



BECOMING AWESOMESTOW

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FEBRUARY 2016

¹ *This image by Will Alsop, of the planned development of Walsall waterfront*

The research has been carried out with support from Nestlé's Bright Ideas Fund.
All opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the funder

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Introduction

This report is a report to Nesta that includes the findings of a research project funded through the Bright Ideas Fund. The project ran from April 2014 through to April 2015 and was hosted by the Glasgow School of Art.

The project title was taken from one of the 2013 Reith Lectures that was presented by the artist, Grayson Perry. Perry was talking about the impact of artists and the cultural sector on general regeneration. His term 'Becoming Awesomestow' was applied to the London borough of Walthamstow, from which Perry had just recently moved.

“This idea, you know the currency of bohemian-ness...especially in the urban ecology...artists move into the cheap housing and the cheap spaces and they make them...”²

Perry’s reference was to a phenomenon in urban regeneration, made popular in the 1990s and 2000s [and accounted by Florida, Leadbeather, Markusen and others in the academic literature], whereby run-down, post-industrial areas become inhabited for work and living by artists and creatives and which subsequently take on a bohemian charm or cool and grow in popularity and value and hence becoming ‘Awesomestow’ (a reference to Walthamstow, where Perry had a studio).

During the late 1990s and 2000s many UK cities and towns attempted some form of creative industries or cultural quarter initiatives. These often aimed to regenerate town centres, address issues of urban decline, redress some town planning decisions undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s and tackle socio-economic problems (worklessness and participation, skills etc). Cultural assets (theatres, concert halls, galleries etc) were sometimes regarded as catalysts within such initiatives, attracting further investment and creative talent. With relatively predictable budgets and organisational structures, such cultural assets were also seen as supporting less structured parts of the sector (predominantly small and micro-businesses) at policy level and in the development of sector skills and audiences. The creative and cultural sector became known for its promise of contributing to regeneration. The work of Richard Florida on the 'Creative Class', in particular, was widely adopted into the Economic Development

In 2004, DCMS published ‘Culture at the Heart of Regeneration’³. In its introduction, the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell stated that:

‘there are many fantastic examples of culture acting as a catalyst to turn round whole communities’

In this project wanted to see if we can see evidence of this kind of change outside of the main cities and in some smaller towns.

Our aim was to use a combination of visual and oral narrative accounts sourced from stakeholders in each town to assemble evidence of ‘Strategic Added Value’ that the formal economic impact

² Perry, G. Nice Rebellion – Welcome In, Playing to the Gallery 3, Reith Lecture 2013, BBC, Broadcast 29th October 2013

³ *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration*, DCMS, 2004

assessments often refer to, but do not always fully capture. Our investigations show that while the original visions and masterplans for creating cultural quarters and creative districts in these towns were often idealistic, the new venues have stimulated practical and varied activities and benefits, in keeping with local needs.

Research Questions

The project aimed to investigate through a number of case studies, the extent to which investments made in cultural assets outside the main cities and concentrations of artists, have had the clustering effect that was envisaged at the time of the investments. Essentially this is a pilot project that asks:

- To what extent and in what ways does an investment in a cultural asset (museum, theatre, art gallery) contribute to the regeneration of a small or medium-sized town?
- What are the effects of such an investment on a local economy and community?
- How can the use of images, photography and personal accounts contribute to our understanding of the complex and, sometimes, fragile, nature of regeneration in smaller towns and in particular, help to capture evidence of the intangible benefits?
- How do we account for partial successes?

Case Studies

We looked at three case studies of towns that undertook investments in cultural assets in the past 10 years.

The three case studies in the project are:

- The Shetland Museum in Lerwick
- The New Gallery in Walsall
- The Alhambra Theatre in Dunfermline.

Context

National policy context

In 1986, the Arts Council published *Partnership: Making Arts Money Work Harder*, presenting for the first time the arts in terms of their economic potential, as well as their potential to ameliorate the problems of urban regeneration. Two years later Myerscough published his seminal report *The economic importance of the arts in Britain*, which argues, through statistical analysis of financial data, for the positive contribution of the arts. Both reports mark a fundamental shift towards the valuation of arts in instrumental, economic terms, beyond their intrinsic value.

Through the 1990s, ideas of cultural regeneration developed and became more variegated. Punter (2010) describes the Conservative's approach to regeneration as 'a-social'; an economic, property-driven process only. The Labour government, which came to power in 1997, brought in notions of a social contribution, which drew on the work of Francois Matarasso (1997). Matarasso identified a huge range of personal and social benefits that participating in the arts could bring (e.g. a route for personal growth, social cohesion, environmental renewal and health promotion). Also key to the government's concept of regeneration at the turn of the millennium was the Urban Task Force's *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (1999). A report commissioned by the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott and written by a team led by architect Richard Rogers, this espouses the belief in the far-

reaching benefits of an improved urban environment could bring and the centrality of culture to any successful urban regeneration.

The first major policy on the subject of regeneration was *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2004. This covers cultural icons and landmarks, place-making and urban identity, and community cohesion, describing these functions of culture in an urban context and the social and economic benefits they can bring (employment, visitor numbers and revenue). The document can, however, be described as primarily advocacy, celebrating culture's role, though not leading in terms of providing a course of action (Vickery, 2007).

Models of cultural regeneration

Evans and Shaw (2004) in their report to DCMS (which provides the evidence underpinning *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration*) identify three models for culture to contribute to regeneration. These are 'cultural regeneration', where the arts are incorporated into an area strategy; 'culture and regeneration', where culture is not integrated but additional and probably small scale though still potentially beneficial; and 'Culture-led'. It is the final model we are principally concerned with in this investigation, is described as follows:

...culture is seen as the catalyst and engine of regeneration. The activity is likely to have a high public profile and frequently be cited as a sign of regeneration. The activity might be the design and construction (or re-use) of a building or buildings for public or business use...; the reclamation of open space...; or the introduction of a programme of activity which is then used to rebrand a place...

The property-based element of this was perhaps the earliest model of cultural regeneration and is exemplified for by, amongst others, Centenary Square in Birmingham and later Tate Modern in London and Baltic in Gateshead. Arts Lottery funding gave this practice a huge boost when it was introduced in 1994, especially in the regions, where many new buildings were given capital funding.

The most famous example of the culture-led approach internationally is the Guggenheim in Bilbao. This was widely seen as responsible for turning around the fortunes of the city to such an extent that the term 'Bilbao effect' entered into common language. Critics have since argued, however, that development in Bilbao has been 'at the cost of local and regional cultural development and participation' (p9, *ibid.*)

The value of independent creative workers to the economy and the ideal conditions for them to congregate in an 'innovative city' were examined by Oakley and Leadbeather (1999). Florida (2002) famously described a model whereby run-down, post-industrial areas become inhabited for work and living by artists and creatives and which subsequently take on a bohemian charm or cool and grow in popularity and land value. It is this that Grayson Perry (2013) termed 'becoming Awesomestow' and is another model of regeneration we looked at in context of the case study towns in this study.

The creative cluster model is one that has also been broadly critiqued. Markusen (2006), for example, questioned the integrity of the notion of any kind of coherent creative class and its relationship to urban development, whilst others (see eg. Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004) question the enthusiastic adoption of this as an approach by cities on the basis that it espouses 'a rapidly regenerating and

gentrifying urban core surrounded by a ring of intensely disadvantaged residential areas' (p357, Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004).

