

‘Our Tyne’: Iconic Regeneration and the Revitalisation of Identity in NewcastleGateshead

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Summary. The landscape of the north-east of England, both urban and rural, is perhaps most notable as a deindustrialised landscape. Indeed, the world in which we live is determined as much by what it was as by what it is. Perhaps this is no more evident than in the case of NewcastleGateshead which is often portrayed as an exemplar of the revitalising benefits of culture-led regeneration. The, as yet unproven, success of NewcastleGateshead Quayside is founded upon a massive financial investment in iconic projects. But under what conditions is, if at all, such iconography succeeding? This article addresses the impact of flagship regeneration projects and their role in radically rearticulating the meaning of place and space in a so-called post-industrial world. It is suggested that the success of investment in iconic cultural projects depends above all upon people’s sense of belonging in a place and the degree to which culture-led regeneration can engage with that sense of belonging, whilst balancing achievements of the past with ambitions for the future.

The de-industrialisation of cities has created a set of circumstances in which policy-makers throughout Europe and beyond have desperately sought to explore the possibilities for a post-industrial future. For many such cities, cultural investment in capital-intensive projects which make radical statements about where a city’s future might lay, offer a promised land, but one that is ultimately often unrealisable. The development of NewcastleGateshead offers an example of an iconic culture-led project that appears, at least on the surface, to be succeeding. But can investment in iconic projects deliver what policy-makers ask of them? More pointedly perhaps, at what level, if at all, do such projects engage with the identity of a city and its people?

This article will address the impact of flagship regeneration projects and their role in

radically rearticulating the meaning of place and space in a so-called post-industrial world. As Hunt points out

The architectural critic Jonathon Glancey suggested that Victorian cities had created an urban culture on the back of their trade and industry, but today it is the other way around. Instead of culture springing from the inner workings of our cities, we see it as the way to make our cities work (Hunt, 2004, p. 350).

In what follows, it will be suggested that the success of investment in iconic cultural projects depends above all upon people’s sense of belonging in a place and the degree to which culture-led regeneration can engage with that sense of belonging, whilst balancing achievements of the past with ambitions for the future.

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Context

The impact of iconic developments on the re-emergence of deindustrialised communities is a matter of continued policy debate. John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister has suggested that

There's a quiet revolution taking place in our leading cities. Places that were once the engine room of the industrial revolution, employing millions in mills, factories, ports and shipyards, are learning new ways to create wealth in a global economy where brain has replaced brawn (DCMS, 2004, p. 12).

But there is undoubtedly a danger in assuming that cultural investment can provide some kind of an alternative future for all deindustrialised cities. This reflects a broader debate in which commentators such as Richard Florida have suggested that creativity has an increasingly significant role to play in the social and economic development of our cities and that

regional economic growth is driven by the location choices of creative people—the holders of creative capital—who prefer places that are diverse, tolerant and open to new ideas (Florida, 2002, p. 223).

From this point of view, quality of place has overtaken quality of life as the factor in determining why creative people live where they live. The suggestion might therefore be that iconic projects provide tangible evidence of the quality of place. They are, in effect, symbols of a place in which creative people can feel they will belong. This certainly appears to be the feeling surrounding Liverpool, recently awarded 'Capital of Culture 2008' with Egbert Kossak, one of Europe's leading regeneration experts, commenting that

The Fourth Grace will do for Liverpool what the Opera House has done for Sydney. Liverpool has won praise from around the world for preserving its historical buildings. The time is right for a new, iconic building which will represent the future (Liverpool, 2004, p. 1).

Regardless of the demise of the Fourth Grace, the optimistic tone here is a telling reflection of how those involved in the production of iconic cultural developments tend to perceive such projects. But it remains unclear how far the realities of urban regeneration can match up to the expectations both the Arts fraternity and policy-makers have of cultural investment on this kind of scale.

In recent years, the world's waterfronts have provided a particular focus for culture-led regeneration. Marshall (2001, p. 3) describes the waterfront as space "in the city which allows expressions of hope for urban vitality". He goes on to point out that in cities such as London, New York, Vancouver, Sydney and San Francisco waterfronts have historically been the staging-points for the import and export of goods, but that this is no longer the case in our information-saturated, service-oriented economies

These waterfront redevelopment projects speak to our future, and to our past. They speak to a past based in industrial production, to a time of tremendous growth and expansion, to social and economic structures that no longer exist... Through historical circumstance, these sites are immediately adjacent to centers of older cities, and typically are separated from the physical, cultural and physiological connections that exist in every city. They speak to a future by providing opportunities for cities to reconnect with the water's edge (Marshall, 2001, p. 5).

