WARWICK UK CITIES OF CULTURE PROJECT

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ABOUT THE FUTURE TRENDS SERIES

THE FUTURE TRENDS SERIES—published as part of the Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project—discusses ways of thinking about the value of culture. It explores the importance of research for understanding the place of culture in everyday lives, its impact on local people, society, the economy, wellbeing, and prosperity at large. It does so through a research-informed approach that connects with the needs of policy making.

The intended audiences for the series include cultural workers, organisers of cultural events, funders, policymakers at the national level and in local government, as well as academics. The series aims to provide accessible, research-led accounts of issues related and relevant to the development of the DCMS UK City of Culture Programme and connected initiatives supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Arts Council England and others.

The papers are expected to inform, provoke and engage with place-based ambitions and planning for cultural growth and vitality at all levels. They also offer a practical guide to understanding the range of concepts, methods, data, and evidence that can inform the planning and preparation of proposals and programming.

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ADDRESSING CULTURAL AND OTHER INEQUALITIES AT SCALE

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About the Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project

The AHRC-commissioned Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project is led by the University of Warwick and highlights the importance of universities and of research in the DCMS UK City of Culture Programme: from the bidding process for the title, through to delivery, evaluation, and legacy of the programme.

The project has a particular focus on increasing the use of arts, humanities, and social science research to match the scale of opportunity for evidence-based learning afforded by the DCMS UK City of Culture Programme.

The project is committed to sharing insights and data that can benefit and inform the UK City of Culture Programme and other place-based cultural investments, mega-events, and initiatives.

Titles in the Future Trends Series:

Each title presents an expert analysis of current and future trends concerning key concepts or ideas, supported by case study evidence from Coventry UK City of Culture 2021. The seven titles in the series cover the following topics:

1. Innovations in Economic Impact Assessment
2. Social Value Creation and Measurement in the Cultural Sector
3. Reasons to Co-Create
4. Addressing Cultural and Other Inequalities at Scale
5. Maximising and Measuring the Value of Heritage in Place
6. Measuring the Impact of Arts and Culture on Wellbeing
7. Building Trust in Policing Through Arts Collaboration

To view the abstracts for each paper, please follow this link here.
There is currently keen interest in the social inequalities in the creative economy.

Publicly funded arts organisations are seeking new ways of engaging with communities to ensure art can be for the many and not the few. While the UK City of Culture programme has, like similar cultural mega-events rooted within place, and the priority area funding programmes from Arts Council England, reduced spatial inequalities, they do not seek to reduce social inequalities as a priority. However, social and spatial inequalities are intrinsically linked, something that Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 was unique in recognising when it put hyper-local co-creation front and centre.

By focusing on hyper-local offerings, the programme offered local proximity (important to people who do not often engage with culture or who are in lower economic groups) and the potential for a sense of ownership by the kinds of people who are most often missing from cultural spaces.

A summary of evidence that inequalities in access and opportunities for cultural production and consumption are socially stratified and systemic.
Social inequalities in the creative economy are currently of keen interest to academics, policymakers, and cultural sector practitioners. This is supplemented by a more recent but potentially even more impactful policy focus on spatial inequalities in the sector. The UK City of Culture Programme explicitly targets spatial inequalities, drawing investment to an area and raising its visibility on a national and international stage. While addressing social inequalities is not an explicit aim of the programme, social and spatial inequalities are inextricably linked, and the enormous potential of the UK CoC programme to address both has been seen in Coventry’s approach to its CoC year, and the results generated by it.

Recent interventions on social inequalities have been made by actors such as Julie Hesmondhalgh, who expresses concerns about the lack of young working class actors, and Lenny Henry, who has spearheaded on-and off-screen campaigning to increase ethnic diversity in the television industry. The UK Parliament launched an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Creative Diversity, working to identify and tackle obstacles to diversity in the creative sector, and the Social Mobility Commission created a toolkit for the creative sector.

