

Beyond Impacts | Lessons and legacies from researching Liverpool's European Capital of Culture



Memories and Stories

- Find a place on the map that means something to you
- Use the paper provided to write a memory or story about that place.
- Please add your name and age as well
- Attach your story to the map with pins and thread.

Parallel Session | Cultural Narratives

Presented by
Dr Beatriz Garcia, Impacts 08

Discussant
Prof Franco Bianchini
Leeds Metropolitan University



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Overview | Cultural Narratives

The impact of the ECoC on Liverpool's image.

- How is the story of Liverpool being told?
- Have there been major changes in media representations since the bid stage?
- How is this reflected in people's perceptions locally and around the country?



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Liverpool as European Capital of Culture |



Aspirations for the city's image renaissance

Liverpool Culture Company Objectives

2008 European Capital of Culture Vision

- To create and present the best of local, national and international **art and events** in all genres
- To build community enthusiasm, creativity and **participation**
- To maintain, enhance and grow the **cultural infrastructure** of Liverpool
- To **increase the levels of visitors** and inward investment in Liverpool
- To **reposition Liverpool** as a world class city by 2008
- To positively **reposition Liverpool** to a national and international audience and to encourage more visitors to the city and the North West
- To encourage and **increase participation** in cultural activity by people from communities across Merseyside and the wider region
- To create a **legacy of long term growth and sustainability** in the city's cultural sector
- To develop greater **recognition nationally and internationally** for the role of arts and culture in making our cities better places to live, work and visit



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Why capture event and city narratives ...




- Point of departure | general aims
 - de-construct one of the key official aspirations behind 'Liverpool 08' :
 - transformation of the city's image and boost to the city's creative economy
 - Both elements have strong cultural and symbolic dimensions: **perceptions and identity**
 - find an alternative to economic and physical impact assessments
 - understanding the **cultural** impact of culture-led regeneration
- Operational objectives
 - assessment of **narratives** about Liverpool as Capital of culture and their long term sustainability
 - contrast **institutional** discourses, **media** narratives, and **personal** accounts by key stakeholders and the general public
 - compare these cultural dimensions with claims about economic, social and physical impact



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Impacts 08 framework |



European Capital of Culture Research Programme

inclusion, outreach, diversity

creativity
production
consumption

cultural vibrancy

access & participation

image & perceptions

media coverage
people's views

employment
visitor trends
investment

economy & tourism

08

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European Capital of Culture Research Programme

governance & delivery

aims + objectives
policy, strategy

social capital


physical environment

equalities
well-being
quality of life


infrastructures
public realm
sustainability

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Capturing Liverpool's story | Key methods



PhD studentship

- Documentary analysis
 - Understanding established [and emergent] event policy + strategic disc
- Media content analysis
 - Key themes and attitudes within national (1996-2009) and local press (2003-2009) broadcast (2007-2008) and online (2008) coverage about the city and the ECoC
- Perception surveys
 - Local and national public surveys (2006-2009)
 - Residents in four Liverpool neighbourhoods (2006-2009)
 - City centre visitors (2008)
 - Local and regional arts / cultural peers (2009)
- Stakeholder interviews
 - Government, business, arts & creative, voluntary, statutory sectors (2006-2009)
- Visual ethnography
 - Capturing official, unofficial and spontaneous representations of the city (2006-2008)
- Cognitive mapping
 - Inviting local people to articulate their identity and their sense of place (2007-2008)

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RCUK Fellowship

Liverpool pre-conceptions

Liverpool | established representations

- Nationally
 - Crime and violence, poverty, unemployment, health and education issues