Much of the debate around the significance of iconic projects of this kind are tied up with concerns as to whether or not such investment can effectively ameliorate the consequences of deindustrialisation. In this context, McGuigan (1996) identifies a series of urban regeneration schemes frequently led by flagship cultural projects during the 1980s in cities such as Baltimore and later, in the UK, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and Cardiff (see Cowell and Thomas, 2002; Bassett *et al.*, 2002). The problem with these sorts of developments, according to McGuigan is that they actually

articulate the interests and tastes of the postmodern professional and managerial class without solving the problems of a diminishing production base, growing disparities of wealth and opportunity, and the multiple forms of social exclusion (McGuigan, 1996, p. 99).

Sharon Zukin (1991), meanwhile, refers to 'quixotic' urban renewal projects that simply remain unproven as far as their economic benefits might be concerned. Miles and Miles point out that new cultural institutions such as Tate Modern, the Guggenheim in Bilbao and Barcelona's Museum of Contemporary Art play a prime role as facilitators of cultural display, but perhaps more problematically, as signs of urban affluence

Flagship cultural institutions, frequently financed as public sector investments to attract private-sector renovation of the surrounding area, tend to be engines not of democratisation of culture but of gentrification . . . This is not all bad, in that run-down areas can be transformed, but it may displace a residual population unless it is adequately protected, and establishes a connection . . . between cultural space and wealth accumulation (Miles and Miles, 2004, p. 53).

The social impacts of culture-led regeneration are not necessarily always positive. Even in those circumstances where positive impacts are assumed, causality is always uncertain. In this context, Vegara (2001) refers to the "miracle of Bilbao" in a necessarily tentative fashion. Back in 2001 the industrial decline of Bilbao was undoubted, but Vegara could only at this time go far enough to predict confidently that the conditions were such that Bilbao "could" arise from the ruins of its industrial past, not least as a result of the impact of the Guggenheim Museum. The broader sociological impact of cultural investment on this scale remains intangible and new lessons are constantly having to be learned. For example, in his discussion of the regeneration of Porto in the aftermath of its stewardship of the 'European Capital of Culture

2001' Balsas (2004) concludes that too much emphasis was put on attracting public investment to regenerate public space, replacing infrastructures and modernising cultural facilities, but at the expense of more fundamental institutional capacity building and civic creativity.

Communities of Culture?

The development of cities such as Bilbao and Porto represents both a localisation of global and economic social forces and a location in a world capitalist order as Zukin (1991) points out. The success of such developments is perhaps dependent upon the degree to which the reinvention of the urban landscape fits in with, rather than being foisted upon, the identity of the place concerned. For this reason, the notion of community is crucial. Authors such as Harvey (1990) have described how the post-modern condition has led to the 'end of community', while Delanty (2003) highlights the role of the global city in displacing urban communities. It could be argued that in a global age cultural investment can at least potentially provide a means of revitalising communities by providing them with a new so-called post-industrial future that can help them readjust to the new economic conditions in which they find themselves. As Delanty suggests

Community is communicative in the sense of being formed in collective action based on place, and is not merely an expression of an underlying cultural identity (Delanty, 2003, p. 71).

From this point of view, local identities are socially constructed rather than just being identified with a locality simply because it happens to be there.

But culture-led regeneration will not automatically engage with local communities. An alternative interpretation would indeed be that a lot of culture-led investment inevitably produces placeless forms of cultural representation (Dicks, 2003). From this perspective, culture-led regeneration projects all too often rely on formulaic development

plans producing standardised results; what Short (1989) calls the new international blandscape “sterile and lacking in imagination” (Owen, 1993, p. 15). Such cities are only distinguished from each other on artificial grounds—grounds constructed symbolically by the marketeer

The ready-made identities assigned by city boosters and disseminated through the mass media often reduce several different visions of local culture into a single vision that reflects the aspirations of a powerful elite and the values, lifestyles, and expectations of potential investors and tourists. These practices are thus highly elitist and exclusionary, and often signify to more disadvantaged segments of the population that they have no place in this revitalized and gentrified urban spectacle (Broudehoux, 2004, p. 26).