The toolkit builds on sociological debates that draw on Bourdieu’s theorising on the social construction of cultural tastes. This literature acknowledges that the high status of—or value attributed to—certain cultural genres or objects is not naturally occurring or based on objective artistic merit, but is rather a socially stratified choice. Socially differentiated knowledge of this elite culture helps to reproduce social class inequalities. Research has latterly focused on social inequalities in cultural employment, and the relationship between who works in culture in terms of representation, commissioning, and cultural consumption. Spatial inequalities in the creative economy have received less attention although this has changed in recent years. In part, this has been prompted by the Rebalancing our Cultural Capital report which drew attention to the enormous and increasing disparity between funding for culture within and outside London; not only DCMS funding but also sponsorship, charitable funding, and lottery grants.

The UK government’s Levelling Up Agenda has triggered two UK APPGs: Reimagining where we live: Cultural Placemaking and the Levelling Up Agenda and Northern Culture. But culture at a local level has long been of interest, whether this is in the economic contribution that culture might make through tourism, job creation, regeneration, and more, or for understanding different perspectives on what counts as culture. The social and spatial inequalities in the creative economy are not independent of one another. Both people and cultural opportunities are unequally distributed across the UK, and a lack of proximity to cultural amenities is more of a deterrent to the least advantaged in society.

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BOTH PEOPLE AND AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE UNEQUALLY DISTRIBUTED ACROSS THE UK


4 Orian Brook, Dave O’Brien, and Mark Taylor, Culture Is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

5 Peter Stark, Christopher Gordon, and David Powell, Rebalancing Our Cultural Capital, GPS Culture, 2013, 1–64.


Rather than being a problem just for those interested in cultural policy or sociological theory, inequality in the cultural sector is becoming understood as an issue of social justice. This is not simply because we all pay for publicly funded culture, whether through local or national taxes, or lottery tickets. Rather, it is a matter of principle and of distributive justice: everyone should have access to the benefits that publicly funded culture provide. These may be economic; access to cultural work or to the amenities that cultural assets offer, or the placemaking value of culture that attracts other employers, their workers, and customers. Or they may be social, psychological, or otherwise less tangible: recent reports on cultural value have highlighted improvements to empathy and social cohesion from engaging with culture and there is a strong belief in the contribution of cultural participation to health and wellbeing. The commitment of Coventry as a Marmot City, and the ensuing holistic/multi-dimensional approach to addressing health inequalities, including consideration of the contribution that culture can make, is important in addressing the social and spatial inequalities in culture. Health inequalities are often linked to ‘diseases of despair’, and public health researchers often consider neighbourhoods as ‘opportunity structures’, offering ‘socially constructed and socially patterned features of the physical and social environment’ that can affect the lives of residents.

10 Alice Munro, Coventry - A Marmot City (Institute of Health Equity, 2020).
EVIDENCE BASE, SOCIAL AND SPATIAL INEQUALITIES IN CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Social inequalities in cultural consumption

The social inequalities in cultural consumption are well-evidenced and relatively stable over time. In Figure 1, we can see two aspects of this. First, of the kinds of culture listed, only film is attended by a majority of the population in a year, with a few others being attended by a large minority. Most of these artforms are relatively minority pursuits. This is in contrast to activities described as ‘free time’ in the Taking Part Survey, the DCMS monitor of cultural participation, where watching TV, listening to music, and reading a book for pleasure were all undertaken by at least 70% of people. This reflects the construction of some pastimes as legitimate ‘culture’, and others as not,13 with the legitimated activities being relatively less popular. Second, Figure 1 shows a clear difference in the rates of attendance at each type of event according to the occupational (social) class of the respondent. These differences are also found in Scotland (Scottish Household Survey), and in other international surveys.14

14 Orian Brook, International Comparisons of Public Engagement in Culture and Sport (DCMS, 2011).

Spatial inequalities in cultural consumption

When spatial inequalities in cultural consumption have been analysed regionally, there are often not substantial differences (contrasting with the stark differences in funding for culture), especially when we account for socio-economic differences. However, regions are large, and include areas with excellent access to cultural assets and others with very poor access.

