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The Cultural Legacy of a Major Event: A Case Study of the 2008 European Capital of Culture, Liverpool

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Abstract: Cultural legacy is a relatively neglected theme in event and sustainability studies, compared to economic or physical legacies with solid evidence. This article focuses on the experience of Liverpool as the 2008 European Capital of Culture. An evaluation ten years on can provide the basis for research on the long-term cultural legacy of a major event, as well as how to achieve sustainability through legacy planning. Five dimensions of cultural legacy are explored, including: Cultural agency and strategies, cultural network, cultural provision, cultural engagement, and cultural image. The results of the study show that the spill-over effect of culture can be achieved through thorough legacy planning. The most important lesson learned from Liverpool is to integrate the event into the city's long-term and culture-led development, which yields a healthy and productive cultural climate.

Keywords: event sustainability; cultural legacy; legacy planning; European Capital of Culture; Liverpool

1. Introduction

In view of the economic, social and cultural impacts, more and more cities are competing to host major events. However, due to the short-lived and one-off nature, the event itself may not be sustainable. The sustainability of major events, or their legacy or long-term impact, has been the focus of discussion in recent years. As Holmes et al. [1] stated: “The role of sustainability in events is becoming increasingly important and now features as part of the bid process for many mega-events” (p.2). There has also been a paradigm shift in the academia from pure impact studies to legacy or sustainability studies of events [2]. According to Richards and Palmer [3], the sustainability of an event means: “The continuation of the event programme itself, as well as ensuring that the direct and indirect impacts of events can be maintained” (p.383). In this case, legacy planning is a key way to ensure the sustainability of an event. Additionally, “legacy started to be considered something that should be planned rather than an unknown outcome of the post-event period” [2] (p. 48).

Launched by the European Union in 1985, the European Capital of Culture (abbreviated as ECOC) is one of the most successful and extensive cultural initiatives in Europe, with nearly 60 cities from 30 countries awarded with this title. However, due to the ephemeral nature of the event, many ECOC host cities recognise that ensuring sustainability is a particular challenge. While some ECOC cities have demonstrated an understanding and commitment to legacy planning, successful planning beyond the title year is still not widespread, and there is even little evidence of success [4]. In addition, the academic community has conducted extensive research on the direct impact of organising ECOC events, but the concept of legacy has only recently begun to appear more frequently in bidding or evaluation documents [5]. In this case, the planning and assessment of legacy is crucial for guaranteeing the sustainability of events. On the other hand, most assessment studies have focused on measuring economic, physical, and, sometimes, social legacy, but they have paid little attention to the cultural legacy of an event. This is because the focus of most people is on the instrumental significance of

culture in achieving other goals, not the culture itself [6]. As a result, the research gap in the cultural legacy of an event has become more pronounced than ever before.

This article focuses on the experience of the 2008 ECOC Liverpool, which has been widely acclaimed for achieving sustainable urban regeneration. A case study of Liverpool ten years on can provide the basis for research on the core benefits created by event-led regeneration and help to assess whether these benefits can be long-lasting. This study covers two main research questions: (1) How can we achieve sustainability through legacy planning? (2) What is the long-term cultural legacy of the ECOC? The following section reviews the literature relevant to cultural legacy and legacy planning. Methodologically, this study is based on both primary and secondary data. In the end, the theoretical and empirical implications of the current study will be drawn as the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainability, Legacy and the ECOC

Legacy and sustainability issues are critical to a host city given the huge investment required to host a major event. Event legacy has become a key consideration of hosting a major event [7]. It can provide reasons for public spending, gain local support and stimulate other cities to join the bidding [8,9]. After a holistic review of the literature, one of the most widely accepted definitions of legacy was given by Preuss [10]: “Legacy is all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a culture event that remain longer than the event itself” (p. 211). Though legacy is clearly a key factor of an event, many practitioners admit that the timeliness of events is still a huge challenge. The challenge may come from the exhaustion of budget, diminishing political support, or the redeployment of staff to new projects. Therefore, for certain events, the amount of activity may be reduced, and the authority may be dismissed immediately after the event ends [3]. According to Holmes et al. [1], event legacy does not happen automatically or without intervention—it requires planning, budgeting, and effort. Smith [11] also argues that “attention to legacy has helped to focus cities more on the post-event period and the need to plan for the long term before the event takes place... It is now considered to be something that can be planned. It is also something that is increasingly considered from the outset of events, rather than merely something that occurs post-event” (p. 60). Similarly, Kaplanidou and Karadakis [12] believe that only if a legacy plan is envisaged in the early stage of an event, the long-term amelioration of the host city can be guaranteed. Holmes et al. [1] pointed out some key success factors for event legacy planning:

- (1) The legacy plan needs to be realistic and specific, and it needs to be based on complete study and planning.
- (2) The host city needs to confirm that sufficient funds are available to implement the legacy plan; for example, the legacy plan should be included in an event’s bidding document.
- (3) The careful management of local residents’ expectations is required. The legacy plan takes time to achieve, so a sound communication strategy is required to keep the legacy plan from doubt.
- (4) Multi-theme and multi-faceted legacy planning can generate wider recognition from local residents, attract more media coverage, and have a more longer-term impact.