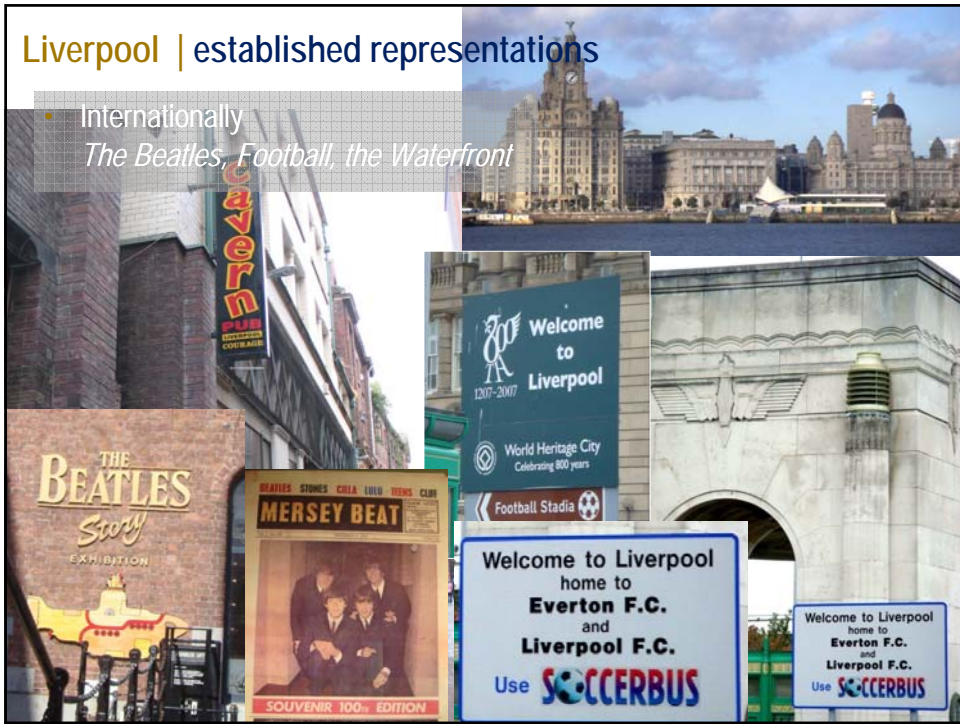
SCOUSERS REACT TO LATEST GOVERNMENT BACK TO WORK SCHEME

Images being circulated online around the time of the bid 2002, early 2003



Liverpool | established representations

- Internationally
The Beatles, Football, the Waterfront

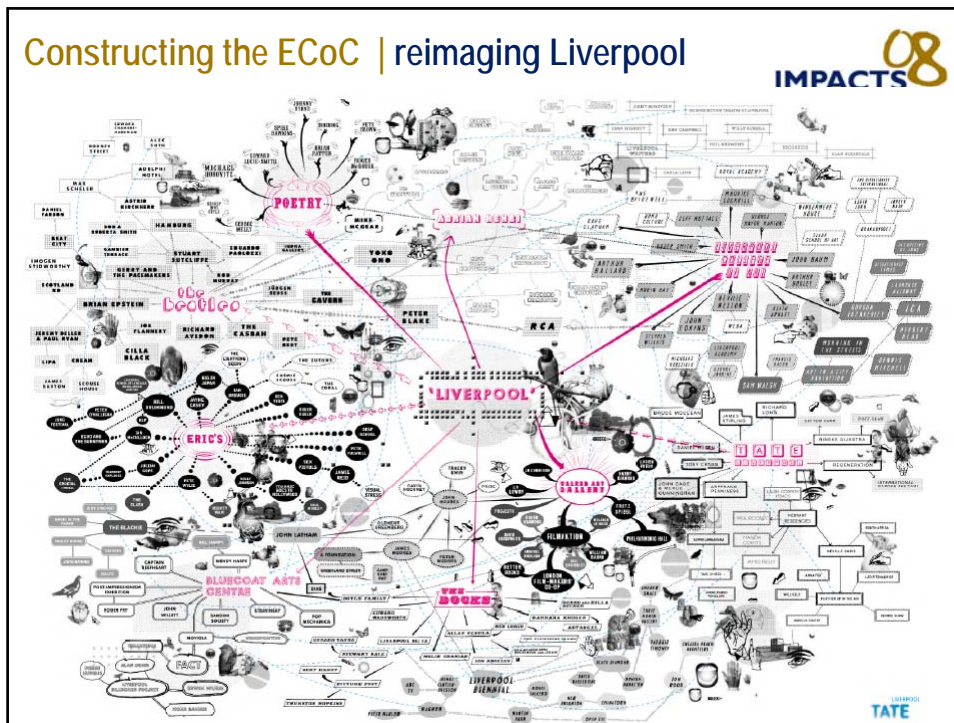


Constructing the ECoC | reimagining Liverpool

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Constructing the ECoC | reimagining Liverpool



Constructing the ECoC | reimagining Liverpool



- Key moments in the projection of the city via the ECoC
 - 2000- 03: Bidding and award
 - 2004- 07: From promises to delivery : managing the event
 - 2008 : The Event year : local, national, international projections
 - 2009 on : Sustaining emerging narratives (“managing the myth”)

2000-2003 | Bidding and nomination

- Low profile bidding preparations
 - Liverpool is no favourite
- 2002-03 | race towards announcement
 - Comparisons with Glasgow, previous 'underdog' re-constructed as international 'success' story
 - Progressive people's momentum is built
 - Communities appropriate the Bid's emblem
 - Judges visit : Liverpool is the 'people's bid'
 - "the city that wanted it the most"
- 2003 | award captures people's imagination
 - ECoC as a symbol of the city's changing fortune
 - "The World in One City"