The context for research into smaller places

Like Gilmore (2013), who explores cultural participation away from 'creative cities' and 'cultural capitals', this project looks to explore the impact of cultural assets in three case study towns that might be described as ordinary, and may even be maligned. Research into culture-led regeneration in smaller places has been much less extensive than that into large cities. This stems from the ingrained idea that competitive places are larger metropolitan centres and these are the natural 'cores' of creative activity (eg. Dovey and Sandercock, 2002).

Bell and Jayne (2006) look at smaller cities, questioning whether size matters in the discussion of creativity-led regeneration. Wait and Gibson (2009) argue for the rethinking of the creative economy, as they put it, in place, because 'regardless of the numerical population size of a city, creativity is embedded in various complex, competing place narratives fashioned by discourses of size, proximity and inherited class legacies' (p1223, Waitt and Gibson).

What Evans and Shaw point out in their 2004 report was a lack of evidence for regeneration based on culture. This was echoed by Miles and Paddison in their introduction to a 2005 special edition of Cultural Trends on the subject, where they wrote that the government, influenced by the work of Landry (2000), made statements about the economic value of culture-led regeneration that could not be backed up with evidence.

Selecting a method

In the Magenta Book⁴, BIS describes evaluation as:

An objective process of understanding how a policy or other intervention was implemented, what effects it had, for whom, how and why

The focus of BIS and HM Treasury guidance is on designing methodologies that are effective in determining causation as opposed to correlation. Causation is when the observed or measured effects happen as a result of the intervention. Correlation is when the effects coincide but cannot necessarily be attributed to the intervention. The related area of additionality is a constance source of uncertainty and methodological debate. Although the Magenta Book is clear about its preference for robust methodologies that allow for a full assessment and appreciation of the counter-factual, it is often impractical to measure this. In the example of our analysis of cultural assets, for example, how do we account for the alternative option where the intervention did not occur? We could pair the case study towns with towns of a similar size and demographic that did not experience the same intervention. Often evaluation approaches involve asking beneficiaries to imagine the non-intervention case. This produces notoriously unreliable results. All too often a beneficiary when asked will both claim that the intervention in question has had a 'highly significant' effect on their business and at the same time respond that they would do 'nothing different' had the intervention not have taken place.

⁴ *Magenta Book: HM Treasury Guidance on what to consider when designing an evaluation*, HM Treasury, 2011

Moreover, as is frequently noted in the literature, quantitative evaluations can tend to focus on that which is measurable, rather than that which highlights the true value of the intervention. Markusen (2013) warns against using secondary data to evidence effective place-making, for example, stating that preoccupation with official data that are not a good fit with the actual aims and impacts of the intervention actually detract from learning.

We took the Impact Evaluation Framework (IEF) as a reference point and conceptual framework. This is a methodology for economic evaluation that is recommended for use by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). However, we did not undertake full IEF evaluations of the investments. Rather we borrowed aspects of this and adapted it for our own purposes. With a limited scope of resources to cover the three case studies, we decided not to attempt quantitative IEF evaluations, but to focus on an aspect of such evaluations. Previous work of one of the authors on carrying out numerous IEF evaluations on behalf of BIS and for the Regional Development Agencies, had led to an observation that for many of the ‘culture’ related projects there were clear benefits that beneficiaries could describe but which were not easily translated into output measures (such as jobs created, gross value added and so on). These include qualitative impacts that are accounted for in the IEF as ‘Strategic Added Value’ (SAV).

White (2009) proposes possible SAV outputs, including ‘Information, knowledge and advice’, ‘Information sharing and relationship building networks’ and ‘awareness, understanding and shared priorities and delivery mechanisms’. He has also offered alternative headings of Influence and leverage, Strategic leadership and place-making and Synergy and engagement which have particular relevance for our case studies.

These possibilities already appeared to us to offer arguably as much relevance to the true value of case study investments than a standard economic impact assessment that essentially focuses on the net benefits of additional ticket sales or visitor spend. So, we kept these in mind during our consultations with stakeholders to understand what the broader intended impacts of the investments were, and combine with an observation of these.

One of the essential features of our research was that we involved stakeholders from the case study towns. Where possible, we wanted to engage them in the development of the revisited ‘theories of change’, which we could then use to illustrate ‘before’ and ‘after’ the interventions from a range of perspectives. Again, the approach is borrowed from formal evaluation methodologies like IEF and we have used adapted ‘logic chain’ diagrams to describe the impacts in each of our case studies.

From there we aimed to compile a selection of photography through which we would attempt to illustrate potential impacts on regeneration using a visual medium.

It would be naive to assume that the approach we used would have any less bias than previous methods. However, we believe that through the use of visual evidence and narrative accounts we were able to present views and explore some of the more complex and subtle impacts with beneficiaries.

Our Method

After having selected the three case studies, our research included these steps:

- Desk and archival research of the case study cultural assets, including websites, grey literature any previous evaluations, relevant local policy documents and press coverage

- Interviews with stakeholders in each of the towns and the associated cultural assets
- Selection of photography and other visual evidence in consultation with the various stakeholders
- Development of the ‘logic models’ which describe the intended and implied ‘theories of change’ and impacts for each of the case studies
- Analysis and selection of the images and quotes that tell the stories of the interventions
- Presentation of these through a public exhibition held at the Glasgow School of Art
- Preparation of this report.

We also intend to publish our findings more widely and hope to extend our work to cover a greater number of case studies and to expand our methodology. In addition to the reference to the IEF, we also took four quotations from ‘Culture at the Heart’ as stimuli for our discussions and analysis. These are:

“Ambitious cultural centres contribute to the economic, as well as the physical, social and creative regeneration of an area”

“the cultural and creative sectors provide employment, attract tourism and harness traditional crafts and skills”

“the revitalisation of the historic environment, including buildings, parks and waterways helps to achieve successful regeneration”

“participation in cultural activities delivers a sense of belonging, trust and civic engagement”

The example case studies were chosen to cover different investment types in terms of varying socio-economic profiles, metropolitan and remote settings, cultural and social variation, Scotland and England. They were also convenient for us due to having some previous knowledge of each of the projects.

Shetland Museum, Lerwick

Lerwick is the capital of the Shetland Islands, a group of islands some 100 miles off the Northern coast of mainland Scotland. Lerwick has a population of around 7,500, although VisitScotland estimates that around half of Shetland’s 22,000 residents live within 10 miles of the town. There have been settlers in the area for over 3,000 years and Lerwick was established primarily as a herring port in the 17th Century. Lerwick is now a busy fishing port, with related fish processing industries and is an important base for North Sea oil and gas.

The site for Shetland Museum and Archives was chosen following several feasibility studies and options appraisals and includes Hays’s Dock, an historic dock listed Category B. Category B includes buildings of regional or more than local importance; or major examples of some particular period, style or building type, which may have been altered (about 50% of total listed buildings)⁵. BDP

⁵ Historic Scotland, <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/historicandlistedbuildings/listing.htm>

designed the new building: an iconic design that reflects local history and tradition. It was intended to act as a showcase for the existing collections as well as becoming the focal point for Shetland's natural and cultural heritage interpretation. In the first month of opening it welcomed 37,000 visitors and has grown to attract over 85,000 visitors per year.

The previous museum and archives services operated out of two separate buildings within Lerwick. These facilities were inadequate to meet both the developing needs of the collections and services.

The new museum, alongside its permanent collection, hosts temporary art exhibitions in 'Da Gadderie' and visiting items from the national collections, including the National Museums of Scotland. Hay's Dock provides a base for historic boats to dock, whilst a 1905 wooden boat-building shed adjoins the museum where boats are on display to the public. The museum operates a high quality restaurant and shop stocking local products.