Taking a nuanced approach to both places and population groups shows that geographic access to cultural opportunities matters a great deal. Research has found that, even within London where all residents might be considered to have easy access to museums and galleries, access has been found to be strongly associated with attendance, along with ethnicity, education, and area deprivation; however, access is the only factor associated with attending more than once a year.15

In Scotland a similar picture emerges, supplemented by the finding that while University graduates were likely to attend even if they live in areas with the worst access, those with less education were more affected by the poorest levels of access; access was as strong a predictor of attendance as other socio-economic factors. In conclusion, it is clear that both social and spatial inequalities are strongly associated with cultural participation. They need to be understood together as influential in people’s cultural lives. As we have seen, people have different preferences for whether they participate locally or prefer to travel further for cultural experiences. People with a low likelihood of attending can be offered a greater sense of ownership through co-creation, by creating differentiated programming (such as Theatre Royal Stratford East in London, or Royal Court Theatre in Liverpool). But neither co-creation/ differentiated programming from afar nor local proximity of cultural opportunities are sufficient in themselves for alienated communities to feel that cultural amenities are intended for them. In short, in order to address social inequalities it is necessary to address spatial inequalities at the hyper-local level.

For cultural participation by children, especially that undertaken outside school, Access to cultural opportunities, along with socio-economic factors, has been found to be important for other types of activities too, from opera to street festivals. This is likely to become even more important post-pandemic; not only are more people working from home (and we know that commuting patterns are strongly associated with cultural attendance), but in surveys 1/3 of respondents say that they expect to attend closer to home than pre-pandemic. And even without considering access to cultural opportunities, the nature of an area, including its deprivation levels, is just as predictive of cultural participation as individual characteristics.

Social inequalities in cultural production

We have known for a long time about social inequalities in cultural consumption. More recent research finds these same inequalities in creative work. Figure 2 shows the social class background (based on the occupation of the higher earning parent when the respondent was aged 14) for people working in creative occupations. For most types of creative work the proportion of people from managerial and professional backgrounds is markedly higher than that of the working population as a whole. The same is true for racial inequalities. Moreover, although women are often overrepresented in creative occupations, this only applies to junior positions.25

The chances of someone from a working-class background entering creative work have not changed over many decades (although there has been an increase in the proportion of people from middle class backgrounds in all occupations, including creative jobs).26

Figure 2: Composition of the creative workforce, by social class background.

Source: Labour Force Survey 2019 27

26 Orian Brook and others, ‘Social Mobility and “Openness” in Creative Occupations since the 1970s’, Sociology, 2022 https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221129953
Spatial inequalities in cultural production

Economists have shown that the Cultural and Creative Industries sector is one of the most geographically clustered, even more so than Finance,28 being predominantly found in London and a few major cities outside the capital.

This is a problem in itself, being one of distributive justice. Who has access to creative employment (which is often publicly funded)? Whose culture is accorded status or portrayed from a position of authenticity? But this clustering also has implications for social inequalities in the sector.

**Mobility** If it is necessary for many people to move in order to access creative work, this will be easier for people from more advantaged social backgrounds. Thus, less advantaged people outside these creative cities are excluded from opportunities for creative work by being less mobile, while those already resident in such cities face competition not only from more privileged people within it, but also from those arriving from elsewhere in the UK.29

**Affordability** The places where creative jobs are most available, such as London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol, are the least affordable in terms of accommodation. This affects not only the beginning of someone’s career (when they are quite probably not being paid for their work)30 but also later when (if) they decide to start a family.

Interviews with women in creative work refer to the need to leave London to find family accommodation, and the resulting rupturing of professional networks.

Thus, it is essential to address spatial inequalities in the distribution of cultural work if we are serious about addressing social inequalities in who holds these jobs.

These inequalities are intertwined, and Coventry UK CoC 2021 was well-placed to address both forms of inequality. Through co-creation and working hyper-locally, it encouraged participation beyond social class barriers through its focus on celebrating the culture of people and places that are often overlooked.