As far as the ECOC is concerned, the achievement of sustainability is very different between cities, and the actual plan of legacy beyond the title year is not common at the early stage. In practice, many cities have encountered significant financial problems in sustaining long-term projects or developing visions [13]. In 2006, the European Parliament and Council decision 1622/2006/EC explicitly required the programme to be sustainable and have long-term effects. This has led to more cities beginning to think about the legacy of the ECOC, and there have been some cases of legacy planning [4]. In order to achieve the goal of sustainability, some countries even started to use legacy plan as the criteria for selecting ECOC cities. In 2012, the European Commission further developed a strategy for new action of the ECOC from 2020 to 2033, with the aim of promoting the contribution

of culture to the long-term development of cities [4,14]. ECOC cities are increasingly planning to extend events and benefits beyond the title year. However, the issue of ensuring sustainability is still complicated for some host cities. In addition, there is still little research on the sustainability of the entire ECOC program, and there is also a great difference in evidence about the sustained effects of the ECOC [15]. Analysing the long-term impact of the ECOC over the past 30 years, García and Cox [4] pointed out this difference. For instance, successful cases that ensure an event's sustainability include: A visible strategy for city development (Liverpool in 2008), strong financial planning (Essen in 2010), sustainable programme spanning beyond the title year (Istanbul in 2010), integrating the ECOC into long-term cultural development plan for the city (Turku in 2011), integrating the ECOC into the economic and development strategy of the city (Umeå in 2014), and a clear connection of the ECOC to tourism strategy (Paphos in 2017). Cases that failed to achieve a sustainable goal properly include: A disbanded delivering agency and insufficient funding (Cork in 2005), a failure to build the aim of sustainability into the programme from the start (Vilnius in 2009), a steep decline in investment right after the ECOC (Tallinn in 2011), and a lack of an intended legacy plan of the event (Aarhus in 2017 and Valletta in 2018). Moreover, according to Gome and Librero-Cano [16], most of the literature does not provide a reliable evidence for the long-term benefits of the event or only directs attention to short-term benefits.

Scholars have developed several typologies of event legacy. For example, Cashman [17] identified six aspects of legacy: Economic, political, cultural, educational, infrastructure, public life, and symbolic legacies. Chappelet and Junod [18] proposed five categories: Economic, cultural, infrastructure, urban, and social legacies. The International Olympic Committee's [19] definition of sport event legacy includes five legacies: Sports, social, cultural and political, environmental, economic and urban. European Communities [20] summarises the legacy of the ECOC, including continuing to strengthen cultural and artistic projects, improving urban image, improving infrastructure (such as establishing new cultural venues and improving the quality of public spaces), increasing participation in cultural activities, and contributing to social and community development. Despite these differences, event legacy can usually be divided into four major aspects—environmental, economic, social and cultural legacies [12]. However, cultural legacy has still been a facet of little research, compared to economic or social legacies. After carefully reviewing the relevant literature, the following studies were the only ones that clearly defined the dimensions of an event's cultural legacy. When reviewing the cases of the ECOC, Palmer-Rae [13] compiled the following long-term cultural effects, including cultural infrastructure improvements, more developed programmes of cultural activities and events, new networks and enhanced collaboration in the cultural sector, new cultural organisations still in existence, long-term cultural development for the city/region, and growing or extending the local audience for culture. Richards and Palmer [3] discussed the cultural sustainability of an event and identified a strengthened cultural sector, an improved climate for cultural production, and infrastructure legacy as the main cultural legacies. García and Cox [4] described cultural legacy as projects that continue beyond the hosting year, increased collaboration and networking between cultural providers, increased capacity and ambition within the sector, and improved image. Ecorys [20–26] summed up the cultural legacy as the sustainability of cultural activities and infrastructure, cultural governance and strategy post-ECOC.

2.2. The Dimensions of Cultural Legacy

The dimensions of cultural legacy in this study are derived from the literature [4,20–28] related to impact or legacy studies of the ECOC, including the following five dimensions of cultural legacy:

(1) *Cultural agency and strategies*. The establishment or continuation of dedicated agency is one way to ensure legacy. According to Richards and Palmer [3], events can be a catalyst for establishing a long-term and permanent coordinating platform to plan subsequent programmes and promote the “festivalisation” of a city. Different cities can use different types of institutions, but ensuring smooth operation which is free from political interference is an important and common factor [4].

Depending on the respective conditions of each city, the agency may need a different focus. However, in the years after the event, people should focus on the planning and the promotion of subsequent events to keep the momentum created. Every effort should be made to avoid the loss of knowledge and talent base during the transition period after the event [21]. In addition, the ECOC may push culture to the local political agenda or help to develop a long-term cultural strategy for the city.

(2) *Cultural network*. Arcodia and Whitford [29] pointed out that events can help to develop new or revitalise existing partnerships between cultural organisations. García and Cox [4] also believe that the ECOC may bring about a major shift in cultural governance and provide a new platform for cooperation between cultural operators or municipalities. New or improved partnerships can then support the provision of cultural activities. The degree of cooperation within the cultural sector can have several positive impacts, such as gaining greater financial benefits brought by increased visitor numbers [13]. In addition, collaborating with the private sector is critical to providing new ideas, introducing entrepreneurship, obtaining additional financial support, and improving the quality of cultural supply.

