

# Culture-Led Regeneration in the UK——A Case Study on Hull

Wenzheng Wang

School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK  
Email: wyyx054@163.com

## Abstract:

Culture-led regeneration is an important development of cultural policy in recent years. This paper takes the city of Hull, which was selected as a British cultural city in 2017, and discusses the strategy and implementation process of cultural regeneration. Analyzes the cultural activities of Hull City, and assess its impact on economic growth, social solidarity, and resident well-being. The study found that cultural regeneration significantly promoted the local economy, enhanced community cohesion, and improved the quality of life of the residents. However, Hull City also faces challenges in resource allocation and long-term sustainability. The conclusions of this paper show that cultural regeneration has reference value for other cities intentionally implementing similar strategies and helps to achieve sustainable and inclusive urban development.

**Keywords:** cultural regeneration, Hull city, cultural city, cultural policy

## 1. Introduction

Culture-led regeneration has been considered one of the recent significant developments in cultural policy. According to Yang (2023), it has come to the forefront as a key framework for urban revitalization and economic growth. This essay will look into the strategies and the process of culture-led regeneration in the United Kingdom with a case study of Hull which was chosen as the UK City of Culture in 2017. To this effect, the essay having the case study focus will analyze and discuss cultural activities that have been used to drive the economy, foster togetherness, and improve the residents' wellbeing. This will include a description about culture-based regeneration as a strategy, as well as criticisms and positive literature analyzing its success. Some of the case studies for these can be taken from the Hull's experience, where the practical effects of the various such initiatives put into practice would be described in detail along with the reactions received, the problems encountered and how these were tackled. Last of all, the essay will end with the evaluation of the results obtained in Hull and its relevance to other regions that may be interested in emulating the strategies of urban revitalization. Hence, in this exploration, this essay seeks to offer a view of how culture can be used to promote sustainable and inclusive urban development.

## 2. Existing Literature on Culture-Led Regeneration

Culture-led regeneration is a process that assumes the use

of cultural activities, facilities or investment in the process of revitalization of certain regions, sectors or entire cities. According to Bystrova & Pevnaya (2021), the idea is based on the belief that culture can bring new life to abandoned cities through tourism, business opportunities, community identities, and improved lifestyles for the populations. This literature review shows that this possibility has some advantages and disadvantages in policy implementation and the challenges it poses.

Culture-based regeneration strategy has attracted the focus of academic and policy makers since desperate attempts are made by cities and regions for regeneration. Dinardi's (2015) analysis in "Unsettling the Role of Culture as Panacea: 'The Politics of Culture-Led Urban Regeneration in Buenos Aires' for example provides a critical overview of the concept of culture as a panacea to urbanization issues. According to Dinardi, cultural regeneration is a concept that people use more often to project political messages, which are subject to debate. This critical perspective is important in considering the complexity of cultural policies as well as the processes of their enactment. Similar to what Dinardi pointed out, the process of cultural regeneration was originally fed into practices, given that the politic in Buenos Aires was stained with political corruption as well as mismanagement. The conversion of the Palacio de Correos y Telecomunicaciones to be used as a cultural center (Dinardi, 2015), for example, was a more political than cultural move. This case illustrates how culture-led development initiatives have hidden political agendas; they can therefore generate a range of outcomes that are

often highly paradoxical in character.

Borrowing from Fahmi, McCann, & Koster (2015)'s work on the creative economy in Indonesia and especially emphasizing the position and role of negotiators in the context of cultural policies, it is possible to underline the significance of regional culture and institutional conditions. Their study, "Creative Economy Policy in Developing Countries: Unlike the Malaysian case, which focuses on a single state, "The Case of Indonesia: Dissecting Creative Economy Discourse" focuses on the differences and dynamics of creative economy interpretations and policy enactments in diverse Indonesian locales. The study brings out that Indonesia specific city cases like Bandung, Yogyakarta and Surakarta engaged different strategies based on their different contexts as moderated by intermediary agencies. Another example, Bandung positions itself well in line with the concept of the creative economy as it has good support from the academics and local communities. While others hegemonically instrumentalize traditional creative industries innovation elsewhere while other cities reimagine them without much creativity. This variability therefore calls for the development of differential policy strategies that should accommodate variations in socio-economic characteristics of the local context, as well as the recognition of the important role played by local agents as intermediaries in processes of translating and contextualizing global policy concepts to local settings.

In the UK, the Local Government Association's report "Culture-led Regeneration: A very useful source here is a publication of the National Cultural Institute, "Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth" (2017) that gives an overview of many cultural regeneration projects throughout the country. Special focus is made on establishing cultural industries as major sources of employment, as well as on demonstrating the post-impact of cultural-led regeneration programs in terms of increasing tourism supply, improving social inclusion, and even increasing people's health status. This article consists of 15 case studies of various CLRs and effects that have been grouped into four categories: development and management of individual cultural assets, community developmental cultural initiatives and programs, systematic development and management of culture facility, and culture and arts/ cultural festivals. These case studies reveal that for culture-led regeneration to work, there should be strong underpinning vision, sustained focus, an emphasis on the area's distinctiveness, risk taking, and the active participation of the people within the society. For instance, the regeneration programs in Margate, Chester and Southwark (Local Government Association, 2017) demonstrate how the individual cultural organizations can be properly placed and also properly funded for cultural activities to spur the economy

and engagement of the people.