Dicks (2003, p. 82) points out that the underlying rationale behind flagship redevelopment projects is, in the above context, to generate new consumer demand by attracting new visitors and shoppers to the city and thus “is rarely directed primarily at improving the quality of life of existing residents”. Dicks discusses the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay as an example of regeneration that could be accused of distancing the project from its locality and thus from the existing local culture. Meanwhile, Broudehoux goes on to argue that a city’s cultural capital cannot be easily manipulated, insofar as inappropriately blatant image construction will inevitably give rise to tensions and political conflicts. In effect, the representation of a city must do more than simply construct a ‘pseudo-place’ (Augé, 1995).

It will be suggested in this article that an economically driven vision of culture-led regeneration may serve to underestimate the diverse meanings which all social groups potentially invest in a development like that on NewcastleGateshead Quayside. It is in this context that Bianchini and Schwengel (1991) call for a genuinely public debate about the reimagining of cities, a debate that is not left to the marketing strategy and

urban boosters, or which constructs an idealised middle class of what a city should be, but one that genuinely engages with the people that make a city what it is.

NewcastleGateshead Quayside

In order for a genuine public debate to take place and in order to understand the impact of culture-led regeneration and in particular the relationship between iconic projects and a sense of place and space, it is essential to contextualise the historical and sociological conditions under which such circumstances arise. This approach is not one that sits very happily with the short-termism associated with an approach to cultural policy that seeks to ‘prove’ the cultural case (Bailey *et al.*, 2004). An approach that prioritises the meaning attached to iconic developments may prove far more beneficial in determining why a development is successful. This article will therefore focus on the findings that are beginning to emerge from a 10-year longitudinal project, the Cultural Investments and Strategic Impact Research (CISIR)¹ project funded by Gateshead Borough Council, Newcastle City Council, The Arts Council, England, One NorthEast and Culture North-East, which is concerned with the social, economic and cultural impact of cultural investment on NewcastleGateshead Quayside. Although just 3 years through its 10-year course, this research is beginning to indicate that iconic projects can serve a significant ideological function, at least if at the right place in the right time, as far as they play a key role in not simply reflecting a sense of local identity but in actually rearticulating and reconfiguring that identity in complex and paradoxical ways.

NewcastleGateshead Quayside has in recent years undergone a remarkable transformation. Millions of pounds of public and private investment have revitalised the Quayside both in the eyes of its people and, perhaps even more so, in the eyes of the outside world (Minton, 2003). This revitalisation centres around three iconic pieces of architecture: the BALTIC Contemporary Art Gallery built

for £46 million; the Sage Gateshead Music Centre designed by Foster and Partners at a cost of £70 million and the Gateshead Millennium Bridge built at a cost of £22 million which in combination have served to redefine an area of industrial decline. The BALTIC is a new contemporary arts centre that overlooks the River Tyne. The Arts Council National Lottery funded project saw the conversion, by Gateshead Borough Council, of a 1940s grain warehouse into the largest gallery for contemporary art in the UK which aimed to attract 400 000 visitors annually. Originally conceived as an art factory, a place for artists from all over the world to work, the BALTIC has no permanent collection and boasts five generous spaces for contemporary exhibitions. Opened to the public in December 2004, The Sage Gateshead is not envisaged purely as a music venue. It is also a home for the Northern Sinfonia and Folkworks as well as a Music Education Centre. The reinvention of Gateshead Quay, which also includes residential developments and two international hotels, is linked to the Newcastle side of the Tyne by the Millennium Bridge, the world's first tilting bridge which was opened in September 2001 and won the RIBA Stirling Prize for architecture in 2002. In combination, these developments have given new life to NewcastleGateshead Quayside, providing the region with a renewed public focal point. It is, however, important to remember that the development of the Quayside has not been without its political tensions.

The history of the relationship between Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council has not always been an easy one. The notion of NewcastleGateshead is in itself a construction of the destination-marketing agency Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, intent on cashing in on both the reputation of Newcastle upon Tyne as a regional capital and party city, and the cultural iconicity on the Gateshead side of the Tyne. The developments on the Quayside have undoubtedly played a key role in highlighting the potential benefits to be had from the two councils putting their local rivalry to one side for the

common good. The Quayside has long provided a focal point for the region and, indeed, appears to be becoming increasingly important in this respect. However, the marriage between Newcastle and Gateshead is largely symbolic in nature and one issue this research will seek to address is the degree to which the renaming process is 'owned' by the people of Newcastle and Gateshead.