(3) *Cultural provision*, including cultural facilities and cultural activities. *Cultural facilities* have the potential to increase the quantity and quality of urban cultural supply in the long term. Cultural facilities and activities can provide an important stimulus for the cultural life of the city and are often one of the elements of event legacy planning [3]. As Smith [30] stated, if sustainability is to be achieved, the proper use of new facilities after the end of the event is a key factor that will contribute to broader social and economic benefits. However, event-related infrastructure development is often challenged by operational and financial problems and leads to a negative public opinion and a lack of support [3]. In terms of *cultural activities*, sustainability must take into account the one-off nature of major events. One can expect that the frequency of activities will be diminished in the years after the event. For the development of event strategies throughout the city, it may be necessary to make tough decisions to reduce or stop certain activities. Cities need to regularly review and evaluate which events best meet the city's goals and should be kept [3]. For those events taking place during the title year, public authorities must provide on-going funding. However, the continuation of cultural activities often faces significant financial problems [5]. Another problem is that events will inevitably be concentrated in special areas, mostly in the city centre. However, even if the planners deliberately hold the event in the city's border areas, this does not necessarily ensure that residents in the remote neighbourhood can feel the benefits of the event [30].

(4) *Cultural engagement*. Matarasso [31] emphasised that participation of and interest in cultural activities can promote social development at different levels, including personal impacts such as empowerment, self-confidence, and the social impact of creating a more enjoyable social atmosphere. For many ECOC host cities, increasing participation and cultural interest is an important goal [13]. In the UK, the Ministry of Culture, Media and Sports' mission statement is "improving the quality of life for all through culture and sports events, supporting the pursuit of excellence, support for tourism, creativity and leisure" (as cited in [32], p. 324).

(5) *Cultural image*. Finally, cultural events have become an important means of improving the image of a city, especially in the "declining cities" designated by Bianchini and Parkinson [33]. For many ECOC cities, developing a cultural image has become a major goal and achievement [13]. For example, García [6] showed that changes in urban image and identity are the most important legacies of the 1990 ECOC Glasgow.

3. Research Methods

Liverpool was a port of global importance in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but it has experienced a significant recession since the 1980s, primarily in the city's prestigious maritime and manufacturing industries [34]. Since then, Liverpool has begun to use culture as a core element for its strategy of urban regeneration, including organising the International Garden Event, renovating the Albert Dock, the opening of Tate Liverpool, the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation in 2004,

and the 2008 ECOC [34]. Today, culture continues to play an important role in improving Liverpool's image, residents' identity, and the city's economy. Therefore, choosing Liverpool as a case study to evaluate the cultural legacy of the 2008 ECOC could have considerable significance for understanding the interaction between culture and sustainable development. In terms of data sources, the research was based on the following primary and secondary data.

The first category of primary data comes from an online survey conducted in 2014 with cultural managers based in Liverpool. To construct the online survey, the dimensions and the questions were collected from previous research and documents related to the ECOC (e.g., [4,13,35]). The survey consists of four parts of questions: (1) Ways of collaboration; (2) dimensions of collaboration; (3) interaction with the public sector; and (3) interaction with the private sector. The respondents were chosen from two major cultural networks, namely the Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC) and the Small and Medium Arts Collective (SMAC) in Liverpool, with the criteria of having a strong connection with the 2008 ECOC. The LARC originated in the 1990s, but since 2006, it has included the city's eight largest art organisations. SMAC was founded in 2007 and consists of approximately 43 small and medium-sized art organisations. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was tested with 2 pilot organisations prior to the formal survey. In the end, 42 organisations (6 from LARC and 36 from SMAC) responded to the survey, representing 82% of the cultural organisations from the above-mentioned cultural networks.

Secondly, in order to understand the legacy of the ECOC perceived by local residents, a telephone survey was conducted in 2015. To compare how the ECOC affected a broad population, the sample was divided into four regions (150 questionnaires in each region) with different geographical and socio-economic backgrounds. The literature was screened for adequate measures that referred to the economic, social and cultural legacies of major events. To refine the derived legacy items, the official evaluation reports of Impacts 08 [35] and Ecorys [20] were reviewed, and six items of cultural legacy were yielded, including an increased level of cultural participation, an increased level of cultural interest, an improvement of cultural facilities/space, an improvement of cultural events/activities, an improvement/acceleration of infrastructure projects, and access to cultural opportunities. Based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of each legacy item. Respondents also needed to meet the criteria of living in the area for at least eight years to ensure their experience in event legacy. Finally, a total of 592 available questionnaires were collected. The two types of primary data were used mainly to evaluate the legacy outcomes.