Furthermore, the findings of the Local Government Association support Dinardi on the issues with culture-led regeneration and Fahmi et al. However, political agendas might take over cultural ones and bring changes contrary to the intended ones, or in some cases, some cultural initiatives do not promote a true spirit of change requiring proper contextual modification or active community participation. The role of culture as an approach to development was also underlined as a worthwhile tool and as a method of a creative development strategy, while the issues of vulnerability and weakness of imposed cultural identities and false community mobilization were noted as crucial points in CPC-led and other similar regeneration experiences across the literature.

### **3. Hull: A Case Study of Culture-Led Regeneration**

Hull being the UK City of Culture in 2017 is a good example of a culture-led regeneration initiative in practice. The concept behind this endeavor was to revitalize the current image of the city, boost economic activity and inspire unity among the people.

#### **3.1 Economic Impact**

Generally, Hull achieved a lot in terms of economic benefit as a City of Culture. Evaluating the campaign, the University of Hull noted that the project amounted to more than £200 billion in the economy of the region (Local Government Association, 2017). An increase in cultural activities attracted a large number of visitors; more than five million people attended at least one cultural event resulting in improved business activity in the related sectors such as tourism and trade. The enhanced visibility and positive media attention similarly brought new investments to the city, which also played part a vibrant economy transformation.

#### **3.2 Social Impact**

In addition to the improved economy, the Hull culture's renewal also had social consequences. 80,000 people engaged across 200 events in the period 2015 to 2017. These events were exhibitions and other activities as part of the cultural program meant for the audiences. These events involved both local and international artists, and involved grand projects of art interventions in public space, as well as numerous local-based projects, guaranteeing broad involvement of community members (Local Government Association, 2017). By giving more focus to the institutions such as openness and peoples' participation it became possible to strengthen the positive feelings within the residents of Hull and the creation of a new identity.

Walthamstow Creative Connections also engaged 500,000 people in the first six months, thereby improving the quality of life for local residents (Local Government Association, 2017).

### 3.3 Challenges and Criticisms

However, Hull cultural regeneration had some challenges as follows. Among the issues raised, one of them was the failure in the distribution of benefits in the city. The core areas of the city only experienced the influx of development and investments while some of the outer zones did not. This disparity highlights a common challenge in culture-led regeneration: to ensure that the positive outcomes will not deepen existing societal disparities in the distribution of commodities and benefits. The third problem arose with regard to the continuation of the sight after 2017. Although the year of culture generated short-term economic and social impact, sustaining the growth and interest entailed substantial financiers and planning efforts. The establishment of legacy projects, such as the Humber Street Gallery and the Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City project, which was geared to solve it with the help of constant cultural action and construction work.

### 4. Comparative Insights from Literature

A reflection on the Hull case against conceptual contributions coming from the literature allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying processes at the root of culture-led regeneration. Dinardi (2015) explains how cultural regeneration was advancing a depoliticizing development, which appears to capture the issues Hull encountered in figuring out how to deliver all of the health benefits equitably. Arguably, there is danger that cultural initiatives may be appropriated as tools for political gain, or as means to forward special interests; therefore the importance of strategic planning and authentic participation of the people.

Even in the case of Hull, Fahmi, McCann, and Koster's (2015) emphasis on local context and intermediaries is also visible here. Thus, Hull's cultural renewal exemplifies the effective cooperation between both local governmental institutions and representatives of cultural industries and the population. Such findings are in line with the results highlighted by the Local Government Association (2017) on the necessity of partnerships and local actors' engagement to activate effective cultural programs.

### 5. Conclusion

Hull's designation as the UK City of Culture in 2017 serves as a good example of practicing culture-led regeneration. The initiative illustrated how cultural products can create economic value, promote the unity of people, and help to create satisfied and fulfilled communities. But it also profiles the headache of achieving the right balance on the benefits' distribution and the difficulty of maintaining long-term forward movement. A review of various literature pertaining to culture-led regeneration, including Dinardi (2015), Fahmi, McCann, & Koster (2015), as well as the Local Government Association's (2017), all point to several factors that reveal the complications involved in the process of policy implementation. Listening to place, engagement, enduring interest and strategizing are the key characteristics that underpin the effectiveness of culture-led regeneration programs.

As other cities and regions push on with culture-led regeneration as a theory for urban regeneration, certain lessons can be drawn from the case of the city of Hull and the existing academic literature. Therefore, drawing lessons from the experiences and achieving from the prospects, the policymakers can effectively promote the cultural values and development of the society to foster the culture-led sustainable and inclusive economic growth for the prosperity of livable communities.

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