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EVALUATION OF PUBLIC ART – FRAMEWORKS, LOGIC MODELS AND EMERGING IMPACT By Ian Strange and David Usher

CONTEXT

Over the last decade public art has increasingly become associated with the wider processes of regeneration and place shaping. Every region and city wants a bigger, better and more iconic trophy to enhance its identity on the international stage. Public art is now a feature of many cities as they aim to revive former industrial legacies and to establish their cultural competitive advantage on a global stage. At the same time, the extent to which public art positively contributes to the regeneration of areas and neighbourhoods that have been subject to economic, social and physical decline has become a central concern of government and regeneration agencies.

In an evidence based policy environment evaluation has a key role to play. However, the assessment of impact in relation to wider regeneration benefits is highly complex. This is reflective of a number of factors including the uncontained audience which views public art, its outcomes being time lagged, evolving over time as public art pieces grow in significance, and, reluctance amongst the cultural community to be subject to scrutiny. In short, public investment in art is controversial and public perception can be volatile.

Against this background, one of the aims of the Northern Way (a partnership between the three northern Regional Development Agencies) has been to market the North of England to an international and domestic audience by building on the image of its three regions and maximising the potential of its cultural assets. The 'Marketing the North to the World' priority aims to strengthen the North's cultural offer and image to support economic growth by coordinating and promoting cultural events and attractions including the development of a programme of public art at key gateways and by raising the profile of the North in the media. From the overall Northern Way investment Fund comprising £100 million, public art projects were allocated for investment up to the value of £4.5 million during the period 2006-09 through the 'Welcome to the North' (WTTN) public art programme.

In evaluating the WTTN public art programme, a team based within the Faculty of Business and Law and the Faculty of Arts and Society at Leeds Metropolitan University has used a 'logic model' framework focusing on understanding the 'theories of change' through which the programme is designed to influence medium and long term Northern Way objectives. Logic models provide a means of exploring how the programme works. Within the evaluation of the WTTN programme, logic models were applied at the individual project level and aggregated to provide a framework for the programme. The programme level logic model, sets out the mechanisms through which anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts are expected to be achieved, the indicators to be used and the other factors that are likely to affect the achievement of the anticipated impacts.

'WELCOME TO THE NORTH' PUBLIC ART PROGRAMME

The delivery of the WTTN public art programme led to the installation or rollout of four physical public art installations, a virtual tour (The Wonderful North) and a fifth installation to follow in Middlesbrough (Temenos). Two of the original four installations – Another Place and Turning the Place Over - have the potential to

become iconic pieces in a similar way to the progress of the Angel of the North following its completion. The key initial installations included:

'Light Neville Street' - a key component of the Leeds Holbeck Urban Village regeneration and development programme scheduled for completion by autumn 2009. It comprises a light and sonic work created by international artist Hans Peter Kuhn installed at the east side wall of the underpass in Neville Street, Leeds. The installation involves solar light panels to create a sense of transit through the tunnel. An ongoing series of events, partnerships and interventions have been instigated to achieve a cultural and social legacy. One key aim of the installation is to demonstrate the contribution of public art to improving the public realm and solving environmental design problems and as a symbol of the cultural confidence in Leeds and the city region.

'Halo' - Panopticons and Land started as the flagship project for East Lancashire's Regional Park programme. Launched during September 2007, Halo is an 18 metre diameter, circular steel structure, raised 7 metres off the ground on a tripod at a site above Haslingden in Rossendale. The plans for the site included improving its quality of place in an attempt to encourage visitors to the area. Halo is at the centre of a wider partnership to reclaim a 32 hectare site. The programme has created works that epitomise the new images, confidence and aspiration of East Pennine Lancashire.

'Turning the Place Over' - is the work of Richard Wilson, a twice-nominated Turner Prize candidate. It was launched during Architecture Week in June 2007, to form the jewel in the crown of Liverpool's cultural offering throughout the city's 800th birthday celebration in 2007 and its year as European City of Culture in 2008. The work is a seven metre high and nine metre wide void cut from the façade of the building capable of rotation in three dimensions.