In terms of secondary data, the first category of data was derived from the impact/legacy studies done by the Institute of Cultural Capital in Liverpool. Four repeated neighbourhood surveys were conducted in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2018 to explore residents' perceptions of the 2008 ECOC, with a total of 3052 residents surveyed. Based on four communities with different socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds, the results allow us to compare how the ECOC affected a broader population group [28,35]. The analysis was further complemented by two official documents assessing the 2008 ECOC Liverpool [21] and the ECOC project as a whole [4]. Commissioned by the European Commission, Ecorys is a research-based consultant conducting impact assessments for each ECOC host city since 2007. To explore successful strategies and "best practices," the latter report was commissioned by the European Parliament to analyse the long-term impact of the ECOC over the past 30 years. Other references include online sources (e.g., action plan, evaluation reports and tourism statistics) collected from Liverpool City Council, Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Region and LARC. These secondary data were used to address the issue of legacy planning.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Cultural Agency and Strategies

Event legacy must take into account long-term governance, including the cultural agency responsible for cultural planning and long-term strategies for cultural development after the ECOC.

After an event is over, it is inevitable that the delivering agency may face the fate of dissolution, and the accumulated experience may be lost. In Liverpool, Liverpool Cultural Company was the operating agency for the ECOC in 2008, but it was dissolved after 2008. Culture Liverpool was set up as the successor of Liverpool Cultural Company in order to maintain and strengthen the governance of the cultural sector. The major role of Culture Liverpool is to develop cultural strategy for the city and to be a sustainable platform for organising cultural events [21]. It also recognises the need to establish and maintain partnerships with cultural organisations and others, especially with the Arts Council England, when public funding for arts and culture is reducing. Other missions of Culture Liverpool include: Visitor economy, arts and participation programs, cultural investment projects, sponsorship, and income generation [34].

Furthermore, in order to create a lasting legacy, Liverpool has made it clear how to use the ECOC as a platform to develop a cultural strategy survived after the title year. Cultural Liverpool developed a new cultural strategy with associated action plans (2009–2014 and 2014–2018). The 2009–2014 Action Plan identified priorities for consolidating the development of major cultural organisations and promoting events and creative communities. In particular, it provided financial support to the cultural sector through the 2009–2014 Art and Culture Investment Programme (ACIP) [34]. In addition to providing grants, Culture Liverpool aims to promote and support cultural networks and partnerships, as well as streamline the bureaucratic administrative procedures. For example, the cooperation of large and small cultural organisations was ensured, such as the LARC and the Creative Organisations of Liverpool (COoL) [34].

The 2014–2018 Action Plan was designed to sustain the growth momentum of the 2008 ECOC and to develop and support competitive cultural products. It provided a medium-term plan illustrating how cultural events and investments could support the city's vision and economic goals [34,36]. The 2014–2018 Action Plan included a commitment to continue major events and the 2014–2018 Culture Liverpool Investment Project (CLIP) within the scope of the city council's annual budget. However, the main challenge while launching the 2014–2018 Action Plan was the financial pressure on the city council (the central government budget cuts led to a 40% decline in spending capacity between 2014 and 2017). It posed a serious challenge for large-scale events and investment projects supported by the CLIP. Similarly, local cultural organisations were also at risk of reducing budget and funding opportunities [34]. Even so, CLIP still allocated a budget of £6.5 million in the period of 2014–2016. Thirty-six local cultural organisations received, each year, an average of approximately £3 million grants and financial assistance. The purpose of CLIP is to further develop the city as a cultural destination, better integrate culture into business, and promote the city to the international market [34].

CLIP enabled cultural organisations to host a wide range of events in various communities [36]. Thirty-six funded organisations organised 29,840 activities, 66% of which were for specific groups. At least 4.6 million people participated in the CLIP-funded activities, and in addition, £15 million of additional art funds were raised from public and private sources. It was found that these activities created enormous social benefits, such as helping residents' health and well-being, supporting their personal development, and improving their communities [36]. At this time, Liverpool is planning to conduct a far-reaching consultation process to launch the 2018–2025 Liverpool Master Cultural Plan, 10 years after the end of the ECOC.

4.2. Cultural Network

Improving the network of the cultural sector was seen as one of the most positive results of the Liverpool ECOC, which strengthened the cooperation and partnerships between cultural organisations, thereby promoting the long-term operation and conception of multi-agency approaches [21]. The enhancement of cultural networks was evidenced by the development of LARC, SMAC and the Art and Culture Network (ACN) [37]. The achievement of LARC was particularly compelling. It originated from an alliance of four-to-five cultural institutions in the late 1990s but only occasionally gathered in that time period. Since 2006, LARC expanded to Liverpool's eight largest art organisations,

including National Museums Liverpool, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, Unity Theatre, Bluecoat, and Foundation for Arts and Creative Technology (FACT) [37]. LARC aims to support the delivery of the 2008 ECOC programmes and affects the development of cultural policy in Liverpool [38].

