Out of place? Emotional ties to the neighbourhood in urban renewal in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

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10. Case Study: Newcastle-Gateshead, United Kingdom

10.1 Introduction

Newcastle-Gateshead is often portrayed as an exemplar of the revitalising benefits of culture-led regeneration: urban renewal in which cultural facilities take centre stage in the redressing of an area’s deprived reputation. By designing eye-catching museums and theatres filled with important works of arts and artists, the area should acquire a new purpose and identity. Several English cities (Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Cardiff) have sought to incorporate production and consumption of culture as part of their efforts to sustain a new industrial future in the post-industrial world, where cultural investment provides an alternative to the de-industrialised past.

One of the main contributors to this idea is Richard Florida’s thesis that the creative ethos is increasingly dominant in developed societies (2002): creative cities are thriving because creative people want to live there. This points to the potential of culture as a powerful means of attracting creative people into the city. Commentators, however, are eager to point out that cultural strategies simply reflect the utter absence of new industrial strategies for growth (Zukin, 1995:274) and will only increase social exclusion because these investments articulate the interests and tastes of the post-modern 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: 99). Is Newcastle-Gateshead an exception to the case or a new victim?
Newcastle and Gateshead are two city councils on the bank of the river Tyne in the north east of England. Both cities were hit hard by de-industrialisation and the closure of the coal mines in the second half of the last century. Many people left the area and social problems increased rapidly for those who were left behind. In the nineties both city councils decided to put aside their mutual competitiveness and established a partnership to bring people back to the city centre and tackle the persisting social problems. At the time Gateshead was one the 35 most deprived areas in England.

10.2 Culture-led Gentrification in Newcastle-Gateshead

Newcastle-Gateshead 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. 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 the home of 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. More important for local residents was the fact that the Millennium Bridge in Newcastle, contrary to the one in London, did not wobble!

In combination, these developments have given new life to Newcastle-Gateshead Quayside, providing the region with a renewed public focal point. In almost every writing or documentary on the north east of England at least one of these buildings is mentioned or depicted. 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. What united both city councils was a shared belief in the importance of public art for the regeneration of the area.

10.3 The Role of Public Art

Gateshead council first became involved with public art in the early 1980s when they decided to take art to the public with a series of outdoor installations because it did not have its own contemporary art gallery. The early works were so successful that in 1986 the formal public art programme was launched. This programme was given a tremendous boost during the 1990 Garden Festival at Dunston, Gateshead, which had more than 70 temporary artworks on display. The programme is directly connected to urban renewal. Art should not only be taken to the public but also be used as a means to help residents relate to their environment:

*The primary motivation for the creation of public art is to provide a ‘sense of place’ through unique works of art visible daily to the public, which help to create a quality environment* (Gateshead Council 2006: 6).
Public art should contribute to ‘attractive, functional and flexible’ streets, buildings and public spaces. Artworks and the role of the artist in this context, enhance the fabric of the urban framework, involving the public through the creative process, adding value and creating a sense of ownership. Through the commissioning process, the work of artists should positively impact on social exclusion issues, create civic pride and improve the general quality of design.

Artworks can be found in the streets, at Metro stations and on the riverside amongst other locations. Each work has been individually designed for its specific site and many incorporate references to local history. Residents have been actively involved in developing the programme of art, and thousands, from children to pensioners, participated directly by making their own art at the Shipley Art Gallery and the annual sculpture day in Saltwell Park, which attracted over 200,000 visitors. Moreover, the art programme visited a large number of neighbourhoods to organise local art activities for different residents groups, which were attended again by thousands of residents. The programme has attracted artists of national and international renown and Gateshead now boasts an outstanding and accessible collection of contemporary art, particularly sculpture.

Twenty years after the public art programme started, Gateshead has a legacy of more than 30 major works by leading artists such as Richard Deacon, Andy Goldsworthy and Antony Gormley, most paid for with cash won from sources such as the Urban Programme, Arts Council, Northern Arts, Henry Moore Foundation and local sponsors. The public art programme has now gained national recognition and won a succession of prestigious awards for a dynamic and imaginative approach to commissioning art for public sites.