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2004-07 | Managing the event + its narrative

- Key transition | from a promise to a reality



Open access



Restricted access
Brand privileges



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Official narrative | Strategic focus



- Thematic years to highlight dimensions of the city
 - 2004 | Faith in one city
 - 2005 | Sea Liverpool
 - 2006 | Liverpool performs
 - 2007 | Liverpool heritage – 800 years
 - 2008 | European Capital of Culture
 - 2009 | Liverpool and the environment
- Engaging local people while attracting the external visitor...
 - Local advertising
 - National advertising



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media content analysis



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Methodologies | media content analysis



- Coding approach
 - Objective states: paper source, date, length, type (news, editorials, letters..)
 - 6 overarching thematic categories; 5 tones
- Sampling approach
 - Lexis Nexis plus Cision media consultancy
 - 1996, 2003-2009: Searches for stories on Liverpool
 - 2007-2009: Searches for stories on the ECoC / Liverpool 08 / Culture Company
- Data gathered on Liverpool coverage
 - Local papers: (2% of total) average 500 per year
 - National papers: (12% of total) average 300 per year
- Data gathered on ECoC –specific coverage
 - Local papers: (20% of total)
 - National papers: (all coverage)



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Stories of Liverpool as European Capital of Culture



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The ECoC image cycle ... 2007 Media controversies



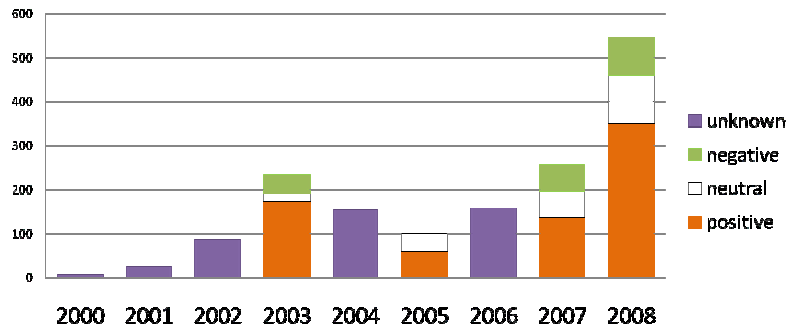
The ECoC image cycle ... 2008 Media boost



Volume of national coverage on Liverpool ECoC



Number and tone of national press articles mentioning the Liverpool ECoC



Source: Impacts 08 research



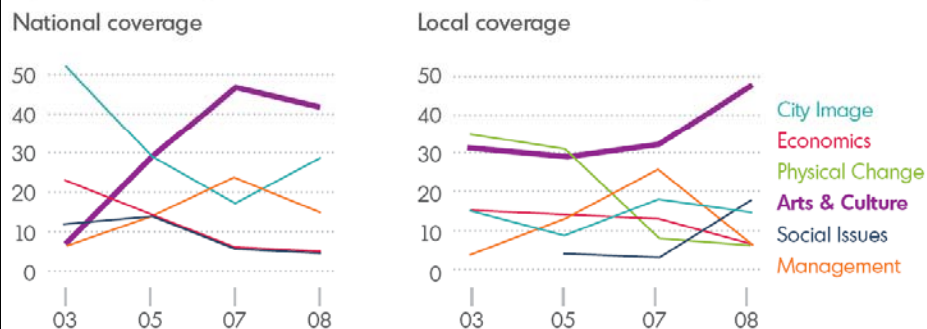
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Thematic focus from bid announcement onwards



Figure 21: Percentage of thematic focus of national and local coverage on Liverpool as ECoC

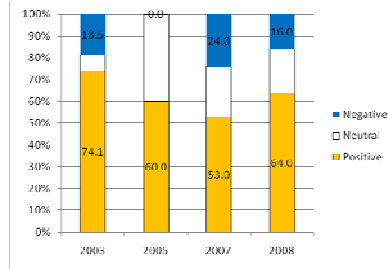


- Nationally, ECoC mainly presented as image and economic catalyst in 2003; by 2008 – focus on cultural stories, wider image renaissance and leadership issues
- Locally, more emphasis on physical change ; though dramatic drop since 2005
- 2003 –economic & social focus (nationally); locally, the social dimension has grown since 2005
- 2007 – mainly focus on culture stories, then management (controversies?)
- 2008 – returns to trend in 2005 – culture, then image, then management, then social issues

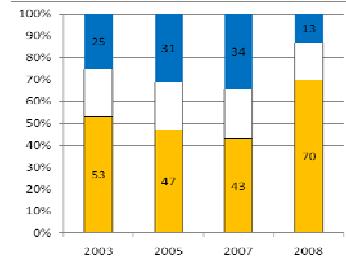
Attitudinal trends (2003- 2008)