The ECOC stimulated LARC to work together to obtain revenue from other sources. For instance, LARC has successfully received some state-level art grants, especially the Thrive programme from the Arts Council England to deliver additional projects from 2009. Thrive invested £1.34 million in LARC, enabling it to deliver a series of programmes aimed at enhancing the role of the cultural sector in citizen leadership and promoting economic and social regeneration [21]. With the support of the Thrive program, LARC established a leading role in Liverpool's cultural provision, especially by creating innovative programs, attracting great artists and cultural workers, connecting different regions of the city, and empowering local communities, etc. One of the most successful projects was called "Long Nights"—a low cost but highly influential program. The Long Night event aims to create a safer urban centre environment and to encourage a more diverse night economy. The first two long night events attracted more than 15,000 residents to visit the gallery, and almost half of them usually did not enter the city centre at night. Another project launched by LARC is Open City, a volunteer programme designed to encourage a range of community groups to visit cultural facilities, such as museums, galleries and theatres. The programme paired community groups with volunteers to enhance opportunities to engage in cultural activities [39]. In addition, LARC worked with other local partners such as the Mersey Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership [4]. In addition to LARC, the ECOC also promoted the investment of smaller cultural organisations, such as SMAC, which consists of about 43 small and medium-sized art organisations in Merseyside in 2007 [37]. Figure 1 illustrates the major findings of the 2014 cultural sector survey, where the numbers signifies the frequencies of responses.

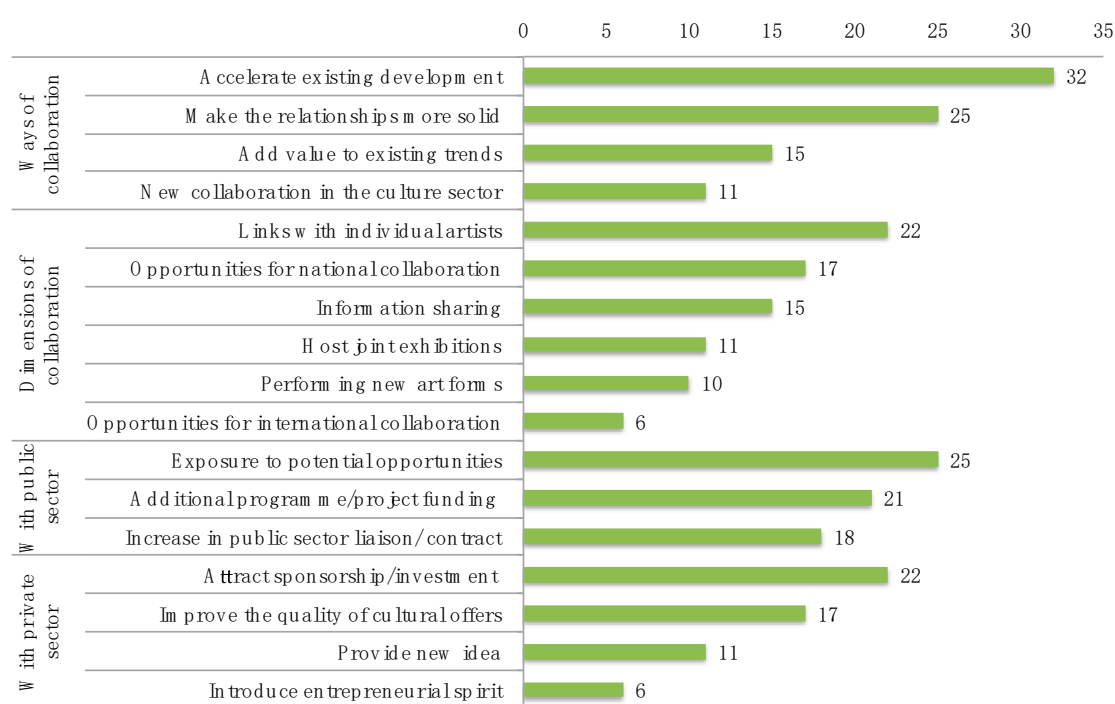


Figure 1. Perceptions of cultural sector about the cultural network effects of Liverpool 2008. Note: This is the 2014 cultural sector survey; number = frequencies of responses ($n = 42$).

Respondents commented on the ways that the ECOC facilitated the collaboration within the sector, including: Accelerating existing development ($n = 32$), consolidating existing relationships ($n = 25$), adding value to existing relationships ($n = 15$), and creating new partnerships ($n = 11$). Figure 1 also outlines the facets of the collaborations mentioned, including: Contact with individual artists ($n = 32$),

collaboration at the national level ($n = 17$), sharing messages with each other ($n = 15$), hosting joint exhibitions ($n = 11$), performing new art form ($n = 10$), and international cooperation and exchange ($n = 6$). In addition to the network within the cultural sector, the ECOC also enhanced the interactions of the cultural sector with public and private sectors. In terms of cooperation with the public sector, discovering potential opportunities ($n = 25$), additional subsidies ($n = 21$) and more public sector contracts ($n = 18$) were identified as the benefits brought by the ECOC. The collaboration with the private sector allowed the cultural sector to obtain sponsorship ($n = 22$), improving the quality of cultural supply ($n = 17$), introducing innovative thinking ($n = 11$), and cultivating entrepreneurship ($n = 6$). While the increase in cooperation seems to have had a positive impact on Liverpool's cultural sector, there are some indications that large and institutionalised cultural organisations tended to gain more opportunities and produce more lasting results. For more detailed statistical results, refer to Liu [40].