One of the most famous pieces of public art in Gateshead is the Angel of the North, designed by Antony Gormley. Measuring 20 metres in height and 54 metres across, the statue stands on a site that was once occupied by a colliery at the A1/A167 road interchange. This is the main southern approach to the borough and the Tyneside conurbation. Due to its location and size the statue is viewed everyday by 90,000 people in passing from the road and railway nearby and receives 8,000 visitors per week. Research (One NorthEast, 2002) shows that the sculpture is one of the most recognised symbols in the north east of England and people have used it as a celebratory location/gathering point for events such as the...
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eclipses, pre-wedding ceremonies and New Year’s Eve. In 2002 the Angel was voted one of the ‘Wonders of Britain’ in a national survey carried out by Yellow Pages.

Interest in The Angel has not always been this kindly. During the planning and building stage the statue was heavily criticised by the local and national media, comparing it to Nazi symbolism and questioning the “large waste of tax payers’ money”. Local residents openly disputed the £800,000 price tag, which in their eyes could have been better spent on social projects such as housing or hospitals. In response Gateshead Council launched a ‘concerted press campaign’, which challenged the negative views on the sculpture and deliberately promoted the case for public art. The watershed moment came when one of Angel creator Gormley’s best-known works, *Field For The British Isles*, was exhibited at Greenesfield BR Works in Gateshead from March-May 1996. The display of 40,000 miniature terracotta figures pulled in 25,000 visitors in 10 weeks, and attracted widespread public acclaim and support, paving the way for the Angel of the North. A turning point for local residents was a daring dawn raid on April 30, 1998 by Newcastle United fans, who hoisted a giant-sized replica of a local football hero’s shirt on to the 65ft statue and draped it across its chest. Ever since, public opinion has changed about the sculpture and the Angel became a source of local pride.

The claim to success extends to Gateshead borough council, which argues that the sculpture has had a huge impact on Gateshead in terms of inward investment and arts related funding. The Angel of the North promoted the image of Gateshead as adventurous and forward-looking and symbolised what Gateshead Borough Council could achieve in urban renewal through public art. This gave investors the confidence to invest in the renewal of the Gateshead Quayside and allowed the council to secure £48 million for the refurbishment of the Baltic Flour Mill into a public museum for Modern Arts. According to the Council, Public Art has helped reclaim derelict areas, creating new social spaces and providing links between Gateshead Town Centre and the cultural facilities located on the Gateshead Quays.
10.4 New Feelings of Home in Gateshead and Newcastle?

While the transformation of the Newcastle and Gateshead Quayside is undeniable, it remains to be seen if the public art programme has had the huge impact claimed by Gateshead borough council. Did the public art programme not only generate much media attention and access to large funds, but also change the reputation of the area and the social-emotional ties of its residents? In spite of several research and evaluation reports, the only claim made is that there simply has to be a link between the remarkable transformation of both cities (in space and minds) and the public art programme initiated by Gateshead borough council, without the need for further evidence. The Council is content to note:

*Few people would question that the Angel has had an immense impact. Literally immense - we do not believe we can sensibly measure the full economic and social impact that it has had. We could theoretically measure every column inch of publicity that the Angel continues to attract [and place an economic value on it]. But we think that DCMS needs to discuss with partners how we might develop a methodology for moving beyond concrete measurement to recognise that some work has a value that can be accepted without the usual evidence* (Gateshead Council, 2004 cited in CATHOR, 2006).