National



Local



- Liverpool ECoC coverage has remained mainly positive
- Nationally, the peak was in 2003, locally, it has been in 2008
- 2007 to 2008 transition quite marked locally and nationally



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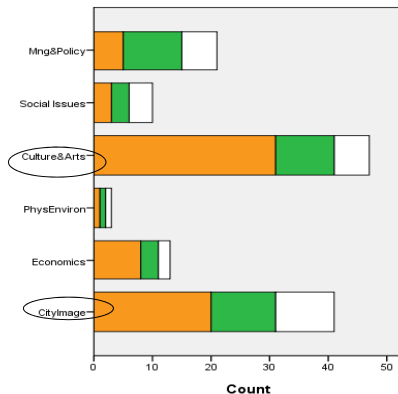


Thematic focus and tone of Liverpool ECoC stories

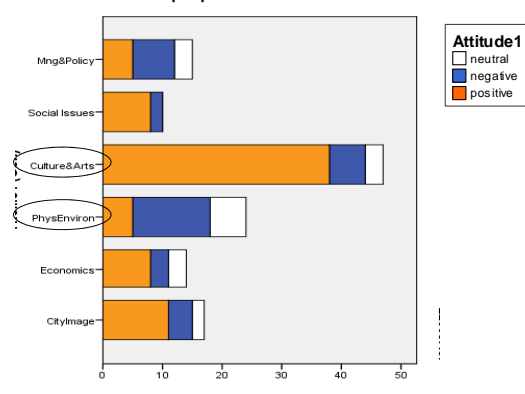


(2003, 2005, 2007, 2008)

National papers



Local papers



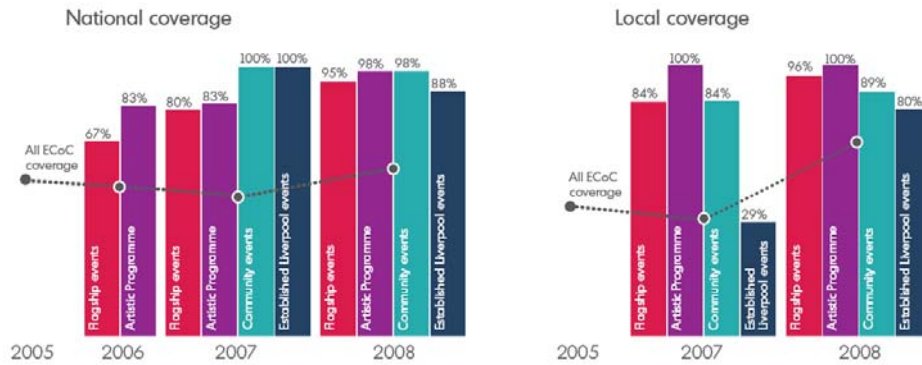
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Press coverage of Liverpool ECoC events



Figure 22: Press coverage of Liverpool ECoC events – % positive or neutral



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Online media



- The Liverpool ECoC was strongly reflected in user-led social media spaces throughout 2008 and dominated online narratives of Liverpool:
 - *flickr* | 50,000 Liverpool ECoC tagged photographs uploaded by event audiences
 - *YouTube* | 2,200 video clips generating over 2.5m views
 - *Facebook* | 500 new group pages on ECoC events, over 13,000 members
 - *Google* /volume Liverpool ECoC related searches comparable to football searches
- Most prominent events in social media platforms were mass participation
 - Go Superlambananas (across platforms)
 - Spider / La Princesse (YouTube, flickr)
 - Mathew Street Festival, Liverpool Summer Pops (YouTube, flickr)
 - Opening and Closing events (greatest surge in google searches)
- Although social media has potential global reach, constituencies were mainly local or a hub for Liverpool's diaspora (expats, relatives)
- MTV awards attracted the greatest international following (YouTube TV clip sharing), but did not generate particularly strong associations with the ECoC

Most recognised events



- Locally (media coverage, resident surveys)
 - Free mass participation events (Go Superlambanana parade, Spider/La Princesse)
 - Events connecting with city heritage (Tall Ship races, Mathew Street)
 - Liverpool ONE opening strongly associated with the Liverpool ECoC

- Nationally (media coverage)
 - Mainstream / media events (Opening Weekend, Paul McCartney concert, Spider)
 - Art highlights (Klimt exhibition, Tavener Requiem, Simon Rattle concerts)

- Internationally
 - Mainstream / media events (Opening Weekend, Paul McCartney concert, MTV awards)