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FUTURE TRENDS

Levelling up agenda

As discussed, the Levelling Up agenda has become an explicit part of cultural policy. Given the volatility of politics, and the urgency of emerging crises, it may be that it drops down the political agenda. However, as we have seen, crises can also heighten awareness of social and spatial inequalities, prompting government to prioritise the need to address them. Both DCMS and Arts Council England have identified priority areas for investment via a combination of statistics on deprivation and population, the current cultural spending in the area, and the levels of cultural participation; together, these identify need and current supply. ACE will invest all of the £43.5 million of additional investment they will receive for 2022-25 to benefit creativity and culture outside of London.

This can be seen as an acknowledgement that areas have missed out on investment in culture, and some lack basic cultural infrastructure. There has also, through evidence to the APPGs, been an increased understanding of the specificity of local characteristics and the need to work with local actors to co-create support networks.\(^{31}\)

This has been reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the precariousness of creative workers and businesses, and the need for involvement in local policymaking related, for example, to housing and workshop space.\(^{32}\)

These are substantial new policy interventions, with the potential to offer huge opportunities to cultural organisations based outside London. Other likely beneficiaries are communities that have historically been poorly served by the legitimated cultural provision, and whose own cultural interests lack funding or recognition.

By diversifying the places and communities where culture is created and invested in, and devolving decision-making locally, different kinds of communities may be given voice, lowering the social and spatial barriers to places where cultural opportunities are available. While the differences are enormous and deeply entrenched, the Coventry case study gives powerful examples of how change can be effected at a hyper-local level. However, if such programmes are to have impact nationally, they will need to be large and sustained.


\(^{32}\) Lauren England and others, Creative Work: Possible Futures after Covid-19 (Bolzano/Bozen: franzLAB, 2022), p. 139 https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-080
COVID-19 pandemic
The pandemic had an enormous impact on the creative sector. Clearly, it was not alone but performing arts and museums and galleries in particular experienced more long-lasting impacts than many other sectors. Thousands lost work, many of whom did not qualify for government support, and the crisis only reinforced existing social inequalities in the sector’s consumption and employment. Many organisations pivoted quickly to digital, overcoming barriers of distance and mobility, but this channel was swiftly withdrawn in many cases.

The distribution of COVID recovery funding largely replicated existing spatial inequalities in funding. This brief analysis of the spatial and social inequalities in the creative sector following the pandemic must be continued and extended if we are to understand the long-term impacts of

- the pandemic,
- the cost of living crisis, and
- the levelling up agenda.

Furthermore, research needs to identify the changes over time in
- cultural provision,
- who has access to cultural consumption and cultural work in their local area, and
- how does this affect social inequalities?

The work undertaken by Coventry UK CoC 2021 has strong potential to address the creative sector’s social and spatial inequalities. By focusing on hyper-local offerings, the programme offers both local proximity and the potential for a sense of ownership by the kinds of people who are most often missing from (excluded by) cultural spaces.

Coventry UK CoC 2021’s impact on social and spatial inequalities is analysed in the case study on the following page, which identifies strong indicators for future research in the topic.

### DISTRIBUTION OF COVID RECOVERY FUNDING LARGELY REPLICATED EXISTING SPATIAL INEQUALITIES IN FUNDING


CASE STUDY: HOW DID COVENTRY UK CoC 2021 CHALLENGE INEQUALITIES?

Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 (UK CoC 2021) had the vision statement of ‘reimagining the role of culture in a diverse, modern Britain, demonstrating that culture is a force that changes lives, moving Coventry and the region forward’.

In the planning of the programme, Creative Director Chenine Bhathena stated, ‘we will use this year to improve access to arts, creativity and cultural activities for all citizens wherever they live’. With this ethos, the design of the cultural programme was purposeful in ensuring that activity was accessible to all, regardless of social class. Early evaluation findings released in September 2022 highlight three key statistics:

- Activity took place in all 42 neighbourhoods within Coventry,
- 43% of tickets issued to Coventry postcodes went to those in lower economic groups, and
- 77% of the programme, excluding commercial activity, was co-created with local residents.