Shetland Amenity Trust is the managing organisation for Shetland Museum and Archives. Since opening in 2007, the building has become the top visitor attraction in Shetland, consistently welcoming over 83,000 visitors per year and maintaining a Five Star Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Award from Visit Scotland.

Shetland Museum and Archives is managed and funded by way of a Service Level Agreement between Shetland Amenity Trust and Shetland Islands Council. Although funding has been cut in recent difficult financial times, the Trust still maintains a free entry policy and the museum opens seven days per week.

The Amenity Trust successfully applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund and received a grant of almost £5 million toward the capital project. This represents around 50% of the cost, the remainder of which was raised through a variety of public sector funding sources, including the Amenity Trust's own funds (awarded from oil revenue).

Policy context

The need for new Museum and Archives facilities for Shetland was identified in the early 1980s. However, it took some time to move from this early identification of need, through to the commissioning of the building. In 1999, Shetland Islands Council, which managed the previous museum and archive facilities, asked Shetland Amenity Trust to take the project forward, as part of its remit is the provision of heritage and cultural services. The following section looks at the key policy and strategy documents of relevance to the development of the museum.

Shetland Cultural Strategy: A Vision for Cultural Life in Shetland 2004 – 8

Shetland Cultural Strategy: A Vision for Cultural Life in Shetland 2004 – 8⁶ was presented as the first cultural strategy for Shetland. Within the overall vision, the strategy identified three aims:

- Access, participation and potential
- Creativity and heritage
- Learning, Economy and regeneration.

⁶ *Shetland Cultural Strategy: A vision for cultural life in Shetland 2004 - 2008*

The new museum and archive was identified being key to the delivery of the strategy and described as:

A hub for the well developed range of cultural heritage initiatives and centres ,many of which are managed by voluntary community organisations.

Rural Development Strategy for Shetland 2007

Shetland's Rural development plan was published in 2007⁷. This plan identified Shetland's culture as an important factor in its continued development and the survival of its fragile rural community. The overall all vision for Shetland's rural community, set out in this plan includes an aim for Shetland to be a place where:

'Our unique cultural identity and spirit is celebrated and promoted'

The plan refers to the development of the new museum, on a 'hub and spoke' model with connections to the other heritage sites and museums across Shetland as one of the actions that would help to deliver that aim with respect to cultural identity.

Creative industries in Shetland Today Ekos, 2008

Ekos undertook a study of the creative industries sector in Shetland, which was published in 2008⁸. This study identified a sector that was skewed towards micro-businesses involved in small-scale production. Specialisms in music, visual arts and crafts were noted. The study points to the developments of the new museum and Mareel as opportunities for the sector and refers to proposed 'Cultural Quarter'.

Key developments in the physical infrastructure for the sector (in particular the new Museum, the Mareel and the planned Cultural Quarter in Lerwick) offer potentially significant long-term development opportunities

In fact, since then it has been found that there is little appetite for clustering amongs the creative industries in Shetland. Although they do congregate at the museum and Mareel for meetings and networking, the business park did not attract these businesses, which tend to be rurally, home-based and are located across Shetland.

The revised Cultural Strategy, 'On the cusp'⁹ makes a direct connection between culture and economic development, selecting 'Culture and the Economy' as one of five themes:

⁷ *Rural Development Strategy for Shetland*, AB Associates, 2007

⁸ *Creative industries in Shetland Today*, Ekos, 2008

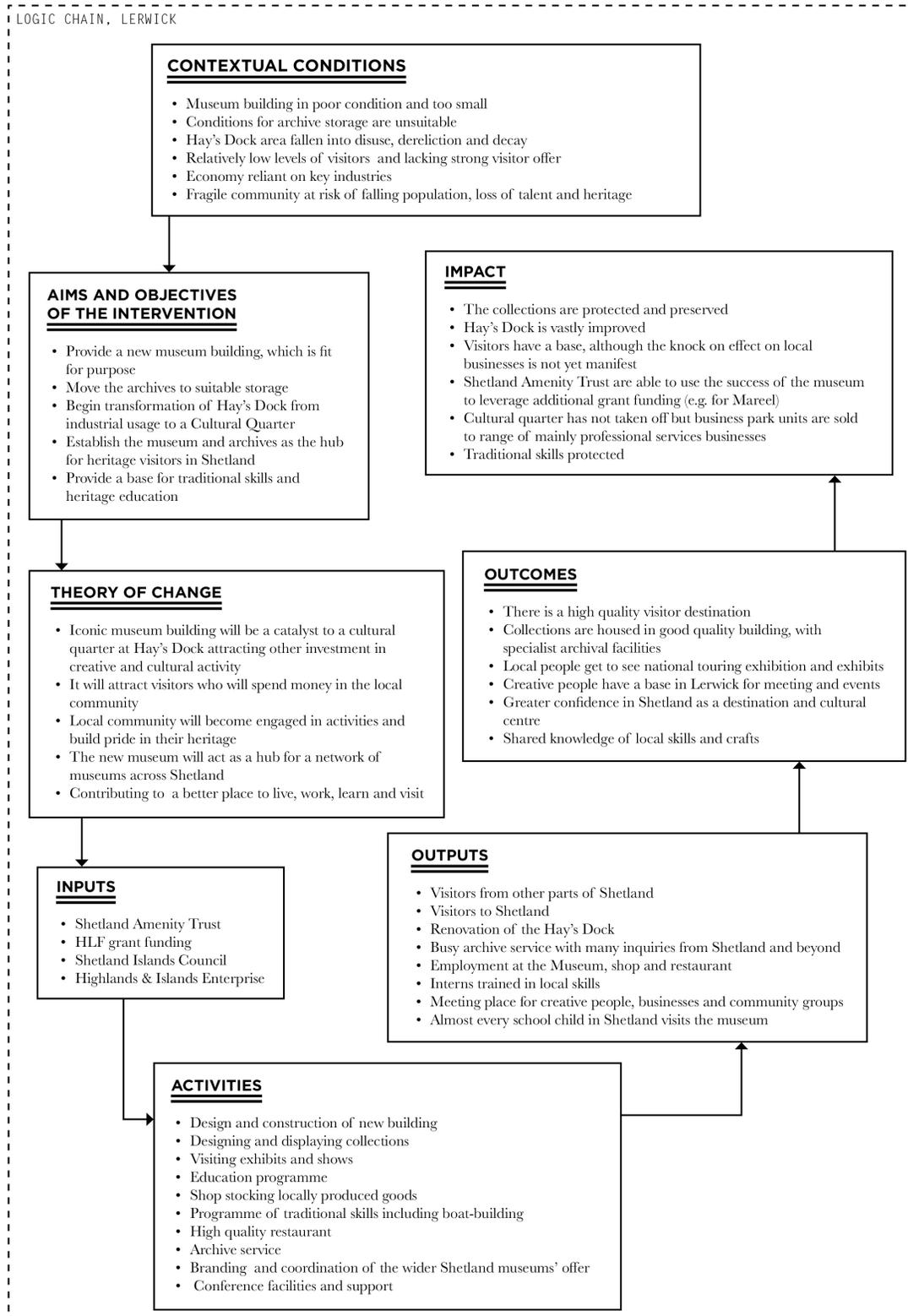
⁹ *On the Cusp... Shetland's Cultural Strategy: A vision for cultural life in Shetland 2009 -2013*

Ensure that the connections between culture and economic development are explored and understood and that investment in cultural assets and creative activities is actively pursued as a means to increasing prosperity. Shetland has a chance to exploit its unique place in a connected digital world that makes us more accessible than ever before

Logic chain and theory of change

As discussed, ambitions for the impact of the new museum and archives were high. The project was seen as being more than an isolated building project creating a cultural asset. The following diagram shows the theory of change in diagrammatic form. This has been developed for this current project, to demonstrate (with the aid of hindsight) the contextual background, the aims and objectives of the intervention, the ‘theory’ behind what was expected to change as a result of the new museum, inputs in terms of finance and funders, activities taking place at the new facility, resulting outputs and outcomes and finally the impact achieved. We have developed equivalent diagrams for each of the case studies.