However, not everybody is happy to agree with this statement. Christopher Bailey from the University of Northumbria argues that a mere correlation is not sufficient evidence for cause and effect: "*There are so many contingent factors that the hunt for causation is doomed*" (Bailey, 2006, cited in CATHOR, 2006). Steven Miles (2005) is equally critical and points out that ‘these sorts of developments’, actually articulate the interests and tastes of the post-modern 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 (Miles citing McGuigan, 1996: 99). Flagship cultural institutions, frequently financed as public sector investments to attract private-sector renovation of the
surrounding area, tend to be, according to Miles, engines not of democratisation of culture but of gentrification. While, in the eyes of Miles, not all is bad, it is hardly beneficial to the original residents: run-down areas can be transformed, but it may displace a residual population. (Miles and Miles, 2004: 53).

Miles goes on to argue that city councils and urban professionals often make a crucial mistake in their eagerness to transform an area’s reputation: their ready-made identities 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 (Miles citing Broudehoux, 2004, p. 26). This critique echoes the comments in the Dutch debate on neighbourhood identity and branding (see chapter 6), which stress the impossibility of ready-made identities. A difference with the Dutch experiences is the focus of neighbourhood identity: while in the Netherlands efforts are concerned with the design of a new brand for deprived neighbourhood, which will appeal to old but particularly new residents, the English focus on the design of iconic building and cultural venues, which symbolise the new identity and reputation of the area. Both approaches try to enforce a new identity onto a place and this common element enrages critics in both countries alike.

As an alternative Miles suggests, that the success of culture-led regeneration is 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.

*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 (Miles, 2005).*

According to Miles this is exactly what happened in Newcastle and Gateshead. By using public art as a participatory tool in urban renewal, both councils have been able to link the regeneration of the area to the local culture and identity, and in
doing so strengthened the local identity. The redevelopment of the Newcastle-Gateshead Quayside has successfully tapped into and reconfigured the place identity of the area by giving the people of the region something tangible with which they could reassert their collective identities. The need to reassert their collective identities is, according to Miles, linked to the history and position of the north of England. Citing Keith Wrightson, Steven Miles describes this identity as proud and truculent:

_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, 1995:29, cited in Bailey et al. 2005:62)

A strong sense of place, combined with a second rate position, breeds an aggressive form of pride with which northerners try to re-establish themselves in relation to a dominant south and a foregone industrialised past. The need for regeneration was a much economic as cultural and for Miles this is key for culture-led regeneration to succeed. In an article with Christopher Bailey and Peter Stark (2006) Miles argues that redevelopment of the Newcastle and Gateshead Quaysides was underpinned not by economic imperatives, but by a will and determination on the part of local arts activists and politicians to provide the area with more and better cultural facilities. Not only because of a lack of cultural facilities or because of a lack of cultural awareness among local residents, but also because the local authorities sought to use large public works of art as a means of signalling the intention to regenerate the locality.

The need for cultural facilities was clear: in all arts attendance areas, the north had the lowest levels of usage in England, broadly one-third below the national average and one-half of London levels. The region enjoyed an ‘availability index’ for the large-scale repertoire in the performing arts at one-quarter of the national average. The use of public art for regeneration was new. By using public art in urban regeneration the councils of Newcastle and Gateshead not only
improved the cultural facilities, but also improved the local identity. The regeneration succeeded, Bailey, Miles and Stark argue, precisely because the local people took ownership of them, not as exclusive symbols of wealth but as sources of local pride that regenerated a local source of identity as much as they did the local economy. As such, they suggest that the regeneration of the Newcastle and Gateshead Quayside “might well be interpreted as representing the radical reassertion of a rooted identity in new ways and therefore represent something far more significant than the inevitable end-product of cultural commodification”.

The authors are keen to point out that a combination of a people’s identification with places, and pride in and of that place and its heritage, may potentially represent a powerful cultural force for urban renewal. The Newcastle-Gateshead regeneration illustrates the way in which existing (and, in some senses, declining) sources of identity can be strengthened.

