Questioning the social aims of public art in urban regeneration initiatives. The case of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead (UK)

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Summary. After introducing and analysing the main assumptions that lie behind claims and criticisms regarding the social engagement of the arts in urban regeneration, this paper draws on empirical material collected in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead (UK) to shed light on the main problems of integrating artworks, place-making and social policies within urban regeneration initiatives.

Keywords: public art, social inclusion, urban regeneration

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Introduction

This paper is the outcome of a first phase of a comparative research examining the social aims of public art within regeneration initiatives in Newcastle upon Tyne/Gateshead (UK), Turin (Italy) and Ghent/Brussels (Belgium).

Since the 1980s, arts, public art and cultural industries have been advocated as positive contributors to urban restructuring and regeneration. As a consequence of this cultural turn in urban regeneration, thousands of pages have been written to prove or falsify this common and widely-held belief. Advocates, on the one hand, have produced investigations aimed at demonstrating – through case studies – how positively art can have an impact on communities with a relatively low budget. More or less explicitly, the intention was to encourage a wide use of these practices to tackle social exclusion (Laundry and Matarasso 1996; Matarasso 1997). On the other hand, the most sceptical and sharpest critics have argued against what they define as a purely rhetorical use of arts, shedding light on the shift both in public arts intrinsic value as an instrument of criticism (which has been lost in favour of an "ornamental" role or reduced by the co-option of culture to marketing purposes), and in the focus of

social policies, which have become less engaged with social justice and more blandly focused on its third way reconceptualisation: that of "social inclusion" (Hall and Robertson 2001; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007; Stephenson 2004; Carrington and Hope in Miles 2005).

This paper will not align itself with either point of view[1]; nevertheless it will deal with the reality that public art and cultural initiatives are widely used in urban contexts under the banner of regeneration, with the intention to achieve some degree of social impact. Its main aim is to examine the implementation of socially committed public art policies, exploring in particular an area neglected in the current literature on this topic: the contribution of public art to *achieve social benefits* within regeneration activities, *through the involvement* of citizens *in place-making* processes. In order to achieve this goal, the paper will explore and analyse the interconnection among three policy fields – with their conceptual tools and practices – namely public art, urban regeneration and social inclusion.

Drawing from both the perspectives mentioned above, the first part of the paper (the following two paragraphs) is devoted to an analysis of the literature, shedding light on those assumptions and positions causing contention in the debate. Concepts such as public art, public realm, regeneration, inclusion and participation will be described in their controversial, sometimes clashing definitions, particularly stressing the clash of rationalities and the unavoidably different aims of regeneration policy, social policy and art practices. In the theoretical framework it will be argued that, among the many existing causal relations linking some elements of these different policy fields, three in particular can lead to a potentially positive *integration* of social, cultural and regeneration policies. These causal relationships are as follows: 1) that place-making processes (as those in regeneration initiatives, for example) have an influence on social inclusion/exclusion of local communities; 2) that art can be a constitutive element of regeneration policies and more specifically that public art has a peculiar relation with space, namely the public space and finally 3) that art can have a (often positive but sometimes negative) social impact. The next paragraph will develop these concepts, analysing in particular the concepts of relational aesthetics and community specific art, place attachment and negotiation of place-making, and the notion of "publicness" in public art and public spaces.

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[1] Following the approach Malcolm Miles sketched in his "Interruptions: Testing the Rhetoric of Culturally Led Urban Development", *Urban Studies,* 42(5/6), 2005

In the second part of the paper, I will draw from the empirical material gathered in case studies of two English urban contexts, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the neighbouring town of Gateshead, to show to what extent these causal connections— and therefore an integration of the three policy fields— have been realised (at the same time, identifying any problems that have arisen). It will be argued that such an integration of perspectives and disciplines has to deal with at least with three orders of problem;

- Firstly, problems connected with the achievement of shared definitions of some basic concepts, such as those illustrated above (inclusion, public art and regeneration);
- Secondly, conceptualisations of the *integration* itself, as for some actors such integration is simply a bunch of concomitant actions, rather than a real coordination of complementary policies;
- Finally, problems of identifying the right incentives each actor would find adequate in order to commit himself to a collaborative and intersectoral attitude to work.

In the last part of this working paper, building on the conclusion of this work and looking ahead, I will present and submit a method for consideration and discussion, derived from the action-research theoretical framework, for building a social platform aimed at bridging the knowledge and disciplinary gaps and to achieve greater integration of art, social policies and place-making in a regeneration programme.

Framing the research

As anticipated above, the focus of this work lies at the nexus of three topics with their corresponding theories and debates. A brief description of each is important for an understanding of the hypothesis and assumptions which form the basis of my research.