According to DCMS figures, the total of around £250 million investment by Gateshead Council on the Quayside in order to construct this world-class arts, leisure and residential development has in turn generated over £1 billion in private-sector funding. Given the public reception of the Quayside developments, common-sense would suggest that the NewcastleGateshead Quayside represents something of a success. In policy circles, NewcastleGateshead is often heralded as an example of the immense potential of investment of this kind (Minton, 2003). However, it would of course be grossly misleading to assume that the iconic nature of these developments guarantees success or that investment at a similar level will automatically kick-start regeneration elsewhere. There is, indeed, a body of work that questions the 'just add culture and stir' school of thought (Evans, 2001; Gibson and Stevenson, 2004; Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004).

Most importantly, the culture of a place is an essential ingredient to the success of culture-led regeneration (Jayne, 2004). The DCMS (2004, p. 22) itself recognises that the initial economic surge produced by a large project "can be difficult to sustain unless it is part of a wider regeneration and unless it is formally rooted in the community". The NewcastleGateshead example serves to illustrate how complicated such a relationship can be, not least in its construction of public space which frames

a vision of social life in the city, a vision both for those who live there, and interact in urban public spaces every day, and for the tourists, commuters, and wealthy folks who are free to flee the city's needy embrace (Zukin, 1995, p. 259).

The relationship between iconic developments on the Quayside and the wider community lies at the heart of the CISIR project. The cultural dimension of the research programme has included a series of major surveys carried out by Market Research UK which seeks information on cultural values and attendance among the local population and how these factors relate to broader social and economic indicators on a national basis. However, the degree to which statistical data can inform our understanding of the actual meaning of culture-led regeneration is doubtful, not least because changes in attendance are often used to justify public funding in the arts.

In terms of measuring the apparent willingness of the population of NewcastleGateshead to take ownership of development on the Quayside, it is worth noting that CISIR respondents were advised that expenditure on the bridge, the BALTIC and the SAGE Gateshead amounted to £250 million about half of which came from public expenditure. Sixty-six per cent of NewcastleGateshead respondents in 2003 thought this was a reasonable amount, an insignificant drop from 69 per cent who felt the same in 2002. This compares with 27 per cent who felt this expenditure was too high in 2003 and 23 per cent in 2002—further evidence that the development has strong public support. Indeed, 95 per cent of respondents in NewcastleGateshead in 2003 felt that the Quayside was improving the national image of the area while 89 per cent felt that the developments were creating local pride in the area. But of course the above data do not in themselves prove anything. Granted, the CISIR project is beginning to unearth evidence that the Quayside is starting to have a significant impact on people's attitudes to culture (Bailey *et al.* 2004). However, as Evans (2004) suggests, it remains notoriously difficult to define and to quantify the social impacts of cultural activity. In order to delve beneath the surface of cultural investment, it is indeed necessary to address the meanings with which local people endow the Quayside and have endowed the Quayside over time.

A Centre of Urban Sociability

The Quayside is a space that is well accustomed to change. However, at its heart appears a long tradition of sociability. Over the remainder of the research programme, the meaning of the Quayside will be addressed from a variety of angles, but the first step along this path was constituted by a series of group interviews undertaken with older residents of Newcastle and Gateshead who were identified through Age Concern. The interviews were limited to older people in order to address the meanings attached to the historical development of the Quayside in as focused a fashion as possible. The aim of these interviews was to tap into the role of the Quayside as a key urban space and to address the meanings with which people have endowed that space over time. Questions of historical and cultural change are fundamental to the meanings that underpin people's relationships with the Quayside as the following quotations from older residents of NewcastleGateshead indicate. The Quayside has always been a social space

Everybody spoke to everybody down on the Quayside in the '40s. Perfect strangers. It didn't matter. But nobody did anything about the quayside. It was a disgrace! But, there was an excitement about it. It was a change to get out of the house.

You saw all life down there in all its stages!

For decades, the Quayside was a focal point for family outings. One Gateshead resident who used to live in Washington recalled how an annual visit to the Quayside was one of the most exciting events of the year

It was a great adventure. My family would be waiting to hear about what had gone on.