By raising this claim, Bailey, Miles and Stark take issue with Zukin’s (1995) suggestion that culture-led regeneration actively undermines urban distinctiveness. Zukin argues that despite the language of inclusion associated with culture, the reality is that culture is not the unifying force many urban renewers might like it to be. In many cases, cultural strategies reflect for Zukin simply the “utter absence” of new industrial strategies for growth. In turn, the potential economic benefits of cultural appropriation in urban renewal are counter-balanced by the erosion of local distinctiveness (1995, p. 274). Scott agrees: the clustering of culture “has deeply erosive or at least transformative effects on many local cultures” (2000:4). And even Richard Florida who is credited with raising the importance of culture for cities is unsure whether local culture will benefit in the end. The creative class seeks quasi-anonymity and prefers weak community ties to strong ones. Culture is for Florida an individual commodity which creative citizens pick and mix according to their desires and is therefore eroding to existing cultures based on strong ties. While Florida is sceptic and Zukin and Scott are critical, Bailey, Miles and Stark argue that culture-led regeneration can revitalise cultural identities in a way which represents a counter-balance to broader processes of cultural globalisation. Moreover, they point out that culture-led regeneration will be most successful when it, intentionally or unintentionally, teases out the local distinctiveness.
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_Culture-led regeneration perhaps provides a framework within which, given the right conditions, local people can re-establish ownership of their own sense of place and space and, perhaps more importantly, of their own sense of history._ (Bailey, Miles & Stark, 2006)

For proof of this statement the authors turn to the first results of a 10-year longitudinal study into the social, cultural, economic and regenerative impact of the Quayside development: the Cultural Investment and Strategy Impact Research (CISIR). This project is co-ordinated by the Centre for Cultural Policy and Management at the University of Northumbria. The aim of the project is to make a thorough longitudinal study of the contribution which the arts and culture can make to the development process, seen socially, economically and culturally. The project seeks to establish not simply the facts about activity levels, attitudes and participation, but also to address the meanings of such developments as ascribed by those people whom these developments affect. What are the effects of urban renewal on the local culture and daily lives of local residents? Are the developments also beneficial to them? A large number of both quantitative (surveys, monitor data) and qualitative (interviews, document analyses and case studies) data sources are used to answer these questions.

The data emerging from this longitudinal research shows that cultural production and consumption is strongly on the increase in Newcastle and Gateshead. There is a significant increase in the percentages of people attending arts events in the North East: for instance 27% of Newcastle and Gateshead residents attended a play in 2002, thereby equalling the 2001 English average, but doing so from very low base of 15% in 1988. From a situation in which, in terms of cultural provision, the area lagged behind much of the rest of the country, it had now arrived at a position of relative strength. Not only art attendance has changed: the number of respondents who felt that the arts played a valuable role in their lives had jumped from 23% in the north east in 1998 to 49% in 2002. And following the 2008 bid for European Capital of Culture made by the councils of Newcastle and Gateshead, 75% of respondents in Newcastle and Gateshead said their pride in the area has been reinforced. And if Newcastle-Gateshead did go on to win, 67% of respondents felt the area would be a better place to live.
These figures illustrate that cultural attendance and attitudes have changed significantly during the public art programme, however, less clear is the contribution of the programme to the local culture and identity. Although the researchers claim that these figures illustrate “that cultural forms of consumption can actively enhance and enliven local communities” they do not show the evidence to back up their claim. A more valuable role of art in residents’ lives and more pride in the area people live in, says nothing about their involvement in and attachment to their community. Future research results might prove them right, but for the moment we have to believe their words.

10.5 Place Attachments in Newcastle-Gateshead

A better indication of improvements in place attachments is possible with the panel data obtained for chapter 5 on the place attachments of English residents. By separating the results for Newcastle and Gateshead, a comparison can be made between the changes in this area and other deprived and non-deprived areas in the United Kingdom. Does Newcastle-Gateshead fare better, and if so, in which way does it deviate from the national trend? A stronger increase in place attachments, particularly place identity would be expected. This expectation is supported by the data. The table below illustrates that in comparison with other English neighbourhood place identity and place attachments, both physical and social, have increased more in Newcastle-Gateshead. Even when compared to a positive trend in the New Deal for Community-areas, both cities show more improvement, particularly in Place Identity and Social Attachments of residents between 1998 and 2003: the people in Newcastle-Gateshead feel more at home and more connected to their neighbours.