The first issue is *social exclusion*, and particularly its spatial dimension. We know that exclusion from social life is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, which affects different aspects of social and collective life to different degrees. Its manifestations can appear alone or in combination: exclusion from the labour market, social and educational services, poverty, lack or weakness of social relations and

social networks, exclusion from cultural production or consumption, invisibility or stigmatisation, lack of participation and lack of a pro-active attitude towards social life, etc. What is important to underline here is that exclusion can also be associated with physical elements such as spatial segregation, poor environmental quality and urban decay, with their causal influence upon stigmatisation and lack of a sense of belonging.

This research rests upon the assumption that public art, particularly when integrated in regeneration and social policies, can contribute to both the physical and the non-physical dimensions of social exclusion. An example of the first can be the more conventional contribution of public art to place management and beautification, aimed at improving environmental quality and place attachment. An example of the second is the involvement in art-making as a vehicle to learn new abilities and provide new perspectives and potential roles in the labour market, suggesting more appealing educational training or directly providing opportunities for participation in cultural production.

These positive effects in tackling the physical and non-physical dimensions of social exclusion through public art may occur – and this is the basic assumption of this research – under the conditions that public art and urban regeneration initiatives will have specific "participatory" features, as we are going to clarify below.

In view of the wide spectrum of definitions currently used, it is appropriate to start by giving a brief definition of public art. Within this concept, we include the different art manifestations – sculptures, video, music, performances – that are located outside the conventional arts sites, such as museums and galleries, in *public spaces*. These range from the traditional monuments and decoration in public buildings, to the most recent examples of art permanently or temporarily positioned/performed within squares, parks, streets, shores, building premises, etc. In such public spaces, art imposes its presence upon the general public, conveying meanings from the artistic/specialist "arena" into the public arena. Therefore "public" art is not only art in public spaces but also art in the *public sphere*: art that can raise social or political issues, participating in or activating the public debate.

A sub family of public art specifically committed to participation in the public sphere is the so called "new genre public art". Recent experiments within the frame of the "new genre public art" have been used to activate citizen's engagement with the environment, and/or with the public sphere (i.e. enhancing the level of participation,

sense of belonging, sensitising to social issues, such as multiculturalism) whilst helping to improve and sometime iconize public spaces[2]. Therefore, the reduction of social exclusion and isolation is among the outcomes of art practices committed to social intervention, rather than merely aesthetic aims.

In addition to the fact that public art is 'art in public spaces' and possibly 'art in the public sphere', a third feature characterising some forms of public art is the degree of *public involvement/participation* in the making of the artwork or during a performance. In this case, the emphasis is "on the process" and the dialogues or involvement it can raise, rather than on the outcomes. When this communicative/participatory element is a necessary requisite, we generally adopt the term "relational art". If the public involved is a local community participating in the art concept or making, it can be described as "community specific" (Miles 1997; Kester 2004). This is the case, for instance, of many educational workshops where the artist works with specific groups such as a young offender, elderly people or direct users of a space.

It should be clear by now that the "public art" family is a rather wide field of concepts and practices, where land art, site-specific art, the decorative arts (carved surfaces, mosaics, paintings), street furniture and graffiti are just a few. Not all the existing typologies of public art are intended to be specifically "art in the public sphere", nor to require involvement or participation of the public. However, some of these define their specificity around these elements: and it is precisely these typologies that we find important for the achievement of the social goals (above). Therefore, this research is particularly interested in the sub-family of practices at the crossroad of the *new genre*, *community specific* and *relational* public art.[3]

Referring to the research theoretical framework, the assumption here is that relational and participatory public art can better promote multiculturalism and citizens'

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[2] To this respect, at least two example must be mentioned: the Chen Zen sculpture "Constellation Humaine" in Montpellier (France), and the works of the City Mine(d) group, in Brussels (Belgium). Chen Zen's work is an aluminium installation promoted by the local transport company located in the neighbourhood of Paillade. It is composed of two spherical tables, surrounded by 70 chairs cast on the models of chairs belonging to the local ethnically diverse residents which have been involved in the art making process. It symbolises the dialogue and the cultural exchange among people. City Mine(d) "is a production house for urban interventions, committed to the development of new forms of urban citizenship, the re-appropriation of public space - roads, airwaves, stations, estates, parks, squares, virtual space - and the creation of cutting edge public artwork." (http://www.citymined.org/aboutus.php)

[3] More details about community specific public art can be found in Miwon Kwon (2002). New genre public art was first defined by Suzanne Lacy in her *Mapping the terrain* (1995). About dialogue and relational art, see *Conversation piece* (Kester 2004).

engagement in social issues, integrating its potentials into the delivery of the regeneration policy.

This assumed connection leads us to the third key assumption and statement framing the research and involving a definition of *culture-led regeneration*.