The Quayside was an industrious place but also a place characterised by comradeship and repartee: “[We] always enjoyed pay day because [we] got paid in the pub”. The Quayside was a vibrant place, perhaps personified above all by Paddy's market which was the main attraction on a Sunday afternoon. Memories of the Quayside were overwhelmingly

positive as were opinions about more recent developments: "And what is the BALTIC, the BALTIC then was a flour mill, but to me it is a tourist attraction now. It's lovely". It is indeed worth remembering that for a period the Quayside was, according to these respondents, pretty much derelict and unloved, a row of unremarkable warehouses and sheds—"In the 1960s I used to be a city guide and I used to be ashamed if it was my turn to go down by the Cooperage because it was such a filthy horrible site to show people". Things have changed considerably, many of the older people having visitors who expressly want to see the Quayside

It is just a tourist attraction now because people want to go there. I send cards to my family in Canada with the bridge on and early on in the year I had my sister-in-law and my niece and they wanted to go down and see the bridge and wanted to go and see the BALTIC. My sister-in-law was not Canadian she was English as well and she had an idea of what it was like before she left and she wanted to go and compare and see what she thought of it.

We went on a day trip. It made my day when I went down there and saw the bridge it was the first time I had been down and it just made my day the way the whole area had changed.

Even given their undoubted fondness for the past, for these older people the Quayside is symbolic of a new improved Newcastle-Gateshead

[In those days] everything had to be loaded in the right way otherwise it would probably go down there or go down there you know but it had to be done in a proper manner. But as I say it is progress in a lot of ways but apart from feeling sad about not having this kind of thing now I do think it has improved and we are making use of the Quayside now and making money for Tyneside and Gateshead which is amalgamated now which they weren't at one time. It was dirty old Gateshead and rotten Newcastle it was.

The Quayside may have been 'dirty' and 'rotten', but that was in a sense irrelevant because it *belonged* to the people of Tyneside

It was very dirty, it was just a dirty old hole, excuse me. But it was our Tyne you know. It was where Tyneside people were brought up. And they knew this.

In many ways, as it is perhaps today, the Tyne was a 'focal point' for the people of Tyneside. It was indeed, "the heart of Tyneside, the city grew up from there". It is under these circumstances that the Quayside retains its aura as a symbol of the north-east.

Culture-led regeneration does not inevitably lead to the construction of a 'blandscape'. Critics of developments on the Quayside in the 1990s may have been justified in describing the mixture of office, bars and restaurants on the Newcastle side in this fashion. However, in combination with the iconic projects across the river, the Quayside offers something very different. The Millennium Bridge, the BALTIC and the Sage Gateshead are symbols of the future rooted in the past. This is no better expressed than in the case of the BALTIC which was built in the shell of a disused flour mill. As Moore and Abbas (2004) and Forrest and Kearns (1999) suggest, the physical environment has an important role to play in fostering community morale and indeed for building bridges between generations and groups in a local community. The iconic projects on the Quayside provide an avenue through which this potential can conceivably be realised.

Behind the Quayside

It is not enough to say that investment on iconic projects on the Quayside feeds into the identity of the people in the region. What is it, under these circumstances, about the identity of the north-east that makes the Quayside developments work in the way they do? As Byrne (1999) indicates, the North's cultural identity is very much the product of the mixing of immigrant populations from Ireland, Scotland, Cumberland, Yorkshire, Scandinavia and other places in England

who were attracted to the area by the prospect of high wages. The banks of the River Tyne once housed shipbuilding, chemical works, coalmining and other heavy industry that lay at the heart of the industrial might of the north-east (MacPherson, 1993). However, deindustrialisation brought with it urban decay as Power and Mumford (1999) point out. In discussing the Newcastle example, Power describes a situation in which Newcastle had entered a cycle of escalating physical decay in which houses were progressively being abandoned and boarded up. The causes of such a development, as Hall (2002) points out, were complex but characterised by the long-term structural decline of the economy, notably during the 1970s and 1980s, and thus long-term unemployment, with poor-performing schools perpetuating the problem, plus social disorder and even gang warfare. This was a particular problem in west Newcastle, despite signs that the city centre itself was by the turn of the millennium beginning to show signs of something of an urban renaissance with a thriving city centre

attracting not merely tourists and night-time visitors but also now residents who were colonizing converted warehouses and new apartment blocks: urban renaissance and urban collapse were standing side by side, sometimes as little as a mile apart (Hall, 2002, p. 418).

Global circumstances and the deindustrialisation of the north-east created a set of circumstances in which regional particularity had to be transferred from production to consumption and this was an essentially divisive process (Vall, 1999). In this context, Keith Wrightson's thesis that Northern identity is about pride and truculence is insightful

A northern upbringing frequently involves the inculcation of an unusually powerful set of attachments to place; a deep rooting in a particular physical, social and cultural environment. At the same time, however, those loyalties are strongly inflected, almost from the outset, by awareness of a questionable place within the larger social

and political geography of England (Wrightson, 1995, p. 29).