Logic chain



Analysis of SAV

Influence and leverage

The Shetland Amenity Trust won several awards for the Shetland Museum and Archives. Through the experience they have developed expertise and networks in the area of heritage. The Trust also used the experience of having developed the museum project to leverage other funding for this project and for other heritage projects.

Strategic leadership and place-making

In terms of place-making, there can be no doubt that the building of the museum has transformed the Hay's Dock area and opened up a previously derelict area to become one of the most attractive public open spaces in Lerwick. The museum is operating as a central base for visitors to Shetland and there can be few who visit Lerwick who do not make a visit to the Museum and Archives.

Hay's Dock has been developed to a high specification, with the Museum designed by BDP, taking its influence from the local materials and heritage; and another iconic design by Gareth Hoskins, in Mareel.

Reports from the Shetland Amenity Trust, from Shetland Arts and Mareel itself all indicate that without the success of the Museum, the Mareel project would have almost certainly stalled. Mareel was, and still is to some extent, a controversial project that met with resistance from some local groups and sections of the community. This is due to resistance from some of the community to public investments in the arts and to the showing of mainstream films in the rural community.

For those that take a positive view of the project, Mareel provides a meeting place for creative people, for networking and business meetings as well as a family-oriented cinema and a 'place where women can go for a drink and feel safe'. This is in addition to its main function as a music venue. However, several consultees felt that the less controversial museum project had paved the way for Mareel to come to fruition.

The Cultural Quarter never materialised, despite it being identified as an opportunity by the Ekos study. The business park, however, has become populated by other businesses perhaps not providing the intended creative millieu, but at least achieving a reasonable level of local activity and traffic in this area of the town that was previously deserted.

Synergy and engagement

The Museum and Mareel together potentially offer a strong combined waterside location for larger events, conferences and festivals. As yet, however, this level of synergy has yet to be fully achieved. There have been some joint events, such as the Viking Festival and there can sometimes be connections between the exhibitions staged in da Gadderie and with Mareel.

The true potential of larger visitor events is hampered by the lack of visitor accommodation in Shetland. Although there are a large number of recorded visitors to Lerwick, many of these are working in the town on contracts relating to the oil and gas industry.

Alhambra Theatre, Dunfermline

Dunfermline has a population of just over 50,000. The capital of Scotland until the 17th Century, Dunfermline was birthplace to kings of Scotland and is the last resting place of King Robert the

Bruce. The town retains features of its medieval past in its Abbey, Palace and Abbott House. It has a proud association with the 19th Century industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, who was born in the town. Dunfermline was the world's leading centre of linen damask during the 19th Century. Today, amongst the town's major employers are BskyB, Amazon, FMC Technologies and the Nationwide Building Society. Dunfermline is expanding, most notably on the Eastern edge of the town in Duloch and the 'Dunfermline Eastern Expansion' where over 4,000 houses have been built over the past 10 years.

The Alhambra Theatre opened in 1922 as a venue for theatre and cinema. It was a 'cinema only' in the 1960s and later became a bingo hall. The large, brick building, which holds audiences of 1,200, fell into disuse until being purchased by Linklater Ltd, in 2006. A private sector trust carried out a phased renovation and re-opening of the venue (first shows in 2007), making improvements when funding allowed.

The Alhambra Theatre based its initial programming on 'simple to stage' comedy and rock 'n' roll, which could attract large audiences (early acts included Jimmy Carr, Ed Byrne, KT Turnstall, Kaiser Chiefs etc) and tribute acts. The venue has extended its programming to host both National Theatre and Scottish Opera. There is a children's theatre school and various community activities plus an annual pantomime.

Policy Context

The Dunfermline example differs from the others in this report in that it is a private sector initiative, rather than one that was led by the public sector. From this perspective then, the whole idea of the logic chain and theory of change is a completely retrospective and forced exercise. We have included it in the project partly for the sake of consistency. It is also included as a speculation that the drivers for regeneration are shared by private sector as well as public sector stakeholders, particularly where there are key individuals who are linked with the town and have multiple investments and interests of a personal and business nature.

Fife Council agreed to a feasibility study for the renovation of the Alhambra Theatre and appointed RGA to carry out this study. However, the findings of that report were that the project was not feasible and would not deliver value for money in terms of impact or benefit to the town. There was a concern at that time, and a tension that remains to this day, that benefits from the opening of the Alhambra would subject to high levels of displacement, due to competition with the council's own theatre: The Carnegie Hall.

Biggar Economics (2013)¹⁰ estimated that the Alhambra had contributed £4.6 million to the Fife economy; and £4.9 million Scotland in its first five years. The study also noted that the theatre had contributed to 'a sense of identity and place; a difference in people's opinion of Dunfermline; civic pride and had made Dunfermline a more vibrant place.

Fife Council appears to have accepted the study and in May 2014 awarded grant funding of £150k¹¹ to the Alhambra Theatre on the basis of its contribution to the local economy and its potential to deliver greater benefits through additional resourcing and greater activity levels.

¹⁰ *Alhambra Theatre Economic Impact Study: A report to the Alhambra Theatre*, Biggar Economics, 2013

¹¹ *Dunfermline's Alhambra Theatre gets £75,000 grant from Fife Council*, Dunfermline Press, 11 May 2014

The most recent relevant policies in Fife are:

- Generations of Change: A Strategy for Culture in Fife¹²
- Create in Fife 2013-17: A strategy for the creative and cultural industries in Fife.¹³

Generations of Change: A Strategy for Culture in Fife

The Cultural Strategy is described as setting out ‘Fife’s commitment to culture...a strategy to support and promote Fife’s cultural ambition’. It sets out two key commitments and six objectives plus nine actions, which are identified as the drivers for improvement and change.

The commitments are:

- Commitment 1: Strengthen and widen opportunities for cultural celebration, engagement and excellence for all; and
- Commitment 2: Make Fife a better place to live and work in for all, now and in the future.

The objectives are:

- Objective 1: Make creativity and heritage more accessible to all in Fife’s communities
- Objective 2: Increase cultural participation and engagement
- Objective 3: Raise awareness of the wellbeing outcomes of cultural activity
- Objective 4: Support communities to increase their cultural capacity
- Objective 5: Support creative learning for all ages
- Objective 6: Maximise the economic benefits of cultural activity in Fife

The appended action plan, which runs to eight pages, makes several references to theatres in Fife and to specific projects, but only those taking place in theatres that are Council run. There is no explicit mention of the Alhambra Theatre, or the contribution that it might make to some of the objectives. According to the evidence presented in the Biggar Economics report and as demonstrated again in this project, the Alhambra delivers against at least objectives 1, 2, 4 and 6.

Create in Fife 2013-17: A strategy for the creative and cultural industries in Fife

The strategy for the creative and cultural industries in Fife references Commitment 2 of the Cultural Strategy and specifically addresses one of the nine actions, which is: ‘Raise Fife’s profile as a dynamic centre for excellence and cultural enterprise’.