Relatively recent regeneration and redevelopment policies, targeted at reducing economic decline, are increasingly looking at the presumed power of art and culture for leading the "urban renaissance". The so-called "cultural way" (whether it is culture-led regeneration or cultural regeneration), is considered to be one of the most successful strategies to counter the urban decay which followed the post-Fordist turn in the western city's economy. Within this approach, advocates of public art have claimed that art in public space can positively contribute to regeneration policies especially in achieving social benefits. However, many criticisms have been raised, stressing the merely rhetorical use of this approach to justify a shift towards policies less engaged with social justice and designed around a softer model of "social inclusion" expressed in the "third way" political approach (Stevenson 2004).

What we would like to stress here is the existence of different regeneration models. First of all, it may be worthwhile to underline that a lot of urban intervention projects under the umbrella of "regeneration" are actually only redevelopment initiatives, with a strong focus on the physical infrastructures, new residences and facilities for commerce. A proper regeneration programme should, however, *integrate* specific social actions within these physical features, such as educational training, employment support or community building initiatives. Given this definition of regeneration, our assumption, here, is that culture-led regeneration should use culture as a tool in all its strategic actions and, as a consequence, use culture – and public art – as a vehicle to integrate the social and the physical dimensions of regeneration, namely contributing to place-making, education, job creation, cultural participation and civic engagement.

As stated above, this research does not neglect the positive influences of cultural regeneration in the social sphere, but asks if— and under what conditions— culture (namely the participatory public art practices) within regeneration policies and place-making initiatives can help to tackle social exclusion.

Research questions

With respect to the above mentioned topics/issues —social exclusion, participatory public art and cultural regeneration— this research is intended to analyse good as well as "bad" —or failing— practices in the integration of the three, in order to inform policy building[4]. In particular, special attention is given to the institutional mechanisms (i.e. policy building, implementation, etc.) connected with such integration. Operatively, this general aim has been formalised in three research phases and sub-questions.

The first phase is dedicated to *mapping public art initiatives* within the case studies, trying to understand how the dimension of "publicness" is conceptualised: is the public space considered an empty space to be filled in with whatever piece of art? How democratic and subject to democratic practices is this public space? What sort of "public" is the one owning this public space? Does the artist belong to this community? Who gave to him/her the right to intervene in this space, and with which boundaries/mandatory statements? What is the degree of citizen participation? And how do we conceptualise art becoming public? Is it intended that the link with the artist is reduced, opening up a process of interpretation and even modification from users, or is the paternalist/critical intention intended to remain predominant? Can we even talk of relational aesthetics?

After this overview and "mapping of the terrain", a second phase is aimed at *understanding the social goals* of the mapped initiatives. Facing the wide use of "social benefits" discourses to justify practice, the research aims at understanding how these social benefits are conceptualised. What is "social"? Is it different from the economic benefit commonly alluded to? What rationalities are pursued (efficiency, competitiveness, communication, etc..)? What "social" problems are addressed? Is there any sort of inclusion/involvement of local communities? And, if so, of what sort of sub-populations?

A final step in the research is to analyse more closely the *place-making process*, implicitly involved both in public art projects and in regeneration initiatives. To what extent do art initiatives in public spaces have an impact on urban place-making? To what extent are they integrated in the "ordinary" way of building/regenerating the

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[4] The idea is that rather than assuming that good practices are always informative and transferable to different contexts, we can equally (or even more) learn from failures in similar practices.

city? To what extent does place-making have a cultural-social dimension? Is it that public art initiatives are just a decorative and additional element to conventional regeneration policies, or do they serve as an instrument for involving citizens in place-making processes? And, if the latter is true, does this involvement reduce social/local conflicts in favour of profit-led regeneration schemes or, on the contrary, is it aimed at pursuing local resident place-attachments and social integration?

In the construction of these framing questions, it has been considered that intersectoral collaboration and policy integration are commonly perceived as problematic tasks in government practices. As this research focuses on the possible merging of three policy fields – cultural policy, social policy and planning/ urban regeneration – special attention to constraints, benefits and incentives to promote such merging has been given.

The research context: Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead

Located on the two banks of the River Tyne in north-east England, Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead are at the core of the region[5]. With its ship-yards, glassworks and coal-mines, among many other industries, the region was an early protagonist of industrial development and more lately an emblem of the "post-Fordist" crisis: massive factories being dismantled, mining and manufacturing employment in steady decline, rising unemployment, poverty and population drain.

In order to tackle the dramatic intensity in urban decay, multiple social deprivation and economic decline, since the early 1990s a series of noticeable national and regional funding initiatives have been delivered through regeneration programmes (Urban Development Corporations, City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budgets, New Deal for Communities, etc.). These programmes, as well as the local efforts of bidding for the European Capital of Culture 2008, have brought a stunning change in terms of city re-branding and economic conversion towards arts and culture as a new economic engine.