4.3. Cultural Provision

Given the level of cultural facilities at Liverpool and on-going improvement programmes, the 2008 ECOC did not need to invest in improving the cultural facilities. However, the ECOC's status was very effective in providing incentives for existing projects, such as the Echo Arena and Exhibition Centre Liverpool, the new Liverpool Museum, the renovated World Heritage Waterfront and the Bluecoat Art Centre. These projects provide ample space for cultural events and improve Liverpool's cultural and tourism products [21]. On the other hand, ensuring residents' active participation in various cultural activities was a key area of Liverpool ECOC's legacy plan [4]. After the end of the ECOC in 2008, three major strands of cultural events continued to exist and were directly influenced by the ECOC year. First, according to Impacts 08 [37], free, open/street, community participation, and carnival events were regarded as the most popular events. The most famous example was the 2008 "La Princesse"—a spectacular outdoor theatre event with 50-foot-long mechanical spiders travelling around the city and that allowed audiences to follow. After 2008, large-scale outdoor performing arts events, designed and operated by Royal de Luxe (a street theatre company based in Nantes, France), were held three times in 2012, 2014 and 2018. The theme for 2012 was "Sea Odyssey"—commemorating the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. An economic impact assessment showed that 800,000 people participated in the event, generating an economic impact of £32 million [34]. The 2014 giant event was called "Memories of August 1914"—commemorating the centennial of the First World War. One million people joined this event, and it was Liverpool's top free event attended in 2014 [41]. The final act of the giant trilogy in 2018 was called "Liverpool's Dream"—celebrating the 10th anniversary of the 2008 ECOC. It brought over £60 million revenue to the Merseyside economy and brought 1.3 million visitors to the city, making it the largest event in Liverpool's history. Liverpool's Dream also helped the city to win three of the 2019 Eventex Awards, including Best Event Destination, Best UK Event and Grand Prix People's Choice Event [42].

Second, "Four Corners" was a six-year project (2006–2012) designed to use art to improve community life in remote and deprived areas of the city. "Four Corners" was part of the Creative Community project—known as Europe's largest public and community art project, with dozens of art organisations, providing a framework for artists and communities to work together and focusing on the life experience of Liverpool's communities. For example, in 2009, a project called "Da Boyz" was commissioned by an art organisation and conducted educational initiatives in deprived communities [36]. Third, one of the main features of the ECOC in 2008 was the theme year programmes lasting for eight years, from 2003 to 2010. The 2010 branded programme was called "Year of Health, Well-Being and Innovation." From 2010 to 2012, the city council funded more than 60 art and health projects that supported people's awareness of health. This grassroots project attracted more than 60,000 participants in the city [36]. In addition, Liverpool has developed a major event strategy for 2015–2020. The goal is to ensure a variety of event programmes throughout the year to increase the number of visitors and improve the destination image. The Major Events Group (a subcommittee of the Visitor Economy Board) will continue to play an important role in developing the event programme of

Liverpool. In particular, it will focus on the pillar events each year, enhanced by a series of supportive events across themes such as culture, music, sports and business [43].

The 2015 neighbourhood survey (see Figure 2) provides some positive signs of infrastructure and amenities legacy, including the improvement or acceleration of infrastructure (80% agreed) and cultural provision related to events, including increased cultural facilities/spaces and increased events/activities (79% and 77% agreed, respectively). In addition, 75% agreed that access to cultural opportunities has improved. A further statistical analysis (see [44]) has revealed that the location of community and the attendance at the ECOC events were the main variables of differences in the perceived legacy outcomes. Especially, a noticeable variation was found between communities in cultural provision legacy. For the disadvantaged communities, lower cultural impacts of the ECOC could be attributed to both the cultural distance (lower cultural capital resulted from lower socio-economic status) and physical distance (travelling distance and cost). On the other hand, for those advantaged communities, higher socio-economic status, geographical proximity and excellent transport links to central Liverpool are the main contributors to cultural provision legacy.

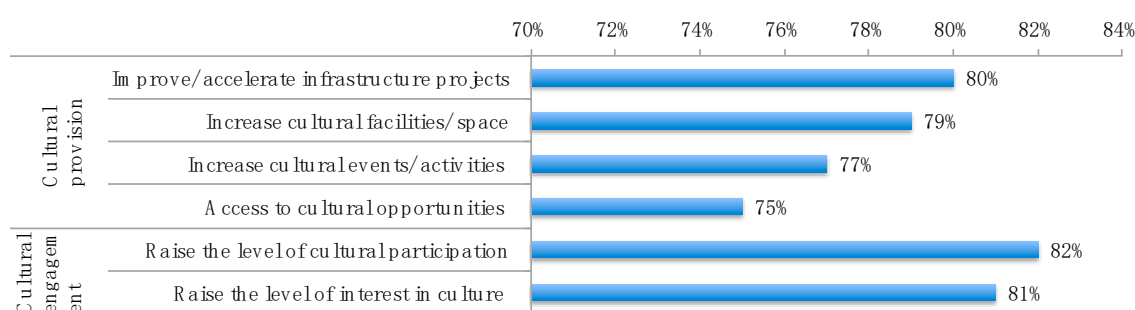


Figure 2. Perceptions of residents about the cultural provision and engagement effects of Liverpool 2008. Note: This is the 2015 neighbourhood survey, $n = 592$; number = % of agreement.