The strategy identifies ‘Cultural Tourism’ as one of four opportunities for the sector in Fife over the period 2013 -17. It also features ‘performing arts’ as one of its sub-sectors. However, the focus of this cultural tourism opportunity appears to be on arts festivals and open studios. The only mention of cultural assets is in relation to Council-run museums and art galleries.

There is again no mention of the contribution of the Alhambra Theatre, despite the findings again of the Biggar Economics report that it contributed almost £5million to the Scottish economy over its first

¹² *Generations of Change: A Strategy for Culture in Fife*

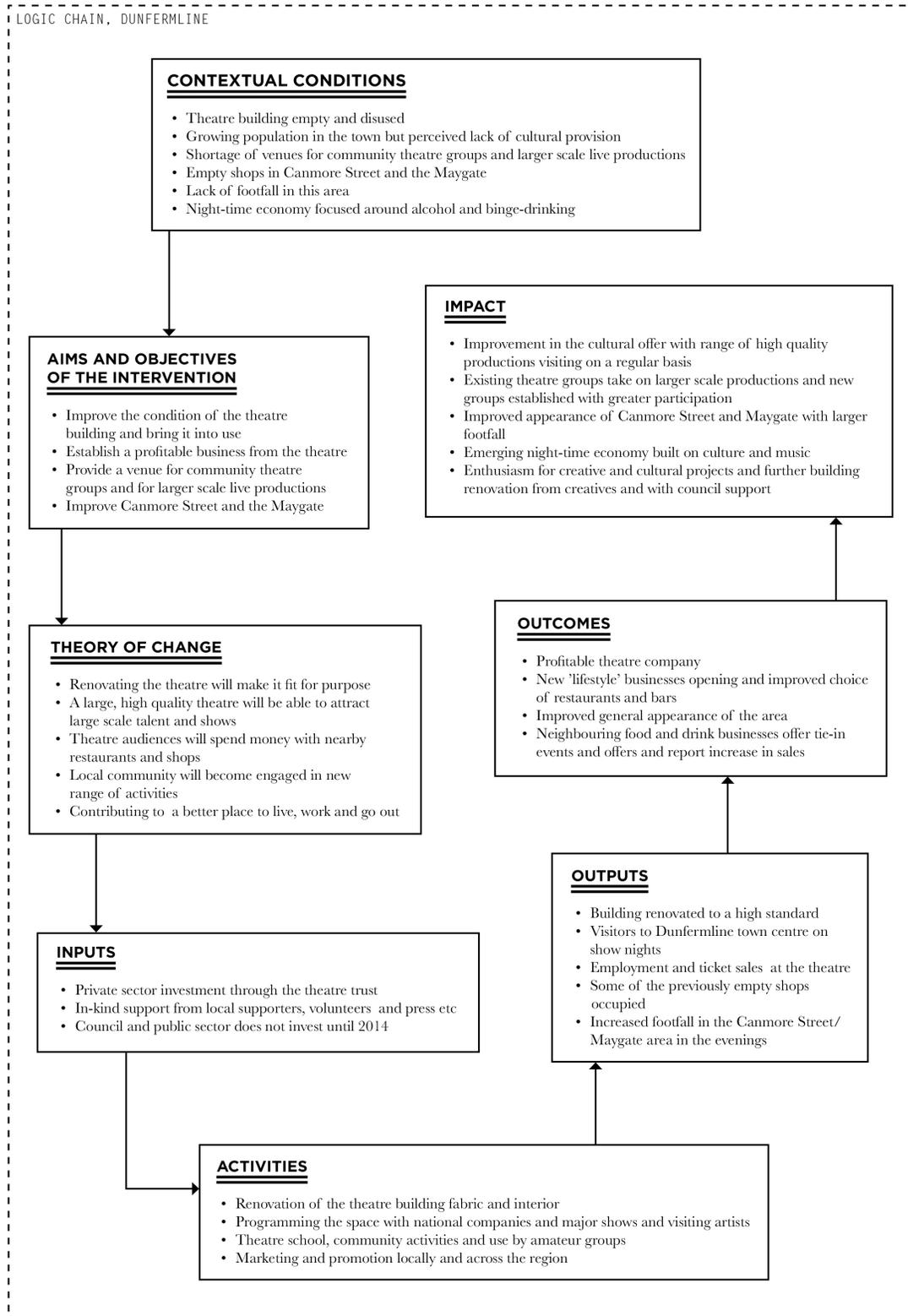
¹³ *Create in Fife 2013-17: A strategy for the creative and cultural industries in Fife*

five years, significantly more than the annual £44k that the Cupar Arts Festival is reported to have generated in 2012.

Logic chain and theory of change

The logic chain diagram plots the intervention from the pre-existing contextual conditions that were apparent before the Alhambra was redeveloped and opened; including the empty buildings along the street, lack of footfall, problems with the night-time economy and with the shortage of rehearsal space. It then shows the aims and objectives of how the intervention might address these conditions and the theory of change relating to how this might be expected to happen. The inputs to this project are primarily private and third sector funding, until the local council later made an investment. The relevant activities include the renovation and re-opening of the building itself as well as all the events and happenings taking place inside. Outputs and outcomes are mainly due to the increased visitors and the new activities taking place at the theatre and knock-on effects to the surrounding streets. Finally impact relates back to observable improvements on some of the contextual conditions – the street itself is improved alongside the increase in cultural provision.

Logic chain



Analysis of SAV

Influence and leverage

The theatre is regarded by many to have contributed to a growing awareness and pride in the city's heritage. However, the city's cultural development is a mixed picture as there are on-going issues in relation to the Abbot House, that is also in Canmore Street, which closed its doors to the public in the summer of 2015, due to funding and management issues. Support for initiatives such as The Hub (café, public information and safe place) and The Fire Station Creative are regarded by some consultees as influenced by the optimism partly created through the Alhambra project.

Strategic leadership and place-making

As previously discussed, it is difficult to be sure what is an impact and what is an un-related co-occurrence. So, to understand what is the counter-factual of the investments made in bringing the Alhambra Theatre back into operation. In place-making terms, there can be no doubt that the fabric of the building is vastly improved for the theatre itself, and also the café premises at street level.

Following the opening of the Alhambra, the area of Dunfermline around Canmore Street and the Maygate has developed. There are winners and losers in this and, as with any small or medium-sized town over this time period, has seen some small independent businesses come and go. Overall though, we see some positive signs of an improved quality of retail and leisure offer in the area. There is particularly a marked change to the evening economy of the town including:

- Two micro-breweries
- Wine bars and pubs with late licenses, high quality food offerings and live music
- Restaurants with pre-theatre and special offers around theatre shows
- Events at smaller music venues to tie in with band nights at The Alhambra.

In particular, the increase in music taking place at the theatre is seen by many in the town to also have influenced the wider Dunfermline music scene. Often there are fringe events taking place on days when the Alhambra schedules gigs, for example at PJ Molloys, The Bruery or other local pubs and smaller venues.

Synergy and engagement

The theatre regularly sells out large-scale shows including some big names in comedy and music. Some of the direct benefit from this activity includes the theatre school, employment of local professional and semi-professional musicians and theatre crew in theatre productions and engagement of volunteers.

Since the opening of the Alhambra there have been a number of other culture and heritage related initiatives. The Dunfermline Museum has been raised funding in the region of £12.4m¹⁴. Although this is not a project with a direct link to the theatre, its physical proximity is such that it must be seen as connected in regeneration terms. Edinburgh-based firm, Richard Murphy Architects were awarded the design contract for the transformation of the first Carnegie Library and museum.