As recently pointed out by many authors (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison 2005; Miles S. 2005; Bailey, Miles and Stark 2004; Gibson and Stevenson 2004; Holland and

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[5] The two "cities" are sometimes referred to using the appellative of "twin", owing to the fact that the two urban contexts built a strong ten-years-long partnership in order to jointly compete for the 2008 Capital of Culture. The bid was won by the city of Liverpool.

Chatterton 2002) the region has demonstrated a strong commitment to achieve prosperity and growth through investments in services, leisure economy and cultural facilities[6]. A clear indicator of this success – in economic terms - is reported by the recent OECD Report (2006), remarking that the city has achieved the highest rates of growth in the cultural economy in the country[7]. The Baltic Centre of Contemporary Arts – mentioned as the largest contemporary art gallery in England –, the Sage Concert Hall designed by Norman Foster, and Antony Gormley's iconic landmark *Angel of the North* – all on the Gateshead side of the river – are just the best-known examples of a wide range of strategies and projects in culture-led regeneration. In addition we can list a sculpture garden (on the Gateshead riverfront), a cultural district (Ouseburn Valley), more than one hundred public art sculptures throughout the two cities, and several "public art strategies" from different institutional and private bodies[8]. The region shows all the features Malcolm Miles identifies as fundamental to denote a culturally-led urban redevelopment: "the insertion of a flagship cultural institution in a post-industrial zone, often a waterfront site, to lever private-sector investment in the surrounding area and attract tourism; the designation of a neighbourhood as a cultural industries quarter for small- and medium-size businesses in the arts, media and leisure." (MILES, 2005: 893)

The extent to which public art is an element in local physical, social and economic regeneration strategies is one of the reasons these two urban areas have been selected as the case study.

Moreover, the local policy makers seems to have matured experience into a wide range of initiatives – elsewhere present mostly in embryonic stages – which are ideal in order to reflect on the problematic integration of cultural, social and territorial policies. A proof of this is the existence of a real local debate about the contribution of art to regeneration and the completion of a whole cycle of experimental policies that are in the process of being consolidated.[9]

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[6] Within the region, Blyth, Sunderland and Stockton on Tees are following the same model.
[7] The growth in the period 1998-2003 has been 33%.
[8] The following agencies have a public art strategy: the public-public partnership development agency (NGI), the regional and county government agencies (One North East and Tyne and Wear Partnership), the public transport company (Nexus), the Art Council agency (Art Council North East) and the Newcastle city and Gateshead town councils.
[9] For example, after having completed promoting the Ouseburn Valley as a cultural district, Newcastle is discussing the idea of applying what was experienced and learned from this neighbourhood to the west-end areas of Scotswood and Benwell.

For those who are not familiar with the local history, it may be worth pointing out that the decision to treat the two cities as a whole case study is owing to the tightness of the partnership and joint policies between the two urban contexts. In the 1980s, the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation was created by central government to develop post-industrial and derelict areas of the North East. More recently, Newcastle and Gateshead, developed a common cultural project aimed at winning the bid for the 2008 Capital of Culture. They share a common development agency (NewcastleGateshead Initiative, NGI) and jointly participate in the agency Bridging Newcastle Gateshead (BNG). The latter manages the most recent national regeneration programme Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (HMRP). It may be worth pointing out, however, that very recently the two local administrations have been developing two separate cultural strategies. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a much greater differentiation in policy building models in the near future.

Methodology

According to the different phases of the research, a different set of methodological tools have been used. With the initial aim of mapping public art sculptures and performances, an exploration of the city as well as a research on existing databases have been of important support. The Tyne Wear Partnership's document called *Visual Audit*, for instance, or information on the city councils' websites, have been used as a starting point in this mapping and exploring exercise. During this phase, the national Heritage Week – with its related local events - and the Gateshead Sculpture Trail initiative were taken as opportunities to be guided around by Council officials and to talk directly to the artists about their work.
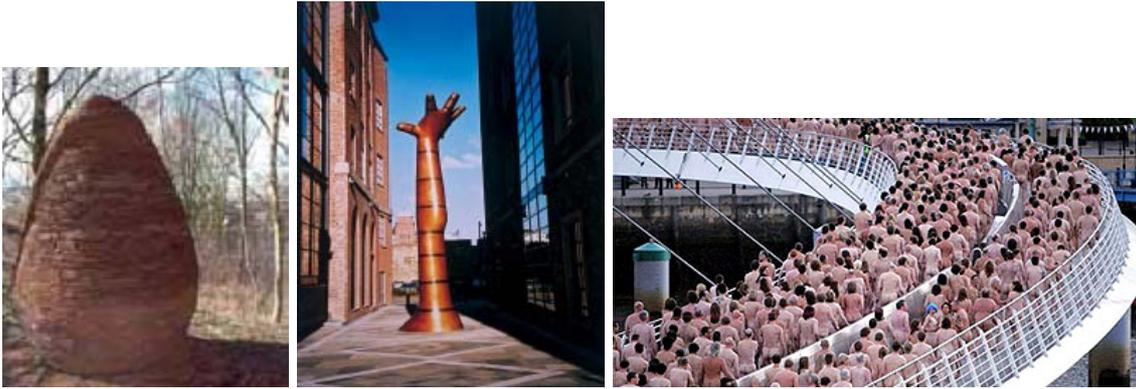
Image 1: Cone, Gateshead sculpture garden, by Andy Goldsworthy - Image 2: Reaching for the stars, Newcastle, by Kenneth Armitage - Image 3: Spencer Tunick's performance: a chain of naked bodies snakes over the Millennium Bridge