4.4. Cultural Engagement

Raising the level of participation and interest in culture is an important target for many ECOC cities, and nearly all ECOC cities included at least some programmes aiming to enhance participation and volunteering [13]. It is argued that to yield sustainable cultural legacy, there should be a high level of community involvement and participation in the event programmes. According to the 2015 neighbourhood survey (see Figure 2), cultural participation (82% agreed) and cultural interest (81% agreed) both increased due to extensive and geographically disseminated local events. Ten years after the end of the 2008 ECOC, a follow-up neighbourhood survey in 2018 further showed the legacy outcomes in terms of cultural engagement and image. The residents were highly positive about the city and its cultural supply, and 44% of respondents were more interested in cultural events because of the ECOC (an increase of 7% from 2009). In addition, 42% of Liverpool residents said that the 2008 ECOC encouraged them and their family members to join new or different cultural activities [45]. Cultural provision and cultural engagement can be regarded as the two sides of the coin. In the case of Liverpool, the growth of cultural programmes, as well as the spread of cultural activities made an important contribution to improving the cultural engagement of local residents. Additionally, as argued by Edizel [2], the success of event-led regeneration lies in a more inclusive approach which considers the cultural values of the local.

4.5. Cultural Image

According to García and Cox [4], the 2008 ECOC was widely regarded as an example of a successful image change. Liverpool's previous gloomy and even negative images have undergone a renaissance. In terms of the concept of the overall city of Liverpool, residents believed that the view of the city held by people outside the city has improved gradually as a result of the ECOC (see Figure 3). In 2007 and 2009, 18% and 23% of Liverpool residents believed that people outside the city had a positive view of

Liverpool. The proportion of respondents who believed that people outside the city had a positive view of the city was significantly higher—45% in 2018. In addition, external perceptions of the city continued to improve after the ECOC. In the period before the ECOC, it was strongly believed that the national media presented Liverpool in a negative way, from 81% in 2007 to 79% in 2009. There seems to be no sign of any change of residents' views on media reporting. The proportion of residents who agreed with the statement "mostly presented in negative ways by the national media" remained high (at 74%), although lower than the pre-ECOC period. As to the direct impact of the ECOC on city image, the responses were generally positive to the description "the ECOC gave people outside the city a more positive impression of Liverpool" throughout the survey period. In 2007, 81% of respondents agreed that the ECOC gave better impressions of Liverpool to outsiders. This figure rose to 86% in 2009, but it fell slightly to 84% in 2018 [28,35].

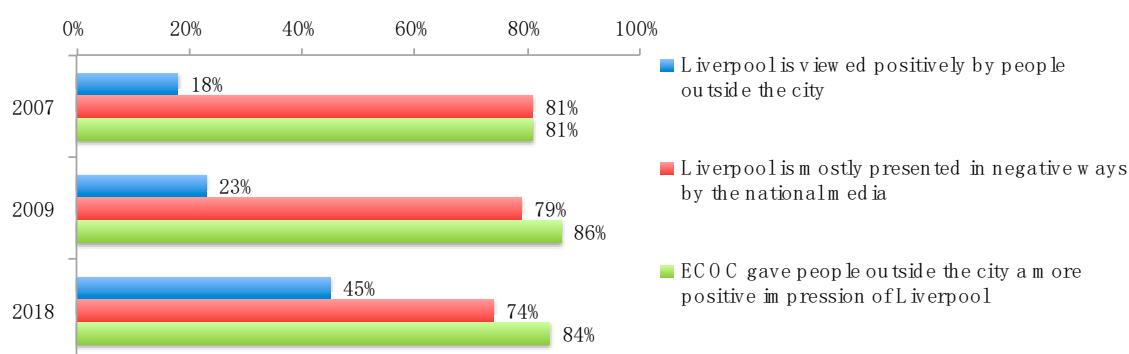


Figure 3. Perceptions of residents about the cultural image effects of Liverpool 2008. *Note:* These are the 2007, 2009 and 2018 neighbourhood surveys, $n = 3052$; number = % of agreement (adapted from <http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/impacts18>).

5. Conclusions

Cultural legacy is a relatively neglected theme in event or sustainability studies, compared to economic or physical legacies with solid evidence. This article focuses on the experience of Liverpool as the 2008 European Capital of Culture. An evaluation ten years on can provide the basis for research on the long-term cultural legacy of a major event, as well as how to achieve sustainability through legacy planning. Five dimensions of cultural legacy are explored, including: Cultural agencies and strategies, cultural networks, cultural provisions, cultural engagement, and cultural image. The results of the study show that the spill-over effect of culture can be achieved through long-term and thorough legacy planning. Theoretically, this study provides an insight into the long-term cultural legacy of the ECOC. It also provides a basis for understanding the interaction between culture and sustainable development. Empirically, this article proposes principles for policymakers to better understand how host cities can ensure event sustainability through legacy planning.