¹⁴ <http://www.dunfermlinepress.com/news/dunfermline/articles/2015/01/08/520846-new-dunfermline-museum-named/>

More directly influenced by the Alhambra's success, is the artist-led initiative at the Old Fire Station. This B-listed building was designed by a local architect, James Shearer in the 1930s, opening in 1936. After having been vacated by the Fire Service for modern premises in another part of Dunfermline, the building lay empty for some time. An artist-led collective has raised £240k to renovate and open the building as Fire Station Creative¹⁵ - a space for 21 artist and creative industry studios, exhibition and teaching space and a café. The director of Fire Station Creative was clear about the influence of the Alhambra on his group's aspirations:

When people in the town see that projects like The Alhambra are possible, it certainly spurs on others to try and put their ideas into practice.

New Gallery, Walsall

Walsall is a town of 68,000 people, part of an urban conurbation just north of Birmingham. With Sandwell and Dudley, Walsall forms the 'Black Country', a name coined in the 19th century due to the appearance of its coal and ironstone mining, limestone quarrying, brick-making, and metal and leather working. Large-scale industry in the area declined in the latter half of the 20th century, however, leaving Walsall with 11.4% unemployment in 1991.

The New Art Gallery building, opened in 2000, was designed by Caruso St John and cost £21 million. £15.75 million came from the Arts Lottery Fund, £4.5 million from the European Regional Development Fund and £0.3 million from Walsall City Challenge. The council also raised match funding by leasing land for stores adjacent to Gallery Square (where the ABC cinema and a 1960s shopping centre stood) to BHS and Woolworths.

The gallery was designed to house the magnificent and eclectic Garman Ryan Collection, donated to Walsall in 1973 by Lady Kathleen Epstein. A group of 43 works by Epstein, as well as works by internationally renowned artists such as Van Gogh, Turner and Constable amongst others, form the core of the displays, accompanied by a programme of contemporary art exhibitions. It opened to critical acclaim, receiving 202,776 visitors in the first year. Although visitor numbers dropped in subsequent years, they have been rising since 2007 and peaked in 2013 at 207,588 when the gallery showed a popular Damien Hirst exhibition. When the Arts Lottery application was made in 1995 there were 55,000 visitors annually to the existing gallery.

Hopes were high for spectacular waterfront regeneration. In reality change to the Town Wharf area has been slow, yet the presence of the gallery has been credited with leveraging investment from developers.

Its original remit – to be accessible to all – continues to be seen in recent activities. It works with all levels of education in the area, as well as hosting a long-running programme of events for different faith communities. It is committed to the development of early career artists and runs an ongoing programme of residencies, as well as providing exhibition opportunities in its fourth floor gallery.

¹⁵ <http://www.firestationcreative.co.uk/home>

Local policy context

A detailed appraisal of the regenerative potential of a new art gallery was never done. Nevertheless, it was claimed to be the ‘flagship project of Walsall’s urban regeneration plans’ in the council’s 1995 application Arts Lottery funding. According to the application, it was City Challenge that restarted previously failed work towards a new gallery space for Walsall in a ‘new, high-profile town centre location’. City Challenge funds were awarded to Walsall in 1992, of which £4 million were invested in Town Wharf, the new gallery location, at the end of the high street next to the Town Arm of the Walsall Canal.

A Cultural Quarter was envisaged, though it was not called this in the context of Walsall. The City Challenge Action Plan of 1996/97 states that the redevelopment of Town Wharf would ‘inject a new commercial lease of life into Walsall Town Centre’ and ‘with it will come much needed, leisure, cultural and recreational opportunities in later phases’. Those later phases were envisaged in a non-statutory report by the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit (1995) called Walsall: Towards the Millennium, which describes the masterplan as depicting ‘an important new cultural and leisure destination alongside Walsall Canal’. It also suggests that there is scope to add to the cultural content of the site through the addition of a multi-purpose performance space, subject to appropriate revenue support being available, together with new leisure and urban entertainment activities. We consider that these uses are best located in proximity to the art gallery to give economies of scale and critical mass.

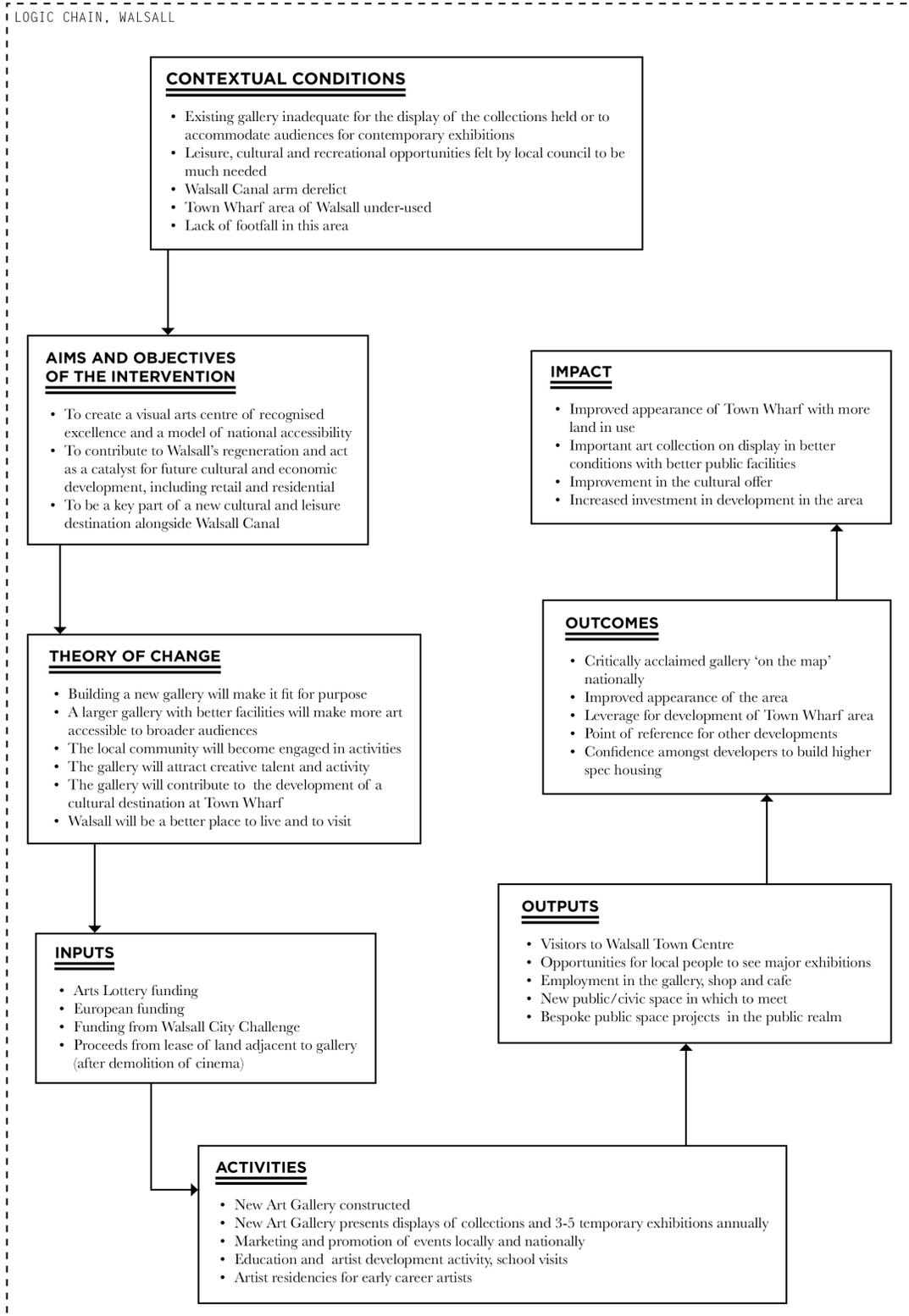
A press release by the gallery in 1999 states one of its key objectives is ‘To contribute to Walsall’s regeneration and act as a catalyst for future cultural and economic development’. Preceding this in the list of objectives are ‘to create a visual arts centre of recognised excellence’ and ‘to become a model of national accessibility for the visual arts and reach the broadest possible audience’, which gives a clear sense of the precedence of intrinsic over instrumental aims for the gallery itself.