According to this view, pride qualified by anxiety breeds truculence. Perhaps it is in this way that cultural initiatives such as those we have described have apparently had such a fundamental impact on local peoples: the NewcastleGateshead Quayside gave the people of the region something tangible with which they could reassert their collective identities. The sociability generally associated with the people of Newcastle also plays an important role here. Newcastle, for instance, was recently voted one of the world's top 10 party cities by the Weisman Travel Agency. Lancaster points out that the working classes have been the 'leading' class in Newcastle for two centuries, the local élite having abandoned the city for the mansions of the Tyne valley. The end product of all this is a noisy and confident city and a city that is having to adapt to social, economic and cultural change: a city that fulfils many of the key requirements of successful city-making (Hall, 1998). As Lancaster puts it

Cities never stay still, they are always changing, consciously or unconsciously trying to be something else. Cities are places where people strive to overcome the negative effects of past and current circumstances and struggle to create meaning, joy and hope in the place that history has located them (Lancaster, 1995, p. 7).

It is in this sense that the emphasis needs to be placed on the relationship between individuals and their physical and social relationships, because it is this relationship that underpins the transactional nature of place. From this perspective, places are in a constant state of flux as the town 'rubs off' on its residents in a processual fashion. From this point of view, individuals actively construct and construe the experience of their immediate environment which is more than simply the product of broader cultural processes, but is about the relationship between people and place (Bonnes *et al.*, 2003; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996).

Many commentators struggle to grapple with the identities of spaces and places and how those identities are played out through history and NewcastleGateshead is no exception in providing a significant challenge to sociologists, geographers and historians alike (Minton, 2003). But the example of NewcastleGateshead Quayside also raises the possibility that investment in culture is not simply about regenerating the local economy, but can actually serve to revitalise the identities of the people of a city and even of a region; that it can provide new ways for those people to look into themselves and out of themselves. In other words, it can reinvigorate the relationship between cultural, place and personal identity and offer a permanent legacy. Such a realisation has significant implications for the ways in which policymakers engage with and indeed place expectations upon iconic cultural projects. As Hunt puts it

The most successful cultural enterprises rightly announce themselves with an architectural statement, but they also draw on indigenous traditions which appeal to the city's self-identity. Yet all of them suffer from a common dependency upon lottery and state funds which ensures that so much cultural regeneration is dangerously dependent upon political fashion and consumer trends. Grand-standing, high-prestige developments funded by outside quangos usually falter if there is no local talent or support networks behind them (Hunt, 2004, p. 348).

In his book *The Uses of Disorder*, Richard Sennett (1970, p. 51) argues that in reconceptualising the city we should not be seeking to restore utopian visions of a small intimate urban sociability, but should rather seek to find "some condition of urban life appropriate for an affluent, technological era". Sennett argues that in an ever-elaborate bureaucratic and technological world, the social dimensions of urban life have rather been neglected

There were hidden threads of social structure in ... poor city areas, threads that

give the people who lived there other regions of identity beyond their own poverty. Essentially, the last few decades of prosperity have righted the injustice these city people suffered, but at the cost of the breakup of their group life (Sennett, 1970, p. 53).

From this point of view, city life is less unpredictable and more coherent than it was in the past and, while this might be a good thing in terms of the efficiency of the city, it is not so good for us as human beings. Above all, a new centring on home and family has created a situation in which social spaces are conceived as intimate and small and therefore based around the home. In short, Sennett argues that the essence and diversity of urban life have been undermined leaving a situation in which our cities are crying out for new forms of complexity.

The argument being presented here is that yes, in some respects the iconic cultural developments represented on the Quayside and taken at face value are inevitably socially exclusive. The apartment buildings that have been developed immediately behind the BALTIC are more accessible to some social groups than others. At least some of the art presented in BALTIC is inevitably more accessible to some social groups than others. In many respects then, this project is inevitably one formed around the building-blocks of economic and cultural capital. However, those building-blocks can potentially produce new forms of complexity and diverse experience that may transcend this superficial exclusivity. Moreover, perhaps iconic developments such as that on NewcastleGateshead Quayside can successfully tap into and reconfigure aspects of place identity. Perhaps the Quayside will work because it offers a diverse range of new experiences, juxtaposing aspects of the arts, night-life culture and pride in place, that mean different things for different social groups and different identities. Lefebvre (1991) argues that the success of a city image depends upon the degree to which the physical image of a city and its rhetorical image complement each other.