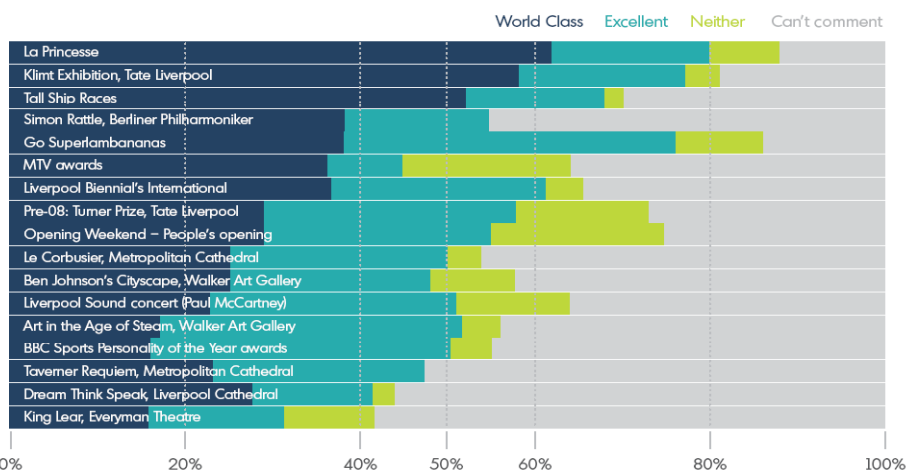
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Events most valued by sector peers



Figure 18: Liverpool ECoC events praised as 'world class' or excellent by over 50% of sector peers⁶⁷



Source: Impact08 research



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Perceptions | Local residents



- In 2007, Liverpool residents' perceptions of the ECoC programme were slightly more negative than national averages
 - This reflects the mixed feelings of Liverpool's most deprived areas, who were uncertain about the programme's lasting economic and social impact
- Levels of confidence on the **lasting positive benefits** of the ECoC in Liverpool varied depending on the neighbourhood
 - Residents from **low income communities** felt less confident about the programme's impact
- While there was limited local confidence in the ECoC's overall impact, **local satisfaction with its cultural offer** was high
 - 86% of Liverpool residents** indicate that they are interested in attending ECoC events and rate them very positively.
- In 2008, local confidence levels **increased dramatically**

2008 local perceptions

- 85% agree the city is a better place than before the ECoC (20% growth on 2007)
- 11.6% of residents felt they had tried 'something new'
- 60% had experienced at least one ECoC event
- 80% rated ECoC events attended as 'good' or 'very good'



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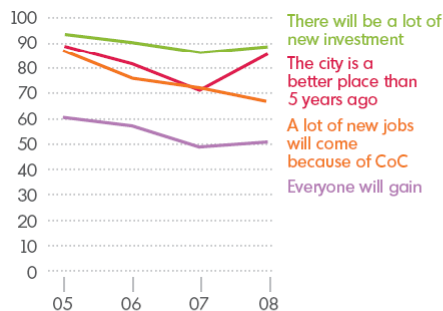


Perceptions | Local residents

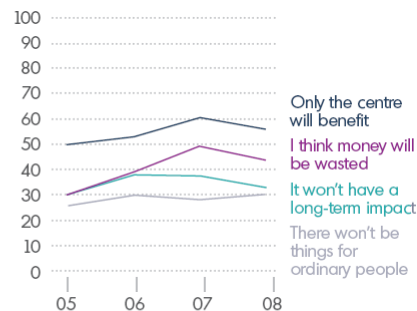


Figure 31: Local perceptions of Liverpool ECoC (percentage of people who agree or greatly agree with statement)

Positive impact statements



Negative impact statements



Source:GfK NCP via Liverpool Culture Company

Perceptions | North West residents, by late 2008:

- 78% felt the city had benefited from the ECoC title (50% 'a great deal')
- 69% felt Merseyside had benefited (a drop from 82% in 2006)
- 50% felt it had benefited the North West (15% 'a great deal')

Public awareness of Liverpool as ECoC



Figure 23: Unprompted awareness of Liverpool as ECoC

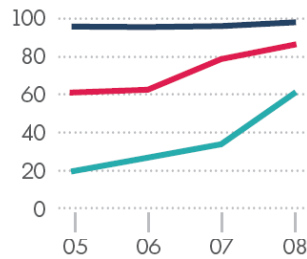
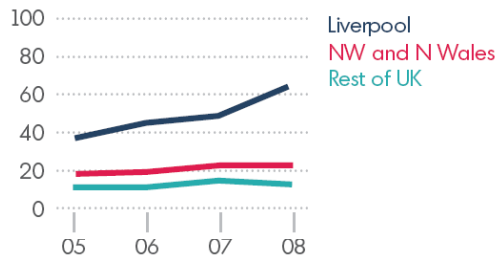