Logic chain and theory of change

The logic chain diagram that follows shows underlying contextual conditions and impetus for the project starting with the inadequacy of the existing gallery building. Other contextual conditions relate to the dereliction of that area of the city and its associated lack of footfall. Aims and objections for the intervention cover the provision of the cultural value of the project, plus a wider regeneration aim for the Walsall Canal. The theory of change in this case involves improving the derelict area in order to engage local audiences, attract creative talent from further afield and to develop a mixed-use cultural destination around the Town Wharf. Various funds provided inputs to the project, including Heritage Lottery, European funding and local city council funding. The project activities included the construction of the gallery building plus the wide range of cultural exhibitions, events and activities taking place in the gallery. Outputs are described in terms of visitors, renovated space, opportunities for local people and jobs created and the impact is demonstrated with respect to regeneration effects and further investment, as well as in the provision of the improved gallery space itself.

The cover picture of this report shows an aspirational view of the planned development by Will Alsopp. Although the development that emerged was not realized on this level, we believe that the aspirational view helped to secure support for the project and for an art gallery of this quality and ambition in Walsall.

Logic chain



Analysis of SAV

Influence and leverage

In 2003, three years after the gallery opened, Urban Splash bought 17 acres of land to the north of the canal. The scheme developed for the area was to feature seven new buildings by the architects Shedkm, Will Alsop and Querkraft. Will Alsop was to design three blocks, including two landmark 'Oyster' buildings, each to provide 77 flats and an overall total of 1,680m² of leisure and retail space. It was intended that work should begin in July 2008 and be completed in December 2011.

Images of the new development show the New Art Gallery at the centre of the vision for the new high-density residential, retail and leisure area, focused on the canal. It evidently aimed to bring to Walsall a new urban form, though one which is non-specific to place – only the presence of the gallery and the Crown Wharf shopping park make the images recognisable as Walsall.

The scale and incredible ambition of the plans are indicative of confidence in the town and its ability to support such a development. In fact, due the collapse of the property market, Urban Splash made substantial losses. Ultimately, the land was sold to Whitbread and Kier to develop as a hotel and restaurant and cinema complex respectively. The Premier Inn hotel opened in 2012, whilst building of the cinema commenced in late 2014.

(Interestingly, the only cinema in the town was demolished in 1995 in order to make way for two large retail units, the income from which the council used as leverage in funding bids for the art gallery. Its demolition was therefore instrumental in the beginning of a cultural area but left the town without this basic leisure/cultural facility for more than two decades).

The south side of the canal was bought in 2005 by Jessup Brothers Ltd., a local development company. Development here went ahead despite the property crash, though the company had to adopt an alternative business approach, letting rather than selling the properties built. Clive Jessup, Director of the company, believes the gallery provides a point of orientation, both in terms of Walsall's identity and that of the Waterfront area. He attributes design elements to a desire to be in dialogue with the gallery and part of the development has been named 'Art Square'. He argues that some of the units built are occupied by young professionals, some commuting to Birmingham, who are attracted by the gallery, though he says they will also find the forthcoming cinema development and the night time offer it brings very appealing.

However, another key point of orientation is the hospital, which is on the opposite side of the development. One building is let to medical staff, whilst another has been set up as a Midwifery-led birthing unit. This represents a positive addition to Walsall town centre but does not contribute to the notion of a cultural quarter. The hospital is perhaps equally instrumental in the nature, function and sustainable future of the development.

Strategic leadership and place-making

The Premier Inn Walsall opened in 2012 on the opposite side of the canal basin. Though designed by Shedkm, an international architecture practice originally involved in master planning the Waterfront for Urban Splash, it does not look significantly different from other Premier Inn buildings. It would be difficult to argue that the presence of the gallery has resulted in a design that is distinctive or higher quality. Moreover, the hotel does not appear to have benefitted from additional trade resulting from

events and activities at the gallery. Hotel manager Manny Singh said that the hotel did not see substantially increased business on the openings of exhibitions, for example.

Developers of the forthcoming cinema and restaurant complex attribute their tenants' commitment (and thus their own) to the presence of the gallery. James Nicolson of Kier Property argued that Light is a cinema chain that is concerned with the local community and which provides more culture oriented screenings – such as live opera; the gallery, he said, was important to them and it being there gave them confidence.

Synergy and engagement

Social impact of the gallery can be seen in its focus on education at a range of levels. Jo Digger, Curator of Collections from the 1980s to 2014, said that while education was felt to be at the heart of the gallery's work when it occupied its former building, the exhibition programme could not be expanded because there was not enough space to accommodate more visitors or more activity. The facilities were inadequate. For example, the gallery had one toilet.

The gallery now offers a range of general activities to schools as well as working to create bespoke workshops for individual school groups and evolve collaboration with schools by developing new programmes such as Cross Curricular Art, which saw the gallery working with one school intensively over a year. All the students in all the year groups visited and this fed into English classes and inspired fashion design, as well as supporting art teaching.

The gallery say 5000 school children visit annually. They are approximately 50% local and 50% from outside the borough – from for example Coventry, Birmingham and as far afield as Wales. 90% of schools in the borough have visited, though some that are very close have never visited. The gallery work with state and private schools.

The gallery has an ongoing relationship with Walsall College, which offers Art HND and Foundation to local young people. Students visit the gallery and staff of the gallery regularly assist in critiquing/assessing student work. Displays in the gallery are used by the tutors as a basis for assignments and in the past longer term projects have taken place in collaboration with the gallery (such as a curation module in 2013 resulting in an exhibition). However, course tutor Andrew Holmes was keen to stress that the college primarily encourages students to use the gallery alone and to go regularly. He believed that having the gallery in the town in itself raised the expectation of students, many of whom would not make regular visits to Birmingham, let alone London and so would not otherwise have access to the kind of international art it makes available.

The gallery works extensively with early career artists. Through a residency programme of individual and group residencies it supports the career development of artists in the West Midlands region. The intensity of this activity (the number of residencies that have been offered and the facilities provided) is not matched by any other gallery in the region – e.g. the Ikon, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Artists who have been involved in the residency programme or who have had their work shown by the gallery tend to talk about an increase in scale in their work, an increase in confidence, financial support and support with career development from gallery staff beyond the course of the residency.

There are issues with the retention of artists in the region after graduation and the programme, as well as support for local early career artists in the form of exhibition and purchase of work, could be seen as attracting them to stay.

The intention from the outset was that the gallery should be focused on the community in Walsall. Peter Jenkinson wrote at the time of opening that the gallery was ‘next to Woolworths and British Home Stores. What better location can you have?’ In Walsall communities are diverse with 20% of the population from black, minority or ethnic groups. For the past 10 years the gallery has organised events to mark Diwali and Vaisakhi, for example. These draw in 1000 visitors, a significant proportion of whom are from communities that would not ordinarily constitute gallery visitors. Organiser Surjit Rai (Cultural Ambassador) argues that the gallery is in an accessible location, in the centre of town, easily reached by public transport. He believes that bringing people in in this way may aid understanding between communities, as well as potentially engaging people with art and culture and also, with civic life.

