are a result of 'cultural inactivity' (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, p. 36) – a crudely determinant superstructure could now be seen to dictate unidirectionally to a reflective base.

The absence of theoretical robustness and the rhetorical nature of the move to creativity can be highlighted not only by the lack of empirical examples but also by

reference to a study of the findings of the stakeholder workshop established to discuss the Creative Community project published within the Building the Case for Creative Communities document. Workshop delegates were invited to undertake a 'Creative Blitz' and split into four groups which reflected the partner organizations within the Creative Communities programme. Each of these groups was asked to develop two creative project ideas: the results highlight the rhetorical nature of rallying to this ubiquitous, yet virtually deracinated concept of creativity. In their responses the participants resort to meaningless rhetoric around dealing with profound social problems 'in a creative way' or 'with a creative twist' that has clear resonances with the rhetoric discussed in relation to both Charles Landry and Richard Florida (Liverpool Culture Company 2005a, Appendix A).

### **Local governance and controversies leading up to COC08**

The first controversy to engulf the city in its initial preparation for COC08 was the cancellation of the landmark cultural building within its bid, entitled The Cloud but known locally as 'The Fourth Grace'. This building was designed by the avantgarde architect Will Alsop and was conceived as an icon to mark Liverpool's regeneration to complement the 'The Three Graces' on the city's waterfront: the Cunard, Liver and Mersey buildings. Because of his challenging aesthetic, Alsop has both been celebrated by some as a visionary for amongst other projects his Stirling Prize-winning Peckham Library, and criticized for structures such as West Bromwich's The Public, which, in many ways, could be seen as the nadir of the belief in culture as a social and economic panacea. What is without doubt is that Alsop's work causes a stir, and he was thus favoured by urban planners wishing to create a stir or replicate the celebrated 'Goog effect' in Bilbao (the cancellation of the project resulted in Alsop's agency nearing financial collapse, leading the embittered architect to suggest that there may not have been any real commitment to build his building in the first place and that 'Liverpool had used what was thought of as an extraordinary design to win Capital of Culture and then dumped it' [quoted in Booth 2006]). The initial commissioning of this building illustrates the fatuousness and rhetorical vacuity of the 'people's ownership' narrative promoted by Liverpool: in the public vote to choose a new building for the city Alsop's design came last. Liverpool's bid celebrated a new model of governance within the city built around the relationship between David Henshaw, the non-elected Chief Executive, and Mike Storey, the elected mayor of the city. However, the relationship between the non-elected, though was increasingly powerful, council executive and the elected officers became progressively more fractious throughout 2004 and 2005, resulting in this key alliance rupturing acrimoniously. This then precipitated a series of increasingly Machiavellian machinations and recriminations which would lead to both their downfalls by the end of January 2006. This impacted on the Culture

Company as Henshaw was then chief executive and Storey was deputy chair, with other leading council employees on the board. In June 2006, in an attempt to protect the Culture Company from the turbulence in the council, a memorandum of understanding was drawn up which reduced the size of the board to 14 directors with 3 council representatives.

The destabilization was not only about personalities and egos but also in relation to the actual conception of culture forwarded within Liverpool's cultural planning strategy. The unresolved tensions between art/culture manifested itself later in turbulent 2006 with the resignation of the original artistic director, the Australian Robin Archer, who felt that she did not have control over the festival due to council interfering and their insistence that COC08 should be driven by a local regeneration agenda (this interpretation was given in an interview with an informed cultural commentator in the city and reinforced by Archer herself who claimed that 'The Culture Company . . . is basically a part of the Council. So the CEO of the Culture Company is CEO of nothing'. The Daily Post, 20 October, 2006). The nadir for COC08's preparations came with the cancellation of the famed open air concerts in Matthew Street in 2007 and the revelation that the Culture Company had £22 million budget shortfall due to the council trying to balance its own finances, leading to the Audit Commission in its Uses of Resources Report (2007) to condemn the city as the only one in the country to have performed below minimum requirements (Audit Commission 2007).

In its evaluation of COC08, Impacts08 does recognize these events but, instead of engaging with them critically, asserts, in the rhetoric of a management brochure, that they were 'key catalysts for positive change' (Garcia et al. 2010, p. 64). It is true that these events did initiate further reform, with the Culture Company board being reduced to seven members in September 2007 and television producer, Phil Redmond, being appointed creative director resulting 'greater arts sector involvement and leadership in the programme' (Garcia et al. 2010, p. 64). While necessary to ensure the delivery of COC08, these reforms represented a de facto abandonment of a convoluted cultural planning strategy and its unrealizable economic and social objectives: this was candidly acknowledged by Redmond himself when he stated: 'hanging a few pictures, sending out jugglers and playing a few tunes here and there is not going to bring life-changing experiences to Norris Green, Netherley or the outer territories of Huyten and Kirby' (cited in the Liverpool Daily Post 15 June 2007).

## **Conclusion**

Because the cultural planning model offered by Liverpool was theoretically incompatible it was, subsequently, practically undeliverable. Before the 'Liverpool model' can be assessed, it is essential that there is clarity as to what this 'model' actually

is. Part of this is to clarify why Liverpool abandoned the approach which won the city its bid, and on which its initial planning was based. The academic study of Liverpool 08's long-term benefit – Impacts08 – fails to do this in any way. While the winning of the Capital of Culture 08 award could be seen as evidence of the rhetorical allure of this putative policy panacea, its subsequent jettisoning is testimony to its internal tensions, antinomies and the impossibility of its practical realization. If the 'Liverpool model' is going to be lauded, then there needs to be clarity on what this actually is. It is the intention that this paper has started this process with a thorough deconstruction of what it could never have been.

#### Note

1. This anecdote was told by the leader of the partnership which wrote one of the competing cities' bids.

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