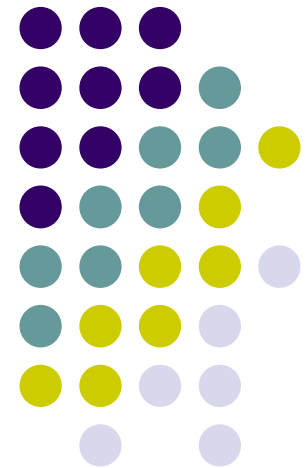


**Dr Peter Campbell,  
University of Liverpool &  
Dr. Dave O'Brien,  
City University, London**

---

**‘Constructing the city of  
culture: contingency,  
culpability and a case worth  
£800 million’**



# What is a European Capital of Culture?



- ‘Organise 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).

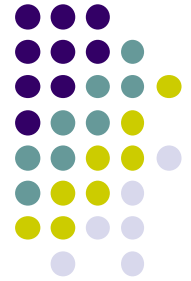
# The Liverpool experience



## *Impacts 08*

- More visits, new visitors and their money
- Good local audiences and participation – but not universal (can it ever be?)
- Perceptions improve internally and externally
- Liverpool tells a story: the Scouse Wedding – getting it wrong, then getting it right

## And its limits.....

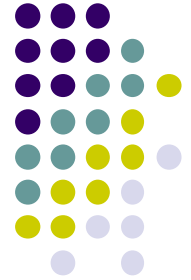


- Commodification of identity for the ‘City Brand’ (Boland 2008)
- Gentrification, urban cleansing and the control of space (Coleman 2004)
- And the effects on creative spaces and creative practice (Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004)
- And the narrative of job creation- what kind of jobs? Were they really creative?

# Is there a 'Liverpool Model' of ECoC?



- Yes
  - Creating a narrative of the city
  - The catalytic effect on partnerships and leveraging further projects
  - Creating a shared policy aim across public and private sectors and their communities
  - Creatively productive, even (especially?) the opposition!
- However....
  - Not £753.8m of impact
  - Or £1billion of regeneration projects
  - And the place specific nature of Liverpool's ECoC
- Role of Impacts08
  - Narratives of multiple impacts have stayed in the minds of public **and** policy-makers: the holy grail?



# A law unto itself?

- Local political culture and leadership
  - The problems in the run up to ECoC 2008
  - The Development of LARC
  - ‘The Liverpool way’ of leadership and politics
- Liverpool’s starting position
  - Nature of poverty and lack of investment in the city
  - EU funding
  - Narrow form of retail and city centre housing investment
  - Existing artistic base and tourist attractions
- Timing of the ECoC
  - Pre recession and cuts
  - Investment came alongside the ‘golden age’ of arts and regional funding
- These (and other specificities) cast doubt on the existence of a ‘Liverpool model’



## What was Impacts08?

- Joint research programme between University of Liverpool & Liverpool John Moores University
- 5 year programme
- Longitudinal research
- Funded by Liverpool City Council and underwritten by University of Liverpool



## Additional and related projects

- AHRC / ESRC Impact Fellowship
- AHRC / ACE Impact workshops
- European Capitals of Culture Policy Group
- Wider relationships e.g. LARC's Thrive funding





## Research framework |



- **Holistic** : multiple dimensions of impact, positive as well as negative
- **Self-reflective**: analyses process as well as outcome
- **Longitudinal** : 2005 – 2010 – [2015]
- **Collaborative** : academic team, local authority funding, knowledge exchange network



- <http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/Papers/BG%202009-10-20%29CultureIsRight.pdf>

[http://ecocpolicygroup.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/beatriz-garcia-presentation\\_25ecocanniversary\\_march-20101.pdf](http://ecocpolicygroup.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/beatriz-garcia-presentation_25ecocanniversary_march-20101.pdf)



## Impacts 08 reports

**Programme overview**

- Impacts 08 Baseline Findings 2006-2007 (2007)
- Impacts 08: Methodological framework (2010)
- [Final Report] Creating an Impact (2010)**

**Cultural Access and Participation**

- Volunteering for Culture (2010)
- Neighbourhood Watch (2010)
- Impacts of Culture on Quality of Life (2010)

**Cultural Vibrancy and Sustainability**

- Liverpool's Creative Industries (2009)
- Liverpool's Arts Sector (2009)

**Image and Perceptions**

- Media Impact Assessment (Part I) (2006)
- Re-telling the City: exploring local narratives (2007)
- Liverpool 08 Centre of the Online Universe (2009)
- The Look of the City (2010)
- Media Impact Assessment (Part II) (2010)