Table 10.1 Changes in Place Identity and Attachment in Newcastle en Gateshead, 1998-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newcastle Gateshead (N=106)</th>
<th>Other NDC Areas (N=730)</th>
<th>Other 86 Most Deprived Areas (N=871)</th>
<th>Other Areas (N=3916)</th>
<th>Total (N=5622)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Place Identity</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Rootedness</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Bonding</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The increased affection of residents for their neighbourhood is particularly visible among residents who indicated in 1998 that they felt little affection for the place where they lived or the people that lived there. The former feel more at home with their neighbours, while the latter have predominantly increased the physical ties to the neighbourhood in 2003.

However, a considerably large group of residents (11%) feels less at home in the neighbourhood in 2003 than they did in 1988. Especially residents who only experienced a physical connection to where they lived, indicates that five years on they have lost their affection for the neighbourhood. Apparently, not every resident shares in the strengthened bonds and local identity. This becomes more clearly visible when patterns of Place Attachment are considered.

Although Newcastle-Gateshead shows the greatest change in patterns of attachment compared to other neighbourhood in England, this change is not all positive. In line with the positive trend in the other New Deal for Communities areas, feelings of alienations are strongly reduced among residents in Newcastle-Gateshead between 1998 and 2003. 43% of the residents who felt alienated from their community in 1998 feel more relatively attached to their neighbourhood in 2003, while 29% even claim to feel completely rooted in their community. However in the same period, and contrary to the national trend, feeling of relativity change for a considerable number of residents into feelings of placelessness: the neighbourhood becomes a more neutral place to live for these residents. This is in spite of the fact that relatively fewer residents changed homes between 1998 and 2003 compared to the rest of England, and that those who did move out, they more often did so between the city boundaries remaining in the city (they feel more or less attached to).
Figure 10.2 Changes in Patterns of Place Attachment for Newcastle-Gateshead residents compared to other area, 1998-2004 (N=5,624)

Apparently, the redevelopment of the Quayside and the popular public art programme has not increased the attachments to the city for every resident. Still, both cities have been successful to the extent that they have been able to increase the affection of residents who felt least at home in their neighbourhood. This partly confirms the claim of Bailey, Miles and Stark that Newcastle-Gateshead has been able to link culture-led regeneration to the local identity of residents and in doing so have strengthened their place identity and affection for their neighbourhood.
10.6 Discussion

The collective cultural strategy employed by the borough councils of Newcastle and Gateshead appears to more successful than the individual approach favoured by Manchester. Contrary to other English cities, which experimented with culture-led regeneration and where urban renewal is dominated by culture with a capital ‘C’, Newcastle and Gateshead emphasised culture with a small ‘c’ in their approach to urban renewal.

By using public art as a participatory tool in urban renewal, the deprived living environment acquired new meaning for residents, resulting in more attachment and stronger feelings of ownership towards the environment. By emphasising the cultural heritage of places and by using this heritage in the redevelopment of the area, the councils were able to appeal to the identification of residents with the area and (re)instill a sense of pride in the places where they lived.

The experiences in Newcastle and Gateshead show that public art can be a valuable participatory tool for increasing the emotional ties of residents to an area, provided that the art connects to their local identity. This does not only strengthen local identity, but also increases the attractiveness of the area for external investors and visitors. The culture-led approach in Newcastle was particularly successful, because the redevelopment of the Quaysides was not underpinned by economic imperatives, but by a cultural demand for more and better facilities. By using public art in urban regeneration the councils of Newcastle and Gateshead improved the cultural facilities and also provided the urban renewal with a symbolic meaning, signalling the intention to regenerate both the locality and the local identity.