Parallel to the process of mapping initiatives and actors, several officers, artists, citizens and community workers have been interviewed, as reported in *Table 1*. Key players, such as city council's officers and local artists, have been met up to three times for updates and for more detailed questioning.

The interviews were aimed at understanding:

- the network of subjects and institutions working in the area;
- the target of the initiative as understood by the people interviewed;
- the way the "social goals" were defined;
- the content of the initiative;
- the kind of participation (if any) which has been set up;
- the location choice and the interrelation between the initiative and the place-making processes occurring (if any).

A third method used to collect information for the case study was participatory observation during public events. Between August and October 2006 many initiatives were organised to raise the involvement of the local public, as well as to increase the perception of vitality and the cities' attractiveness for tourists and visitors, such as street theatre events (images 4 and 5), collective day-long sculpture building (image 6 and 8) and public art unveiling, such as the Byker Pavillion (image 7) and the Saltwell Park Sculpture Trail.

Participating in these events as a member of the public – rather than only as a researcher – was an opportunity for me to access the events, shadowing artists, observing the general public interacting with artists and amongst each other, listening to comments, and understanding by empathetic experience.

Table 1 – People interviewed

NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD City Councils	PUBLIC ART OFFICERS	Matthew Lennon, Anna Pepperal
	ART DEVELOPMENT TEAM OFFICERS	Ednie Wilson, Giles Carey, Nicholas Lovegreen
	REGENERATION, PLANNING and URBAN DESIGN OFFICERS	Dale Bolland; Peter Snell; Neil Wilkinson; Alan Sears, George Kelly, Ian Burchell
	CULTURAL POLICY	Andrew Rothwell
ARTISTS ARTISTS' ORGANISATIONS	Artist in residence	David Goard
	Artist in residence	Jorn Ebner
	Commissioned artist	Rob Voerman
	Commissioned artist	Fiona Gray
	ANTAGON THEATRE AKTION (Commissioned artists)	Bernard Bub
	TESTHOUSE 5 Studios (Commissioned artist)	Andy McDermott
	HELIX ARTS	Robert Laycock
	BRUVVER THEATRE – 36, LIME STREET Co-op	Michael Mould
	LOCUS +	Jon Bewley
CITIZENS LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS COMMUNITY WORKERS	CITIZENS (involved in participatory art initiatives)	26 citizens participating at the Sculpture Day Festival in Gateshead
	SCOTSWOOD STRATEGY	Dave Gaston, Andy Gibson
	RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECT	Anne Bonner
CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS	BALTIC MILL	Jude Watt
	ARTS COUNCIL NORTH EAST	Emma Keating
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT Sub-Regional INSTITUTIONS Other public organisations	ONE NORTH EAST	Ailsa Anderson
	NEXUS TRASPORT (PUBLIC ART OFFICERS)	Andrew Knight, John Meagher, Steve Hunt
	BNG (Bridging Newcastle Gateshead)	Caroline Cowan
	PLANNING AID	Daniel Massey
	NGI (Newcastle Gateshead Initiative)	Carol Bell
	New Deal for Community	Gillian King

This way of collecting data through direct participation has also taken the form of the "observer": some formal events, such as the Scotswood steering committee meeting, the Gateshead Town centre redevelopment consultation, the Planning Aid

workshop[10] and the West-End culture and regeneration day seminar[11] have been attended as unveiled observer. This required a negotiation process with the promoters and organisers in order to be introduced as a researcher, and also required me to take into account the affecting potential of my presence on the observed's behaviour.

Image 4: "Mapping the street" conference-related event. Antagon theatre aktion, Ouseburn Quayside – Image 5: Street theatre company in Saltwell park, Gateshead – Image 6: 21st Sculpture Family Day, Gateshead

Finally, a fifth research tool has been a questionnaire. At a Sculpture family day in Gateshead, twenty-six citizens were asked to answer a few questions about their experience: to adopt a reflexive approach towards any change in their relationship with the governmental institutions, their interests and participation in the arts, their social networks and their personal skills (see Appendix 1).