These statistics sound impressive, but what do they mean? Are they good or bad? And how do they relate to tackling social inequality? More importantly, what is the story that these statistics tell us? We suggest that they demonstrate that by taking a model of working hyper-locally in all neighbourhoods, and co-creating with the community free or close-to-free activities, structural inequalities can start to be broken down.

Cultural participation before Coventry UK CoC 2021

To understand the impact of Coventry UK CoC 2021 and to what extent it addressed social inequalities, we need to consider the baseline data. Using the standard measure of inequalities, the Index of Multiple Deprivation Score (IMD), and data collected by The Audience Agency (TAA), we can see there is a correlation between deprivation and engagement with publicly funded culture.

The April 2018 to March 2019 TAA Area Profile report for Coventry provides the total number of tickets issued to bookers who have a full and valid Coventry postcode for all venues that supply data to TAA, and a figure for venues just in Coventry. Many of the venues providing data to TAA are Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPO), or similar organisations funded through National Lottery Funders.
The data, therefore, gives us a strong indication of engagement with publicly funded culture. For tickets issued to Coventry venues, there is a clear correlation between low levels of deprivation and higher cultural participation. As deprivation increases, the likelihood of participating in arts and culture decreases.

The UK CoC 2021 programme sought to address this imbalance through hyper-local programming in the most deprived areas of the city and with seldom-heard groups, including refugees, migrant populations, and the homeless. Proximity to events

Analysis of ticketing data and the collection of postcodes through post-event surveys indicates that events which were free and held within communities across the city were successful at attracting local audiences, notably so in areas of deprivation and low cultural participation. Activity took place in all 42 neighbourhoods of the city, meaning all citizens had access to events and performances. For example, Party on the Green was a free family-friendly event featuring performances, music, dance, circus, and theatre that took place across three local parks in the city. The geographic distribution of the issued tickets shows that audiences were local to the events, with the majority residing in or next to the MSOA in which the event took place.

Sources: The Audience Agency and Office for National Statistics

The Coventry City of Culture Trust (the Trust) and partners developed the Coventry Cultural Place Profiler to assess demand and need. Understanding multiple geo-spatial inequalities enabled hyper-local programming. The parks where the events took place were specifically chosen because the immediate vicinity lacked cultural venues and facilities. The areas have a combined average IMD score of 33.2 (24.9 city average), and 20% of the population identify as disabled (18% city average).39 Other events in the UK CoC 2021 programme, such as Beneath the Trees and Wildlife Gathering, showcased local talent through community groups and community leaders within their neighbourhoods.

Figure 3: Correlation of Tickets Issued to Coventry Venues Against IMD Score.

Sources: The Audience Agency and Office for National Statistics

Figure 4: Density map demonstrating hyper-local attendance at Party on the Green events.
Reaching lower economic groups

We know that cost can be a barrier to cultural participation; hence, 63% of the UK CoC 2021 programme was free of charge at entry point. Of the 37% that was charged, many of the tickets were priced at £5 or less through a pay-what-you-wish scheme. However, even with these relatively low prices, ticketing data shows that once an entry cost was in place, audiences tended to be those with higher disposable incomes.

The Trust’s strategy of making sure events were hyper-local and free or close-to-free was successful. When we look at the tickets issued during the UK CoC 2021 year by the Trust’s ticketing platform to valid and complete Coventry postcodes, we see that 42.8% of them went to citizens in the lower economic groups.41

Breaking down the ACORN segmentation of tickets, 4,208 tickets—equivalent to 4% of the overall tickets issued to Coventry postcodes—were issued to postcodes classified as Not Private Households. The reason the percentage is different forms of technology. Those who are “e-withdrawn” have extremely limited/no access to technology.

40 ACORN is a powerful consumer classification that segments the population into 6 categories comprising 62 different types, providing a detailed understanding of the consumer characteristics of people and places across the UK. The final three categories, Financially Stretched, Urban Adversity, and Not Private Households are categories that relate to lower economic status.