'Another Place' - is an iconic public art installation by the internationally acclaimed artist Anthony Gormley. Originally installed in 2005, its exhibition was made permanent in 2007 with Northern Way investment funding. The statues span three kilometres of the Merseyside foreshore at Crosby beach. Another Place won the 'Tourism Experience of the Year' at the Mersey Partnership Annual Tourism Awards and it is estimated that 350,000 visitors view the sculptures annually.

There is an unintentional locational bias in the programme toward the North West of England which reflects the expedient delivery of projects within the three year timescale of the WTTN public art programme. This resulted in the identification and selection of projects which were at a more advanced stage of development. In this way the location of projects has tended to be fortuitous for the North West of England rather than reflecting an intentional skewing of delivery activity in the region. Amongst the gateway art pieces that have been installed there is some debate as to whether these represent pan or inter regional gateway sites in the context of the wider Northern Way evaluation. At least three of the art pieces can be regarded as gateway locations. These include Light Neville Street, as a gateway to the city of Leeds, Another Place in the North West and, more recently, Temenos in the North East.

EVALUATING PUBLIC ART

An evaluation framework for the programme was developed using project logic models as the foundation. This provided a means of capturing time lagged outcomes and impacts across a ten year timeframe. The evaluation framework was designed

upon the principles identified in the logic models and was based upon the following core programme objectives:

- Improved quality of place in specific sites across the North of England
- Increased positive perception of the North of England
- Raised profile of the North of England

For each of the above objectives a series of output and emerging impact indicators was established together with the identification of potential data sources to inform them across the short, medium and longer term (3, 5 and 10 years). The second and third objectives were designed to impact a wide range of local, regional and national audiences in the first instance including local residents, community groups, visitors, businesses and property developers. The short term (up to three years) indicators are shown for each of the above programme objectives in the following table:

Improved quality of place in specific sites across the North of England	
Output (up to three years)	Data source
Improved resident satisfaction with quality of place within 5 mile radius of public art	Resident survey proximate to public art installation
Percentage of residents who feel that public art has increased local pride	Resident survey proximate to public art installation
Percentage of residents of residents who feel that public art has increased local distinctiveness	Resident survey proximate to public art installation
Reduction in residents intending to leave the area	Resident survey proximate to public art installation
Improved satisfaction/comfort/health and safety of city/district users as a result of public art	Resident survey proximate to public art installation
Number of jobs created	Public art commissioning organisation
Increased positive perception of the North of England	
Output (up to three years)	Data source
Number of consultation exercises with local audiences	Public art commissioning organisation Media sources; stakeholder surveys
Community involvement in designing art work – number of participants; total contact hours; encouraging other integrated design team projects	Public art commissioning organisation
Increased level of tendering for public art work	Public art commissioning organisation

Number of regions aiming to acquire art pieces of similar type	Arts Council England/Northern Way Programme Manager
Number of approaches to Northern RDAs and Arts Council England to initiate public art programme	Public art commissioning organisation
Number of businesses using name of public art piece as logo/strap line	Web search – company websites and brochures; press cuttings
Number of developers who are aware of the public art installation and who have increased their interest in developing in the North	Developer survey
Percentage of visitors who cite public art project as main reason for visit to area	Visitor survey at public art installation
Raising the profile of the North of England	
Output (up to three years)	Data source
Generation of media attention – coverage; website hits/downloads; articles/journals/magazines; conferences	Monitoring of local and national media coverage
Extent of coverage in tourist guides and promotional tourist literature	Monitoring of local and national media coverage; monitoring of tourism guides
Changing perception reflected in use of positive words to describe the North of England in the media	Local resident and business surveys
Percentage of respondents - general population – who feel that public art has raised the image of the North of England	Local resident and business surveys Published city/regional audit/image surveys

The development of an evaluation framework was a key element during the formative stage of the evaluation. The framework was developed using the logic models prepared with the individual art projects during the later stage of phase 1 of the study and reference to the literature gathered to underpin the development of the programme (Annabel Jackson Associates 2007; ixia 2005). The logic models formed the core of the framework focusing on understanding the ‘theories of change’ through which the ‘Welcome to the North’ programme was intended to influence specific short, medium and long term objectives.