Figure 24: Know 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' about Liverpool ECoC (%)



Source: NOP annual perception surveys



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Stakeholder perceptions | Statutory, voluntary, business



- Hosting the ECoC in Liverpool was seen as a success
 - Raising aspirations and confidence
 - Transformation of external perceptions
 - Quality of events and experiences
 - Legacy of infrastructural changes
 - Potential to alleviate impact of the economic downturn
- The Liverpool ECoC had added value to existing programmes and trends already taking place in the city since the 1990s
- There was great potential, though also great risk, associated with the legacy of Liverpool ECoC



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Stakeholder perceptions | Cultural and Creative sector



- The arts sector viewed the Liverpool ECoC as a success in terms of
 - raising the profile of the city and its cultural offer,
 - bringing visitors and the local population in to enjoy its offer
- The creative industries sector felt :
 - Liverpool ECoC had improved the city profile, particularly external perceptions
 - It had improved sector 'local morale'
 - It increased creative industries sector credibility within city region
 - They noted that in marketing terms, the ECoC had focused on cultural and tourist offer rather than creative industries offer, but the majority expected that the ECoC would bring benefits to their business in the long term
- 51% of sector peers agreed that Liverpool had been repositioned as a 'world class city', while 30% considered the term too ambiguous



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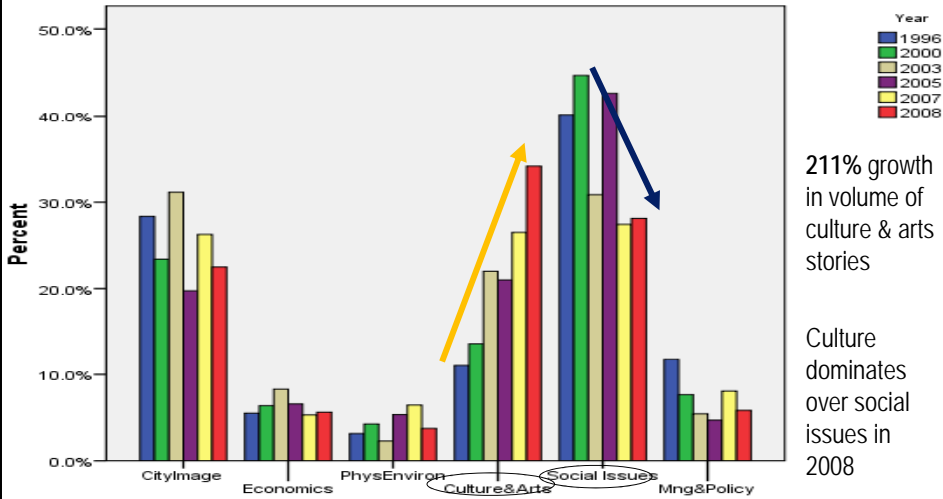
Stories of Liverpool (the city at large)



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Thematic focus (in %) | National press (1996-2008)



211% growth in volume of culture & arts stories

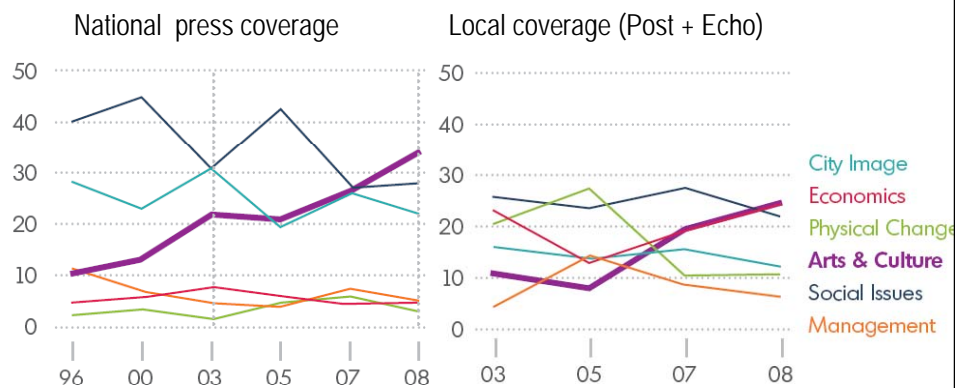
Culture dominates over social issues in 2008



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Thematic focus (in %) | National vs local (1996-2008)



Source: Impact08 research

- Dramatic growth in (positive) cultural-related coverage since mid-1990s
- Fluctuation of (negative) social issues coverage – nationally, trend downwards
- Locally, physical change stories become less prominent from 2007 onwards
- Locally, economic stories drop between 2003 and 2005, and grow since, becoming dominant area, with culture in 2008