42 Hotel residents were citizens who had lived experience of homelessness, or newly arrived refugees and migrants.

43 See the Co-creation and Value Creation paper for further details of this project.

44 Based on Internet User Classification data from 2018. IUC data is an economic metric which looks at access to and ability to use different forms of technology. Those who are “e-withdrawn” have extremely limited/no access to technology.
Co-creating the programme

To ensure the events were relevant to the communities in which they were taking place, co-creation was key. Excluding commercial activities, 77% of the UK CoC 2021 programme was co-created with communities; when commercial activities are included, the percentage is 64%. This is noteworthy as much of this work took place in the neighbourhoods where citizens lived, reducing the spatial inequalities and barriers linked to cultural participation.

In looking at social equalities, the Trust departed from ACE’s deficit model opting instead for a programme akin to Creative People and Places. It extended Marmot City thinking (all citizens, regardless of where they live, are entitled to excellent health outcomes) to cultural provision and participation. Presenting opportunities to those who would typically be unengaged and putting co-creation on a large scale at a hyper-local level was the basis of The Coventry Model of programming and production. Although the focus was on engaging with under-represented communities on their doorstep, regular cultural consumers were not overlooked. Events such as Faith, This Is The City, and Our Wilder Family were all major events that were free of charge to those willing to travel.

The public consultation for the UK CoC 2021 bid made it clear that citizens wanted their communities and their collective stories to be highlighted in the UK CoC 2021 programme. Local citizens were to be at the heart of the year. Research also showed they wanted this to be in their neighbourhoods. The year was seen as an opportunity to reduce inequality, work locally with the community, and co-create, giving them power.

As demonstrated in the main report from which these Future Trends stem, Upper Foleshill and Torrington & Canley are MSOAs that the 2018 Coventry Household Survey identified as having the lowest levels of estimated cultural participation. Targeted interventions saw a rise in cultural participation in both MSOAs between 2018 and 2021. This was achieved through working with the existing local infrastructure (e.g., community centres) and the citizenry, to co-create events relevant to them. For Upper Foleshill this focused on creating events based on faith and religion: participation in publicly funded culture in this neighbourhood rose from 2% in 2018 to 80% in 2022.

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46 See the Co-creation and Value Creation paper for a deeper definition of co-creation. However, for Coventry UK CoC 2021, co-creation refers to the engagement and participation by residents in the design and delivery of a project or event.

Moving forward

Underlying the design of the programme was career development. Pathways were established through skills development and training to aid the sustaining of activity once the party had left town. One such example, The City of Culture Leadership Programme, saw fifteen cultural leaders undertake a two-year training and development programme. The cohort selected was representative of the city and region in terms of ethnicity and other protected characteristics, but also in relation to social class (33% of the cohort identified as coming from a working-class background). This is higher than many categories in the creative workforce as per the Labour Force Survey 2019.

The programme focus on leadership is significant because working-class backgrounds are not represented in cultural sector leadership roles. Also, the Belgrade Theatre—through funding from the Trust—diversified their leadership for their UK CoC 2021 programming, appointing three Co-Artistic Directors from under-represented backgrounds. This ultimately led to a diversification of the theatre’s leadership when a new Chief Executive and Creative Director were appointed in January 2022.

The Trust also used targeted recruitment to diversify its board of trustees to represent and reflect the citizens of the city. Monthly training sessions were delivered to over 200 community groups, community champions, and partners. These focused on event management, fundraising, and audience development. Being hyper-local, the emphasis was on enabling communities to have the skills and knowledge locally to produce and put on events relevant to their community, breaking down power structures and encouraging participation across all aspects of social grade.

The three statistics we highlighted in the introduction to this case study are good. The scale of investment offered to UK CoCs can allow them the opportunity to engage citizens from the entire social spectrum. But reducing spatial inequalities and class barriers requires careful and considered planning, utilising data to target work at a hyper-local level is key to reducing spatial inequalities and class barriers. Looking to the future, it is important that CoCs, including Bradford 2025, work in the heart of communities on socially engaged art, while supporting communities and new cultural leaders in gaining new skills that they can use locally.
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