Findings: preliminary results

A first attempt to put order into the great amount of data collected over more than six months of field work has led me to sketch some preliminary results and focus on more detailed questions. The findings that follow in the next pages are organised along four main issues: who promotes and delivers what sort of art activities; how the publicness of public art is conceived and what conflicts these contrasting definitions

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[10] *Planning Aid – Engaging Communities in Planning* is a nationally funded organisation that "provides free, independent and professional town planning advice and support to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay planning consultant fees. It complements the work of local planning authorities, but is wholly independent of them.(…) It engages communities in the planning process to help them manage changes to their neighbourhood areas." (http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)
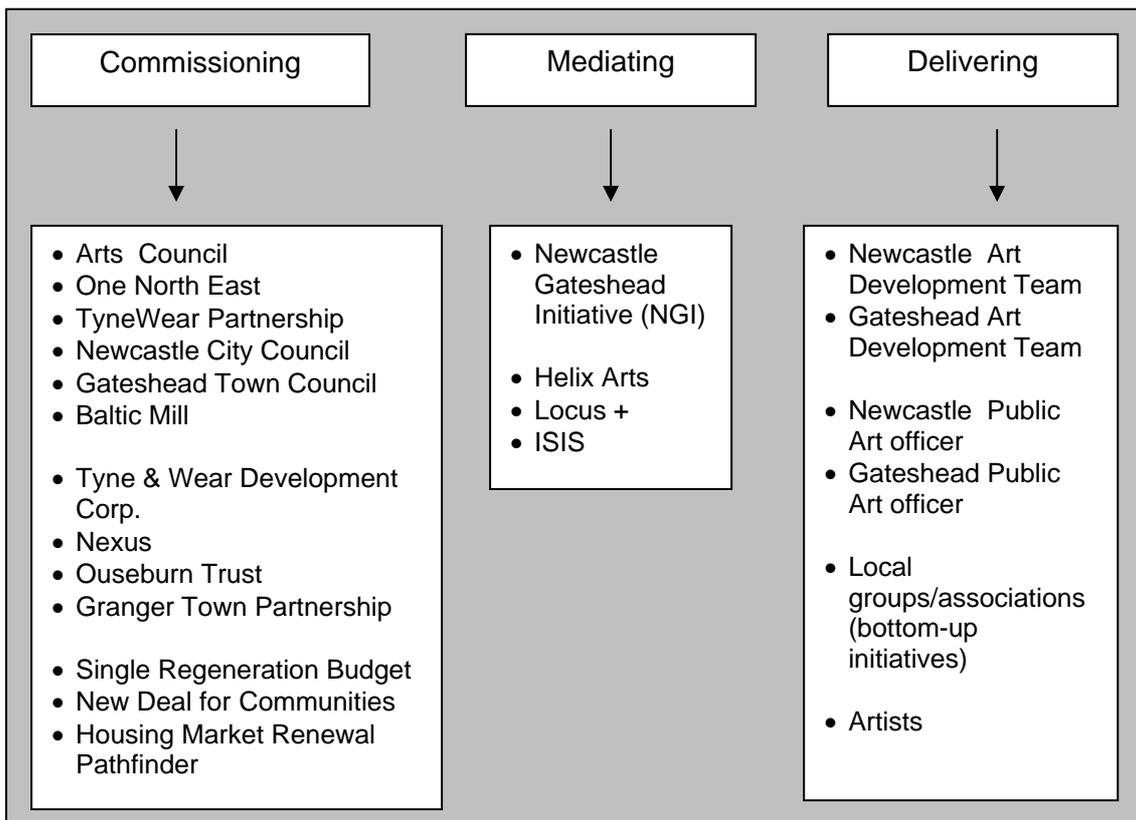
[11] The seminar was organised in order to gather the different actors having experience in cultural policy in Newcastle. After a few presentation about the already active cultural policies or strategies in the neighbourhood, three focus group have been organised to facilitate the interaction and collect suggestions about how to incorporate culture in the regeneration and redevelopment of the west-end, particularly in the Area Action Plan under construction.

embody; how expected (social?) benefits are conceptualised; and finally what is the "state of art" of public art integration in regeneration and the negotiation of place-making.

Commissioning, mediating and delivering public art: a map of actors and initiatives

From the analysis of the different actors involved in public art and their network, the funding structure and the commissioning system, a first distinction can be made among agencies and actors about their role in building the map of initiatives in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Figure 1 – Map of actors and their roles

Commissioning	Mediating	Delivering
• Arts Council • One North East • TyneWear Partnership • Newcastle City Council • Gateshead Town Council • Baltic Mill • Tyne & Wear Development Corp. • Nexus • Ouseburn Trust • Granger Town Partnership • Single Regeneration Budget • New Deal for Communities • Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder	• Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI) • Helix Arts • Locus + • ISIS	• Newcastle Art Development Team • Gateshead Art Development Team • Newcastle Public Art officer • Gateshead Public Art officer • Local groups/associations (bottom-up initiatives) • Artists

Cultural institutions, main directorates of government agencies, private developers, local trusts and national regeneration programmes belong to a first group

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of actors (see figure 1, first column). Most of them have a specific public art strategy and generally they have a main role in commissioning public art in the region.