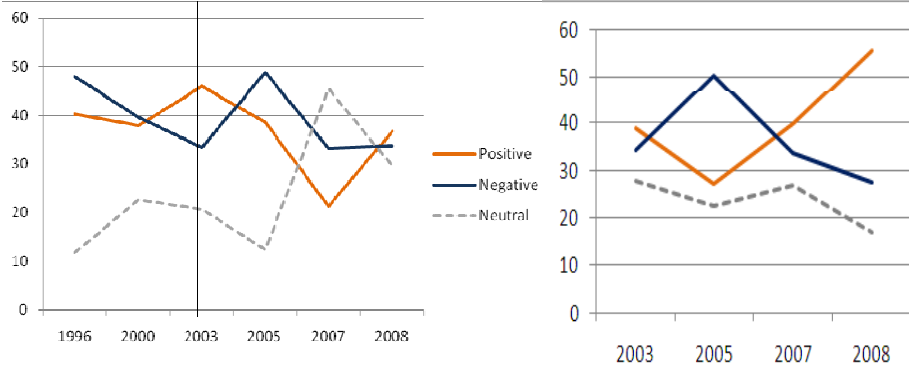


Attitude progression



- National (1996-2008)

Local (2003-2008)



- Nationally – coverage becomes less polarised : growth of neutral stories
- Locally – marked growth of positive coverage



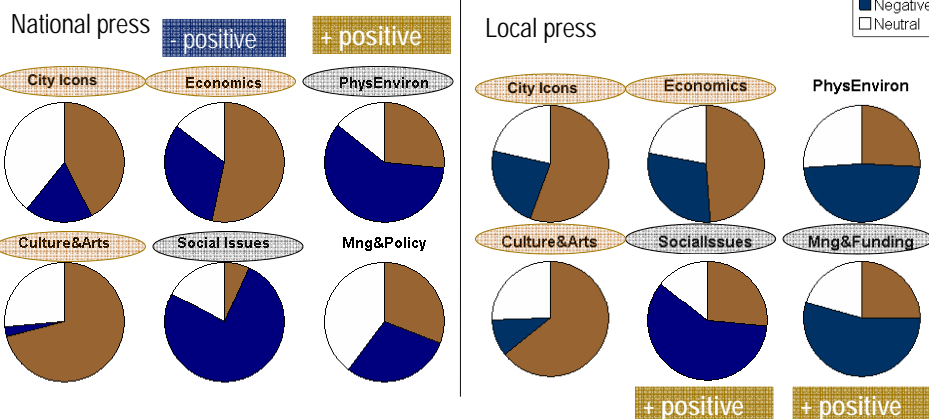
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Attitude per theme



Changing attitude trends in 2008



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Perceptions | National opinion



- From 2005 to 2008, overall positive impressions of Liverpool increased amongst all surveyed groups
 - Outside the North West,
 - Significant positive impression growth (53% to 60%)
 - Drop of negative views (20% to 14%)
 - More people felt Liverpool was a place they wanted to go to (58% to 64%)
- Top 'good' and 'bad' things about Liverpool
 - 'Good things' : people/characters, football/sport, buildings/heritage, waterfront, nightlife, 'interesting' place, with 'lots to do';
 - In 2008: 4% spontaneous references to ECoC as a 'good thing'
 - 'Bad things' : crime, decay/urban decline
 - Growth in % people saying there was 'nothing bad' about Liverpool (19% to 26%)



www.impact08.net Data source: Gfk/NOP national survey

Perceptions | Visitor Opinion



- Between 2006 and end of 2008, marked growth in visitor satisfaction with Liverpool as a tourist destination
- Greater satisfaction levels in Liverpool than other UK tourist destinations
 - 99% feel positive about general atmosphere (compared with 91% in 2006, 89% in other destinations)
 - 97% feel positive about 'feeling of welcome'
 - In 2008, views on attractions ranged from 86% to 95% positive (compared with 73% to 82% average satisfaction for all surveyed UK destinations)
- Improvement in perceptions of crime / safety
 - Rise in 'feeling of safety from crime' (90% of visitors felt positive about safety)
 - This was influenced by the visit as 77% felt 'safer than I expected'