The purpose or rationale of the ‘Welcome to the North’ programme is the spring from which everything else associated with it – aims and objectives, projects, outputs and impact flow. It is, therefore, essential in developing a strategic performance framework and associated indicators to agree a specification of the programme’s intent. This intent has been expressed in terms of the changes that the programme is designed to effect in the conditions of the locality or the wider region – in this case changes to perception, profile and quality of place. Whilst the mercurial nature of public reaction to the commissioning and implementation of public art was very much recognised, and commented upon, during the course of the evaluation, the

framework was designed to capture the realisation of potential positive benefits flowing from the respective art pieces once delivery had been achieved.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PAN REGIONAL ECONOMY

It is still too early to assess the impact of the programme as several installations are yet to be installed as 'pieces of Public Art' and many of the impacts will emerge some time after the evaluation is completed. The views of key stakeholders and secondary evidence provide an illustration of emerging outcomes associated with the programme to date.

In relation to improved quality of place in specific sites across the North of England, resident views toward neighbourhoods in close proximity to the WTTN art installations were examined through data provided by Yorkshire Forward. The dynamics of resident views were found to be broadly similar in each of the areas adjacent to the public art installations with around one half believing their neighbourhood to have improved or stayed the same over the previous twelve months (however the contribution of public art to this view remains unknown).

In terms of increasing positive perception of the North of England, the 'Welcome to the North' programme has attracted artists of international standing such as Antony Gormley, Richard Wilson, Hans Peter Kuhn and Anish Kapoor to tender for art pieces in the North of England. The Olympic Committee has made a recent approach to Yorkshire Forward to enquire about the process of commissioning and installing public art as part of the Olympic Games in 2012. At the local level, one of the Welcome to the North projects had formed the cornerstone of a proposed Art Festival during 2009 and another was an integral part of a wider European City of Culture initiative during 2008.

Private developers had positive perceptions of the role of public art in raising the desirability of an area and one developer enthused about the potential of a WTTN installation to change the nature of the local area in a positive way. Another developer suggested that a different WTTN installation was both a 'talking and a selling point' and it featured in the developer's promotional prospectus. Another project reported increases in visitor numbers visiting the area to view the WTTN Public Art Installation and further claims are made associated with visitors to the North, which indicate that one installation has attracted in the region of 350,000 annual visitors.⁶⁰

In terms of raising the profile of the North of England, the programme has met with considerable success. More than 50 articles on the programme in the North West of England had been published in local and regional newspapers. WTTN installations have been used to promote the North as a tourism and visitor destination. This is particularly the case in the North West region where two of the installations have featured in several national, regional and local tourist guides. The regional tourist board has played a key role in promoting the art installations although there has been very limited survey work undertaken to gauge visitor responses to the respective art pieces.

The communications strategy for the programme was refreshed early in 2008 and was primarily concerned with the external positioning of the programme within the media and aimed to develop a wider sector led debate around public art and regeneration. The overall approach was designed to develop a communications

⁶⁰ (<http://www.thenorthernway.co.uk/icons>)

stream that focused, in particular, on 'marketing and PR elements to generate public and media interest in the public art programme nationally and internationally', through the strap-line 'New Icons of the North'. This approach was summarised in a special issue of the *Art and Architecture Journal* published in the autumn of 2008 which served to raise awareness of the overall programme and its place in the north of England. In addition to these developments, the WTTN programme launched a website during April 2008 which features the background to the programme, the art projects and their associated artists.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The investment by the Northern Way in the 'Welcome to the North' programme has, from a strategic and catalytic perspective, enabled a pan regional art programme to be both commissioned and delivered more quickly than would have been possible if public investment had not been available. Moreover, it is evident that key art pieces would not have gone ahead (including Another Place) in the absence of investment by the Northern Way. However, a number of policy issues have been raised by this programme, most notably those of strategic direction, the complex nature of public art evaluation, the opportunities for inter-agency and collaborative working and programme promotion. It is to a discussion of these issues that we will now turn.