A second group of actors includes the many arts associations and the local development agency. The latter, although having a role in helping the local government agencies to develop their strategy, has a main role in mediating between large organisations who commission the art initiatives and the third group, who mainly implement and deliver art policies and commissions. The art development teams and the public art officers, in the city councils, and the various local groups and single artists belong to this latter group of actors.

This research phase has been important in order to understand who is framing and ruling the context, who makes things happen and from whom to expect a change, should an action-research project take place,.

The typologies of public art promoted and realised in the area in the last twenty years are many, covering almost all the existing range of possibility. There is site specific art (Blue Carpet), carved decoration (the marble carving "River Tyne" along the Quay Side), sculptures (Grainger Town and Gateshead Riverside Garden), landmarks (Angel of the North), street furniture/usable sculptures (Haymarket "Shoulder to Shoulder", Byker "Pavillion", Ouseburn "Seats with a View"), participatory projects (Gateshead under-passes, Byker Metro Foyer, Queen Elisabeth II Metro Bridge "Nocturne" projections), performances (street art festival), etc.

Despite this variety, it is possible to observe the prevalence and emergence of two models: monumentalism and relational art. The first is represented by a massive use of sculptures, from a wide range of commissioners, while the second refers to a few examples of participatory projects or interactive art objects, usually temporary, promoted by a limited number of actors (i.e. art development teams, local groups, artists organisations).

Contrasting definitions of "publicness"

Central to this mapping phase is the investigation of the definition of publicness given by the different actors to their initiatives of public art. In order to operationalise this concept, we have taken in account the location of the pieces of art/performances

in the city, the role of the artist in the art-making and place-making process and the degree of participation of the local communities.

According to a first analysis, we can identify at least five different ways of approaching the concept of publicness.

The *first* approach refers to "public" as artists' public art masterpieces located in publicly visible spaces – public spaces, parks, gardens, roads – mainly (but not only) in regenerated/under regeneration areas. The main goal here is to "raise the international profile" of the city, hiring internationally renowned – generally non UK based – artists who individually create their own art objects. Within this approach, mainly pursued by the public art officers, the belonging of the artist to the urban or local community is irrelevant, as his celebrity is the most important thing. Site-specificity or history-specificity are considered preferable, as they can add value to the installation for its uniqueness, and for the commitment of the artist to relate to the locality. Community-specificity or community involvement, on the contrary, are not pursued or given as preferential options in briefing/constraining the artist with an eventual mandatory statement. Examples of this approach are the works of the artist Andy Goldsworthy, Mark Dion and Antony Gormley.

A *second* approach to publicness is the one pursued by developers, development agencies and market-oriented projects/artists. "Public" is here referred to as "patronised/privately managed" public spaces in which public art installations or events are located. With the aim of re-branding the city and celebrating the resurgence of the city, public spaces on the boundaries of private properties (semi-public spaces), or public spaces maintained by developers, or even public spaces simply treated for market-profit reasons, are transformed through the use of public art. Customers and tourists are the main target as "publics" of these works. Examples of this approach are evident in the many public art installations commissioned by developers, along the Quayside or in the Grainger town area, or the growing number of festivals organised by the local development agency (NGI)
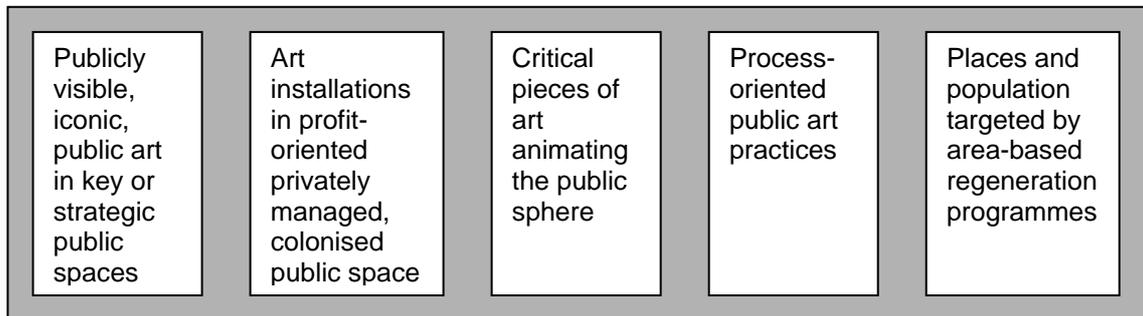
In a *third* approach, critical/provocative pieces of art are installed in out-door or in-door public spaces. In this case, the term "public" is tightly connected to the concept of the public sphere as the art object is intended not only to decorate or complement the environment, but also to inject provocative meanings or suggest counter-routine practices. This is, for instance, the case of public art performances or installations in unusual places, i.e., the 'Spank the Monkey' exhibition (urban street artists), organised