Data source: Liverpool Destination Benchmarking Survey, by ENWRS

Perceptions | Local residents



- Over period 2005 to 2008, 60% of residents had a very positive impression of the city, negative opinions remained around 5%.
- Good things about Liverpool:
 - 2005-2008: people, buildings, waterfront, nightlife, museums and galleries
 - In 2008 : significant rise in mentions to shopping and 'interesting place, lots to do'
 - Rise in spontaneous mentions to the Liverpool ECoC – from 4% to 10%
 - Greatest change in trend: growth in belief that Liverpool is better than other cities for: hotels, music, galleries, shopping
- Bad things about Liverpool:
 - In line with national trends: Crime, decay/urban decline, the people.
 - Greater emphasis than nationally: litter, concerns over 'poor reputation'/negative media



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discussion
concluding remarks



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Discussion



- The design, management and promotion of a major event can act as a platform to construct a common urban imaginary and 'city brand'
- **This process follows a demarkated temporal cycle and spatial focus**
 - **Bidding preparations** | opening the debate, promises and proposals
 - **Bidding promotion** | emphasis on local ownership, 'everyone welcome'
 - **Event preparation** | prioritising, constructing the 'brand', exclusion measures
 - **Event hosting** | telling the story, getting the balance locally, nationally, internationally
- **Changes in media trends 1996 -2008 suggest positive ECoC impact**
 - Dramatic growth in stories about culture and creativity at national and local level
 - Decrease in national negative stories about economic issues (unemployment)
 - Reference to social issues (crime +violence) are less prominent in 2008
 - ECoC specific stories do not refer to social issues; instead they are associated with image renaissance (+), culture (+), physical change (-) and economic growth (+)



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Discussion



- Opportunities and challenges to maximise an inclusive approach
 - The ECoC is not as highly regulated as other international events (eg. Olympics)
 - Each city can 'invent' the designation according to its interests and needs
 - The challenge is to use this process to open up (rather than close) the debate about perceived and desired city images and identities
- Understanding the impact and potential legacy of a large scale event requires a detailed assessment of these intangible processes
 - The study of official and parallel narratives helps establish how the story is being told and how this process affects local people's sense of identity
 - The Impacts 08 approach can provide some answers due to its holistic and longitudinal nature. The study of image and identity must be embedded in an understanding of wider economic, physical, social and cultural trends
 - This should become a reference point for future research on culture-led regeneration



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Discussion | Balancing the narratives



- What is the balance between cultural, social and economic objectives?
- What is being more clearly promoted / what is more visible in the city...
 - Opportunities for cultural and artistic creation
 - Opportunities for engagement and participation
 - Opportunities for investment and consumption
- How are differing | competing | conflicting (?) narratives represented?
 - Who are the key sources | the key voices
 - What are the key spaces being occupied
 - What narratives are most likely to sustain in the long term



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Impacts 08 reports | Cultural Narratives

Programme overview

- Impacts 08 Baseline Findings 2006-2007 (2007)
- Impacts 08: Methodological framework (2010)
- [Final Report] Creating an Impact (2010)

Image and Perceptions

- Media Impact Assessment (Part I) (2006)
- Re-telling the City: exploring local narratives (2007)
- Liverpool 08 Centre of the Online Universe (2009)
- The Look of the City: Public Realm (2010)
- Media Impact Assessment (Part II) (2010)

Economy and Tourism

- Doing Business in the ECoC (Part II): (2008)
- ECoC and Liverpool's Developer Market: (2008)
- Tourism and the Business of Culture (2010)

Cultural Access and Participation

- Volunteering for Culture (2010)
- Neighbourhood Watch (2010)

Cultural Vibrancy and Sustainability

- Liverpool's Creative Industries (2009)
- Liverpool's Arts Sector (2009)

Governance and Delivery Process

- Who Pays the Piper? (2008)
- Liverpool on the map again (2010)



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All reports available at:
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Impacts 08



Impacts 08 is a joint research initiative of the University of Liverpool and **Liverpool John Moores University**, which evaluates the social, cultural, economic and environmental effects of Liverpool's hosting the European Capital of Culture title in 2008.

Since 2005 our research programme, commissioned by Liverpool City Council, has been examining the progress and impact of this experience on the city and its people. Our aim is to develop a model for evaluating the multiple impacts of culture-led regeneration programmes that can be applied to events across the UK and internationally.

Above: Liverpool 08 banner at the Walker Art Gallery by B. Garcia



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European Capital of Culture Research Programme

Latest news:
Our *Measuring Cultural Engagement* workshop, held at Liverpool's Foreight Centre on 27th July, was a great success. [Download the presentations, see who was there and contribute to the ongoing debate.](#) [More news >>](#)

Impacts08@liverpool.ac.uk
Phone: +44 (0)151 794 2988
Fax: +44 (0)151 794 2997

Impacts 08
University of Liverpool
Eleanor Rathbone Building
Bedford Street South
Liverpool L69 7ZA

Thank you

Beatriz Garcia

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