Strategic direction

Given the timescale for the delivery phase of the project (three years) on the one hand, and the lead-in time involved in the commissioning and installation of public art on the other, it is entirely reasonable that expedient delivery of specific projects has directed the nature of commissions in favour of those which were at a more advanced stage of development. Whilst this may have resulted in some degree of strategic opportunity being subdued, exemplified by the original vision for major pieces at Manchester Airport and the M62 Corridor, this factor has not prevented the identification and delivery of high profile art pieces at the regional level. While a number of gateway art pieces have been installed however, there is some debate as to whether these represent pan or inter regional gateway sites in the context of the wider Northern Way. In our view, at least three of the art pieces can be regarded as gateway locations. These include Light Neville Street, as a gateway to the city of Leeds, Another Place to the west and Tenemos to the east.

Another factor contributing to the weakening of strategic direction is the fact that the majority of public investment in the art installations was capital spend, often particularly difficult to manage in the context of public art. Public art tends to be exploratory in nature from both a design and build perspective. In particular, it is intricate and complex to build. The planning and regulatory framework surrounding public art can result in an uncertain and protracted lead in time. 'Tenemos' is currently undergoing planning approval and the Light Neville Street project was delayed for a few months whilst decisions were taken with regard to the removal of a bus stop. These factors make it difficult to profile capital expenditure as they can result in significant and unexpected project delays. It is therefore entirely consistent to anticipate that the development of the WTTN programme became delivery focused with strategic considerations being compromised in some instances.

Public art evaluation

During the course of our evaluation it became increasingly apparent that there were a wide range of factors that makes evaluation of public art complex. While there is a requirement from public funding agencies for robust impact oriented evaluation,

together with calls for accountability and transparency, it is clear that in the arts there are many views as to what should be measured and what the indicators should be. For the Northern Way and RDAs economic impact and Strategic Added Value are priorities. For many of those involved in public art, socio-cultural frameworks have more resonance. In essence, there is a fundamental mis-match between the objectives of RDAs which include the assessment of economic impact arising from programme delivery and the cultural outlook of artists which tends to value the aesthetic nature of a given art installation over and above its potential to improve economic conditions. Within the WTTN programme stakeholders articulated a diversity of orientations towards evaluation. Some, mostly programme sponsors, were keen to see the WTTN evaluation implemented. Others, mostly local projects, were supportive of local project evaluation, but showed little interest in a pan-regional assessment of the WTTN programme. Whichever view was taken, the connection between evaluation and funding presents contentious issues which may lead to evaluation being perceived as little more than a symbolic auditing process.

Communications and inter-agency working

One aspiration has been for the cultural assets of the WTTN programme to benefit tourism and encourage economic development. However, stakeholders suggested that there was little operational connection between the three strategic aims of the Marketing the North to the World objective and the WTTN programme:

- Attracting European and overseas tourists
- Culture, economy and visitor perceptions
- Marketing the North to investors

The limited level of interaction between these three sub-objectives was, in part, expressed as a communication issue between tourism and culture delivery staff. The wider objective 'Marketing the North to the World' was built upon existing foundations in terms of activity in overseas marketing. The intention was to initiate joint working in tourism and the promotion of specific destinations to overseas visitors between the three northern RDAs. The intention was that this would work in a similar way to pre-existing joint working for the attraction of inward investment and marketing targeted at overseas visitors. However, there was no real legacy to build upon in developing public art, as there was no previous track record of the three RDAs pursuing joint working for the delivery of public art.