Perhaps NewcastleGateshead Quayside will succeed in traversing the rhetorical to provide a new form of urban sociability.

Landmark sites such as that on Newcastle-Gateshead Quayside have a significant symbolic and material power. They make a powerful statement about a place and that place's intentions. But that statement is not, as we might assume, imposed upon the people of a city. Its meanings are at least potentially open to negotiation and it is the nature of that negotiation that researchers need to decipher if research into iconic culture-led regeneration is to teach us any genuine lessons. There is no one public space, as Zukin (1995) suggests. Urban space is experienced space and just because one space provides cultural opportunities that may appear to fit more readily into the habitus of a particular social group, does not necessarily mean to say it represents a form of oppression to another. It may indeed provide a means, however symbolic, of escaping from that oppression. Ultimately, landmark sights and in particular, waterfront regeneration schemes are the product of a complex of local, cultural, economic and historical factors (Bassett *et al.*, 2002). As Breen and Rigby argue

Waterfront redevelopment and expansion is, in short, the best current example globally of the resilience of cities, of their ability to adapt to changed circumstances, to adjust to new technological impacts, to seize opportunities and to forge new images for themselves, as well as to create new or altered neighbourhoods for their inhabitants. ... Urban waterfront projects do not always succeed. But where they do, they have a dramatic and visible impact that is capable not only of enriching a city's economy but of improving its collective self-image (Breen and Rigby, 1996, p. 11).

Healey (2002) has also suggested that civic attention and thus cultural identity are drifting away from grand public plazas and architectural monuments. Nowadays, the football club or the retail precinct is the centre of civic attention. But the NewcastleGateshead

example at least hints at the fact that this need not always be the case. One interpretation of the Quayside is as a centre of consumption, playing to the aesthetic sensibilities of the middle classes (Pollard, 2004). But that is one interpretation amongst many. It could equally be argued that global forms of consumption that appear on the surface to be imposed are actually renegotiated at the local level (Evans, 2001). It is in this sense that the Quayside has emerged as a focal point for the 'imagining' of Newcastle-Gateshead; an imagining that has developed into a mobilising force in the public realm of governance in Newcastle and Gateshead (Healey, 2002). Politically, the Quayside has been a catalyst for revitalising a climate of political collaboration between two rival councils. The challenge now is to maintain momentum; to use these iconic projects as a foundation upon which culture-led regeneration can undermine those aspects of social polarisation that are so often the inevitable consequence of post-industrial developments of this kind. But this is only the beginning of the story. If social polarisation is to be avoided, the iconography of the Quayside needs to precipitate a permanent legacy which taps into the cultural lives of all social groups. The BALTIC and the Sage Gateshead are at least vocal in their determination to appeal to a broad range of social groups, notably through Sage Gateshead's efforts to incorporate all forms of musical performance and through both organisations' education programmes. Whether success is achieved in this regard, only time will tell.

Conclusions

The meaning of 'culture' and the impact of cultural provision on place is in a sense intangible. Of course human beings endow places with meaning and thus identity is a socio-spatial phenomenon (Neill, 2004). Liggett (1995, p. 252) therefore suggests that representational space is heavily loaded and deeply symbolic: calling upon shared experiences and interpretations at a profound level. From this point of view, iconic projects

provide a key source of cultural meaning. Alternatively, Zukin (1991, p. 268) argues that urban space structures people's "perceptions, interactions, and sense of well-being or despair, belonging or alienation". In this context, I want to suggest that the Quayside, the oldest part of Newcastle and until the 19th century the commercial hub of the city, represents an especially important representational space for the north-east and thus plays a key role in structuring the above emotions. In many respects the Quayside has always been at the centre of the region, in terms of the region's industrial heritage, not least given the iconography of the Tyne Bridge opened in 1929. Thus, the contention that meanings can become more important than the facts in policy deliberation is a prescient one (Neill, 2004). But perhaps the key point here is that policy-makers and local people alike align themselves to imagined communities and in this case to an imagined post-industrial future. The Quayside offers the possibility of an optimistic future in an otherwise pessimistic age. However, the optimism engendered in such iconic developments is rooted in the foundations provided by NewcastleGateshead's industrial past.

The cultural identity of a place is not simply the product of the moment, but of the evolution and adaptability of time. For this reason, questions of identity should lie at the heart of the discussion of NewcastleGateshead, and also in discussions of culture-led regeneration more generally. This is a point taken up by Neill (2004), who refers to Hall, who in turn argues that

identification is constructed through common origin and shared characteristics with people and groups, or perhaps with an ideal, and the solidarity that emanates from that ideal (Hall, 1996, p. 13).