Could the model for development in the area – either Urban Splash’s masterplan or the Jessup flats/hotel/cinema complex – ever represent that described by Florida whereby a ‘creative class’ move in and undertake creative work? Cultural production- at the level of individual producers - was not already present and does not appear to have been accommodated by the new development.

Perhaps the Urban Splash development had the potential to present the post-Fordian model described by Porter (2000), that of an agglomeration and consumption ‘destination’ cluster, where retail and entertainment are consumed. The Walsall Waterfront that is now taking shape is very much less spectacular than the Urban Splash version, but it is still a ‘destination’ cluster, and the presence of the gallery has certainly provided confidence amongst developers and their tenants and leverage to some degree.

The intervention of the gallery has not been at a single moment in 2000. Arguably the intervention of the gallery has occurred repeatedly as each new person came into contact with it. Even in terms of property, the intervention would be seen as having insignificant effect in the years immediately following its opening in 2000 – even the decade immediately following. Without taking the long view and examining the influence of the presence of the gallery after the first flush of enthusiasm (and after the property boom and bust) it would seem to have had little effect in regenerative terms. Its presence, however, has been a slow burning catalyst for development; when fresh developers have approached the site it has been influential.

Because the gallery is part of broader redevelopment in the area – it was phase one while phase two was a retail park across the road that opened in 2001 – it is hard to distinguish the influence of the gallery from that of the shopping park in some respects. For example, increased footfall in the town wharf area is due to the shops as well as subsequently the new hospital of 2010, although is possibly in part due to the gallery.

Learning and conclusions

We always saw this project as a pilot for a more extensive piece of work. In this project we have scratched the surface of this area of investigation. There are so few studies looking at the development of small and medium sized towns, despite the fact that such a large proportion of the population live in them; and little work investigating the longitudinal effects of investments in cultural assets. We aim to both extend our methods and broaden our scope for the next stage of the work.

The methodology that we deployed provided useful, but limited, insight and we would ideally like to extend the study adding some quantitative primary research to gather opinions and attitudes of local residents and visitors.

Our overall findings led us to believe that while there was impact in each of the case studies, optimism bias at the planning stages was evident so that the benefits were more subtle, reliant on inter-relationships with other partners and agencies and heavily dependent on the wider context. With reference back to the DCMS statements, we saw evidence of all of these effects taking place at the case study locations. However, probably not in quite such a linear 'cause and effect' way as was envisaged.

We found that while the cases made for the initial projects and investments were based on expected impact due to economic benefit, that there was more evidence of benefit realised closer to home, amongst the local residents in ways that fitted with local needs. For example, the Shetland Museum developing close synergies with the schools network, community groups and visiting artists; the Alhambra developing its theatre school programme; and the Walsall Gallery running community events and drawing in passing shoppers to its café and exhibitions.

The scope of the project was limited to the three case studies. Although we have demonstrated contrasts between case studies even in this small study, we would like to conduct an extensive survey of small and medium-sized towns in the UK. We would thereby investigate the various different models of cultural regeneration and try to start to make observations about the efficacy of different approaches and to start to identify critical success factors.

We aim to publish our work to date in the academic literature and to present at at least one International conference in the next year.

We would welcome any feedback on the project or invitations from venues or towns that would like to be considered as future case studies.

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to:

- Our sponsors, Nesta
- The Glasgow School of Art Research Assistant Scheme
- All our consultees and to those who allowed us to reproduce photography
- Christine Jones for her work on the design of the exhibition and printing
- Shetland Museum and Archives
- The Alhambra Theatre, Dunfermline
- The New Gallery, Walsall

Thanks to many colleagues at GSA including:

- Lorna Hards
- Nicky Bird
- Jenny Brownrigg
- Talitha Kotze
- Craig Laurie
- Stephen Jackson
- Gayle McCormack
- Alison Hay
- Ken Neil
- Caroline Grape
- Christel Fruehøj
- Lili Eichinge
- Emma Campbell

- Sean Black
- Edwin Pickstone
- Harald Turek
- Dan Miller
- Frances Kennedy
- Phyllis Mullan
- Suzanne Dunscombe
- Steven Higgins
- Janitors and reception teams



"When I Paint I Remember is a monthly workshop held at the museum for dementia sufferers and their carers, although a home schooler comes too...There wouldn't have been the capacity, space or light in the old museum building"
Ann Williamson, Alzheimer Scotland



Adjacent and attached to the Museum is a 1905 wooden boat building shed. There is a viewing gallery for visitors to view the internal of the shed, enjoy the old boats on display and on some days watch and talk to a couple of 70 yr old boat-builders working to restore old boats.

Photography: Shetland Museum and Archives



The old museum was located in the floor above the Library. The Archives were located in old WW2 huts in very unsatisfactory conditions and access from public was by appointment.

Photography: Shetland Museum and Archives



Images of the Hay's Dock area and site for the museum build prior to development.

Photography: Shetland Amenity Trust



“There was the idea of developing a creative industries quarter at the North Ness Business Park. That hasn’t happened. There wasn’t the interest for office space from the creative sector in Shetland. Instead demand was from mainly service sector businesses who wanted to buy their premises. There’s a solicitor, architect, physiotherapy studio, these kinds of businesses....and the new council offices.”

Rachael Hunter, Highlands and Islands Enterprise



"Every child at Bells Brae Primary School visits the museum at least once per year. The museum and its collections are woven into the curriculum and the school also uses the museum as a venue for concerts and events. The children visit during school-time and then take their parents along at the weekend."
Irene Smith, Bells Brae Primary School, Lerwick





The new building and displays were designed around the collection. This made a huge difference compared to being in the old building.



"Speaking as a parent, Mareel has given us a cinema that shows films for children and along with the new museum, there's now things to do during holidays and at weekends. Writers and artists come in for a coffee; some of them use the workshops. There wasn't anywhere to have business meetings before. Mareel is open in the evenings and even if you're not planning on seeing a show, it's a place where women feel comfortable coming for a drink."

Donald Anderson, Shetland Arts Development Agency



This unit had been a bridal shop, cake shop and now the Little Shop of Heroes has been here since 2012. The niche nature of the shop works for the location, just off the main shopping street. As well as a range of comics and related goods, the shop has a dungeon for regular games nights. The setting is perfect for events like the Comic Day Fest and Halloween.





One of two micro-breweries to open in the street in the last few years, The Bruery, offers home-brewed beers and a range of quality wine and spirits. The venue also hosts regular acoustic music nights and small dramatic productions. This area of the town was run down. It's the medieval centre and architecturally and culturally it's really attractive. It's improved a lot recently.



Khushis is really busy on the nights when there is a show at The Alhambra and many of the acts have eaten in the restaurants. There is usually a big rush for food pre-theatre but there are people around in the street afterwards too.



Walsall's old art gallery, located in a 1965 extension to Walsall Library

Photograph: From *Aspirin Quality Project* (christee.org.uk/) by kind permission of Chris Lee, artist



A series of annual events are organised at the Gallery for different faith communities by Cultural Ambassador, Surjit Rai. He feels the events break a barrier for the gallery. They get people in and give the message that it's not just for middle-class white people. He thought the exhibitions themselves could be aimed more at ordinary, working people from different communities, however.





The gallery under construction.



Next to the canal basin is the Wharf Bar, also designed by gallery architects Caruso St John.





A cinema and restaurant complex is due to open in 2016 on the north side of the canal. Without the gallery the developer said their tenants would be 'more nervous'.

Image: Courtesy of Kier Property