One of the benefits of the WTTN programme was in enabling collaborative working between the RDAs and organisations such as Arts Council England and Yorkshire Culture, both of whom were involved in sub-contracting roles for project delivery. This required new working relationships for each of the organisations involved. Predominantly these were positive, but with a focus upon identifying potential projects in a pragmatic way. Consequently, delivery focused upon the identification and commissioning of viable art pieces in each region, a process felt by some to have been a missed opportunity to link in the development of public art with place marketing and the attraction of overseas tourists.

As the WTTN programme evolved and became established, promotional activity came to the fore. Until recently the programme (or its constituent parts) achieved a higher profile and prominence at the regional, as opposed to pan-regional level. The limited level of breakthrough beyond the regional level was a cause for concern for some of the local projects who had felt that funding enhancement from a wider pan regional agency would enable them to achieve a higher profile for their respective

projects. However, the WTTN programme communications continues to emerge and evolve. One of the key recommendations from project and stakeholder feedback was the need to maximise publicity and promotional messages during the post delivery stage of the programme in order to ensure that its impacts continue to accrue. Indeed, the presence of the art and its impact upon public sentiment will continue to emerge over time. However, there is also a need to identify ways in which the art can be mobilised to promote quality of place and improve the perception of the North of England in the long term. In practical terms this may require linking the imagery and presence of the public art to major event promotion, such as the 2012 Olympics. To date though, there has been limited interconnection between the WTTN programme's public art as a medium of place marketing and the attraction of domestic and overseas visitors.

REFLECTIONS ON THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK & LOGIC MODEL APPROACH

The evaluation framework developed for the assessment of the WTTN programme was designed to provide a consistent basis upon which to assess programme outputs during its early post implementation phase. The development of logic models provided a valuable means of identifying the rationale and associated objectives underlying each of the respective projects as well as a basis for the development of the framework. The value of the logic models has been in promoting discussion and analysis of the programme. They also provide simple illustrations of the relationships between components of projects and/or programmes, although sometimes this is viewed as useful whilst at other times it is viewed as an oversimplification of complex processes. Finally, they provided one input for the development of the detailed evaluation framework for the programme. We would argue that the use of logic models has shown that they provide a valuable framework for assessing the operation of projects and of the programme, which encourages active consideration of the underlying situation and priorities that demonstrate a need for interventions in the form of the programme or project relationships between programme or project resources, activities, outputs and outcome potential for, and evidence of, impact the overall relationships between all of these. Overall the framework developed for this evaluation provided a realistic foundation as it confirmed that outcomes are lagged and reflected the complexity of capturing and demonstrating attributable data even at early stage of installation process.

CONCLUSION

The 'Welcome to the North' programme was originally intended to influence a range of eight medium and long term Northern Way objectives including improved quality of place and perceptions at a North of England level and a raised profile for the Northern Way. In addition, the objectives also encompassed economic impact through investment in public art and increased awareness of the benefits of public art. As we suggested earlier in this essay it is too early to assess the impact of the WTTN programme as several installations are yet to be realised in terms of 'pieces of Public Art'. Many of the impacts of these public art projects will emerge some time into the future. Our evaluation framework however at least allowed us to suggest what these might be and how they might be measured and captured. Through the articulation of the framework it was recognised that the wider programme objective (to make an economic impact on the North of England through investment in public art) will follow over the longer term as a downstream impact.

Perhaps the strongest conclusion to emerge from the evaluation is that there is a need to allow time for the impacts of public art to become evident, or, of being

supported by evidence. There is clearly a range of reasons for this. In the current phase of stalling economic growth it is more difficult to attribute changes in say, house prices, visitor numbers or crime levels to the presence or otherwise of public art. These types of assertions have, over the period 1993 to date, been made in the context of consistent economic growth, which is now at an end. In a wider sense, the link between the iconic status conferred upon public art and the application of quantitative data can be highly tenuous and a robust evaluation framework can help to establish credibility to claims of social, cultural and economic benefit.