In order to help the readers to catch the key findings and how the research questions were answered, Table 1 illustrates the key lessons learned from Liverpool. It can be concluded by discussing the contribution of this case study and making recommendations for possible future research that Liverpool has benefited from more than 20 years of continuous regeneration and investment in its cultural economy and urban infrastructure [46]. The most important lesson learned from Liverpool is to integrate the event into a city's long-term and culture-led development, which yields a healthy and productive cultural climate, in addition to creating sustained social and economic impacts. Namely, the investment in a cultural event is only a part of the city's master plan. While considering sustainability, it is necessary to strengthen the cultural governance of the city in the long run. Though the main cultural programme was completed at the end of the title year, a new operational structure—Culture Liverpool—was established to plan and deliver the legacy plan, featured by the new cultural strategy and action plans, the financial support to the cultural organisations, the continuation of certain cultural

programmes, and the enhancement of cultural networks. The operating agency also has a degree of autonomy in the political process and is supported by the local government. The experience of Liverpool demonstrates that a specialised agency and a long-term legacy plan should be implemented at an early stage to maximise effectiveness. Second, through the enhancement of long-lasting partnerships and networks, such as LARC, SMAC and ACN, the city's cultural governance has been strengthened. These strong networks can not only help to promote economic and social regeneration through delivering a series of cultural programmes (e.g., Long Night and Open City), but they can also work together to obtain resources from outside the city. Cultural managers have pointed out that because of the partnerships triggered by the ECOC, they have had the opportunities to consolidate current and develop new collaborations. The ECOC also triggered the collaborations with public and private sectors at the city and national levels. Furthermore, cooperation and networking between local cultural operators spurred the overall cultural supply of the city.

Table 1. Summary of lessons learned from Liverpool.

Research Questions	Principals	Practices
Q1. How to achieve sustainability through legacy planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a cultural agency responsible for cultural planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Liverpool
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop long-term strategies and action plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2009–2014, 2014–2018, and 2018–2025 Cultural strategies and action plans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial support for the cultural sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2009–2014 Art and Culture Investment Programme (ACIP) and 2014–2018 Culture Liverpool Investment Project (CLIP)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain cultural programmes created/influenced by the ECOC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The giant trilogy (2012, 2014 and 2018) “Four Corners” programme Theme year programmes (2003–2010)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative programs and community empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Long Nights” events and “Open City” volunteer programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply funding from other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thrive programme, Arts Council England
Q2. What is the long-term cultural legacy of the ECOC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The enhancement of cultural network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC), Small and Medium Arts Collective (SMAC) and Art and Culture Network (ACN)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactions of the cultural sector with public and private sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to potential opportunities, Attract sponsorship/investment, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide incentives for existing regeneration projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., Echo Arena and Exhibition Centre Liverpool, Liverpool Museum, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived improvement of cultural provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved cultural facilities/spaces, events/activities and access to cultural opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased cultural participation and interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., Join new or different cultural activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced cultural image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., People outside the city has a more positive view, media presents Liverpool in a less negative way

As for cultural provisions, the status of the ECOC can provide a trigger for accelerating the development of major capital projects [4]. While the physical developments of culture and broader urban infrastructure have been planned before 2008, it might take longer time to complete without the status of the ECOC. On the other hand, in order to ensure residents' engagement in cultural opportunities, a large-scale event plan continued to operate after 2008 and had even greater ambitions. With the support of the city council, three spectacular outdoor theatre events were held in 2012, 2014 and 2018. Given the high public investment in the ECOC, it is also important to ensure that all communities benefit from the ECOC. Through the implementation of the "Four Corners" programme and other outreaching art projects, the access of deprived communities to culture was improved. Moreover, to realise the concept of "festivalisation" [3], a major event strategy has also been set. It will be achieved by annually organising a pillar event, supplemented by a series of sub-theme events. As a result, the increased cultural engagement and enhanced image could be regarded as the key outcomes of the legacy plan. For example, funds from ACIP and CLIP have reinforced Liverpool as a city that offers free cultural events to all citizens. Residents' cultural participation and cultural interest both increased due to geographically-disseminated local events. Residents' perceptions of the city have also gone through some positive changes. According to the 2018 neighbourhood survey, nearly half of residents believe that people outside the city now view Liverpool positively, and five out of every six people agree that the ECOC gave people outside the city a more positive impression of Liverpool.

This study has provided a critical analysis of the planning and evaluation of events' cultural legacy, and it has outlined how cities could realise a sustainable event-led regeneration. However, the author still needs to acknowledge the limitations of current study and to make some suggestions for future research. Though this article has collected some primary data, it still relied on a large number of official documents. Most of these secondary data are overwhelmingly positive. In order to examine the cultural legacy of the ECOC more comprehensively and objectively, the opinions of wider stakeholders can be collected and analysed in the future. Finally, although the ECOC is one of the most widespread cultural initiatives in the European Union, it is not the case for research on event sustainability or cultural legacy. Future research can therefore consider applying the framework of this study to other ECOC host cities or conducting cross-cases comparison.

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