**Economy and Tourism**

- Doing Business in the ECoC (Part I): (2007)
- Doing Business in the ECoC (Part II): (2008)
- ECoC and Liverpool's Developer Market: (2008)
- Tourism and the Business of Culture (2010)
- Economic Impact of Visits Influenced by the ECoC

**Economy & tourism background papers**

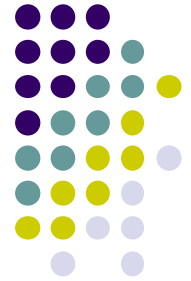
- Estimating Economic Benefits of Event Tourism
- Economic Impacts of the Liverpool ECoC (2008)
- Methodology for Measuring the Economic Impact of Visits Influenced by the Liverpool ECoC (2009)

**Governance and Delivery Process**

- Who Pays the Piper? (2008)
- Liverpool on the map again (2010)

**All reports available at:  
[www.impacts08.net](http://www.impacts08.net)**

# Context for the research programme

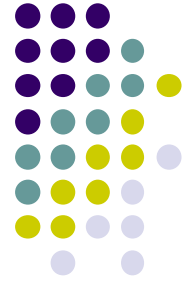


- History of evidential issues for urban cultural policy
- But also Glasgow ‘model’
- Influence of local, regional and European governmental agencies
- And influence of expertise of consultants and experts in the field



# The role of the university

- Co-owner of the research (IP) due to combination of costs and authority
- Key theme is of the University as an independent institution with its own value(s)
- ‘the integrity of the researchers...and also a university makes it, if you don’t know the programme and you see its from a university its, it gives it a bit more credibility’



# The role of the researcher (1)

- The portfolio research career- reflecting changes in social science researchers as part of the wider ‘knowledge economy’? Or institutional changes?
- Academic research practices keenly demarcated from other forms of research practice
- Along with the *pace* of academic research
- Desire for more academic elements

## The role of the researcher (2)



- Contingency within the programme, especially over appointments
- The relationship with the funders (clients), Universities, with broader research community and with local, regional, national and European sector
- Question of integrity and academic robustness key issue for all interviewees



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

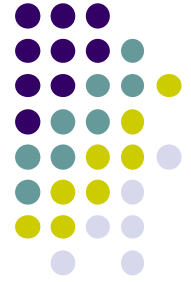


- LCC as informed commissioners, but still ‘clients’
- ‘they would say this is what we want, we’d suggest a compromise with more imaginative solutions and to be fair some of those imaginative solutions were taken on board, but they never took their eye off demonstrating the value of ECoC to Liverpool’





- ‘that was very clear from my point of view- you are appointing us, we are the experts and its 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’



# The role of the number

- Range of agreement that key impacts were:
  - image change
  - change of perceptions of culture within Liverpool
  - governance.
- Why was '£800m' so important?
- All of the interviewees were 'not great believers in numbers'
- So lesson about how policy making uses research (Stevens 2011) and the limits of academic 'impact'

# The £800m case....



‘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.’

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/PhilRedmond-VisionStatement.pdf>

## ...and the influence on policy



- ‘What is also clear is that the concept of “multiple impacts” has moved from the research arena—introduced to Liverpool initially through the Impacts 08 study — into a promise for the policy arena. 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.’ Cox and O’Brien (2011:6)



## Making a model....

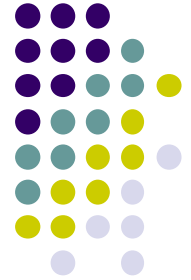
- Provide a replicable model that will add to the legacy of the Liverpool ECoC, for example informing future [European Capitals of Culture](#), the [London 2012 Olympic Games](#).

[www.Impacts08.net](http://www.Impacts08.net)

## ....but what is the 'model' anyway?



- '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'



## Model (3)

- ‘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, its not rocket science but then nothing is rocket science once its been done....this model of practice is effectively new in the sector, unfortunatley and hopefully it will be replicated and used as it worked quite well.’



# A Liverpool Model?

- A model of culture-led regeneration?
- A model for a major cultural event?
- An analytical framework?
- A set of research practices?
- The role of a university, academic researchers and research findings as creating a 'social life' of the Liverpool Model.



# Conclusion: the social life of Impacts08



- Hard (perhaps impossible) to separate the research programme from narrative of success
- Clear influence in policy discourses
- Research findings, practices, people, institutions all entangled in success
- ...and thus the stories of 'models' that will follow across Europe in the next decade
- Research allows for coalitions to mobilise around the numbers.



- @drdaveobrien
- Dave.obrien.1@city.ac.uk