In other words, identity is processual, marked by power relationships and uses a variety of cultural building materials from history, geography, religion, sexuality and so on (Castells, 1997). The construction of identity is as likely to be based on the symbolic as it is on the real: by imagined differences

as compared with the other and by common characteristics shared by a particular social or indeed geographical group. Hall goes on to describe cultural identity as a sort of shared culture, a collective true self or common ancestry which may take precedence over other aspects of identity. For this reason, iconic developments cannot be understood in isolation. As Hayden *et al.* put it

Restoring significant shared meanings for many neglected urban spaces involves claiming the entire cultural landscape as an important part of history, not just its architectural monuments (Hayden *et al.*, 1996, p. 109).

The Quayside development is therefore a key ingredient in what Moore and Abbas (2004) describe as the yet unexplored symbiotic relationship between culture and place, but more specifically perhaps, the relationship between cultural *history* and space.

There is, of course, no straightforward answer to the question, can culture make cities work? The impact of cultural investment in iconic projects is highly site-specific. There is no magic formula for success. But the important point here and one that deserves further investigation is that despite the political nature of culture-led regeneration it does not necessarily produce a meaningless landscape. Such a view represents an aesthetic simplification and not one that seeks to engage with the meanings with which people endow iconic projects such as that on NewcastleGateshead Quayside. I am not suggesting here that an approach to the impact of iconic projects in the urban landscape should be uncritical; far from it. But any such analysis should be steeped in the historical identities of people and places which can therefore provide a starting-point from which critical analyses can develop.

Developments on NewcastleGateshead Quayside emerged from a spirit in which politicians, policy-makers and Arts activists were determined to provide the region with the world-class facilities they thought it deserved. And yet Broudehoux paints a picture in which city leaders manipulate

cultural forms and symbols to engineer consensus among city residents, foster local pride, and promote a shared sense of identity . . . urban beautification also has a depoliticizing effect, and detracts attention from social and economic inequities by reducing the city to a surface assumed to be transparent and unproblematic (Broudehoux, 2004, p. 27).

In constructing such an image of iconic cultural development, Broudehoux presents a rather static image of city life and the meanings people attach to it. The iconic projects on NewcastleGateshead Quayside are landmark buildings that undoubtedly contribute to the pride and confidence of people in the region; an essential element to any programme of urban regeneration (Forrest and Kearns, 1999). But to describe this process as depoliticising underestimates the degree to which the meanings which people invest in developments of this kind are individualised and place-specific. As Zukin (1995) puts it, public space constitutes a window into a city's soul. NewcastleGateshead Quayside tells you as much about the north-east's industrial past as its ambitions for a post-industrial future. Although in its early days, the CISIR programme aspires to understand the degree to which that future can be a reality for the people of NewcastleGateshead and the north-east. The programme will continue to do so by seeking to analyse the way meaning is constructed around the Quayside, whilst comprehending the Quayside's economic impact in this context.

It is essential to seek out the motivations and expectations people bring to their interaction with cities in order to understand the likelihood that significant investment in iconic projects will succeed in specific places. Culture-led regeneration on the scale of NewcastleGateshead Quayside may indeed not work elsewhere, but at this time and in this place it offers a symbolic representation of a region that can succeed and a region that can begin to fight back from a period of industrial decline and neglect.

Vegara's thoughts on Bilbao are especially pertinent here

The greatest miracle that Bilbao is experiencing is a dramatic change in attitude. The feelings of failure and pessimism brought about by prolonged economic crisis and political conflicts have given way to a collective optimism . . . The majority of the Basque community—the public institutions, the private sector, and the civil society—is now convinced that it is indeed possible to reinvent Bilbao and the Basque Country in the new post-industrial age. This is the true miracle of Bilbao (Vegara, 2001, p. 94).

The degree of social and economic control that the south continues to exert over the north may or may not be exaggerated, but the fact that London's Millennium Bridge wobbled and Gateshead's did not is undeniably real. It is real for NewcastleGateshead as a city seeking to establish a sense of itself for consumption by the outside world, but most importantly it is real for the people who have lived all their lives in one or other of these two cities sitting either side of the Tyne.

Note

1. The CISIR programme of research is being conducted by colleagues at the Centre for Cultural Policy and Management, Northumbria University.

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