by the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts, jointly with the Nexus transport company, or the 'Culture Change-Climate Change' initiative developed by the Helix Arts organisation in partnership with CarbonNeutral Newcastle. Although this approach can virtually include more participatory initiatives, in the case of Newcastle and Gateshead this potential is highly underused. With regard to the art exhibition 'Spank the Monkey', for instance, a number of street artists were invited to create interventions in different public spaces in the city, eg., the Metro tunnel or Baltic Square, but none of these public spaces are usually open to local artists and neither of these interventions involved local citizens.

In a more process-oriented public art practice, the meaning of publicness (the *fourth* approach) resides in the nature of the art-making itself, usually a collaboration between the artist and the local community involved in the process. This usually leads to an in-site exposition or in the immediately proximate public spaces. This approach is more likely to be adopted by art development teams and local associations, who are generally working in peripheral or deprived neighbourhoods and tend to put greater value on the educational and expressive aspects of the art-making than the outcome itself. Within this approach the artist is more probably a member of the urban community (sometimes a very local one), providing skills helpful in facilitating the growth of place-attachment and self-esteem through creativity. This is the case of the participatory projects promoted by Newcastle City Council Art Development Team, in partnership with Nexus (the operator of the Metro), in the Byker Metro foyer. Artists worked with different groups in the local community to create sculptures, graffiti or pictures to be photographed and shown in the foyer.

A *fifth* and final definition of publicness refers to the population and the spaces targeted by an area-based regeneration programme. Art interventions in these contexts are usually narrowly dependent on the goals of the project and are aimed to demonstrate (whether rhetorically or not) that the local community actively participates in the place-making involved in the regeneration programme. In the case of the New Deal for Community, for instance, public art installations in local gardens were entirely managed by the leading team of professionals with a group of elected residents who were keen to improve public space quality in the neighbourhood. The scale of the regeneration project and the spatial perspective adopted clearly demarcate a neighbourhood-oriented approach to publicness.

Figure 2 – *Definitions of publicness of public art*

Publicly visible, iconic, public art in key or strategic public spaces	Art installations in profit-oriented privately managed, colonised public space	Critical pieces of art animating the public sphere	Process-oriented public art practices	Places and population targeted by area-based regeneration programmes

The coexistence of these five different approaches to publicness in the public art delivery process within the same territorial context, and sometimes within different bodies or projects of the same organisation, is not free of frictions or even conflicts. At the core of these conflicts are some crucially clashing rationalities, values and views - politically or professionally defined – that it is worthwhile for us to analyse.

A principal and often explicit clash at the very base of public art delivery is the "classical" issue of what is "art": a debate that sees the opposition between what we could call "high art" and "creativity/ craft work". This issue is connected with a wider political and cultural sphere related to the problem of recognising and legitimising different cultural expressions. Two of these neglected cultural expressions, cited by two interviewees are graffiti and body art (tattooing). The former, in particular, has been at the core of a major debate within the city of Newcastle ending with the banning of propellant-based artwork in public spaces.

Partially connected to this issue is the question of what sort of art is entitled to occupy public spaces. The question involves not only an assumed hierarchy among art practices, in which craft work and people's creativity in general are usually given less dignity than "high art", but also a clash among the alternative aims of beautifying the city or promoting the empowerment of local communities. An analysis of who is claiming the use of the public space and why, and their rate of success in gaining the right to place-making, can therefore provide a reading of public spaces as a field of power and an understanding of the regulatory (or neo-liberal) role assumed by local institutions. In this guise, a map of public art initiatives, classified by their promoters and their degree of publicness, can represent a first step towards an "iconography of power": a representation of social groups' rights to embody their power within buildings, sculptures and other urban artefacts.

The conceptualisation of social benefits

The measurement of social benefits of the arts is one of the main challenging and arguable questions which animate an endless debate between critics and advocates of public art. As anticipated in the first pages of this paper, this research does not deal with a partial view of the problem: promoting a perspective in favour or against the feasibility of a social engagement of arts. Rather it is aimed at understanding the conceptualisation of social benefits themselves and their operationalisation through policy implementation, from the perspectives of the different actors involved. However, despite its neglected centrality in this work, the issue of measurement has made some interesting insights from the research, along with the submission of questionnaires to the participants to the 21st Family Sculpture Day.

People of different ages were asked to complete a single page questionnaire (see Appendix 1). In order to explore people's perception of 'social benefits', questions investigated whether or not participation in collective art-making had any impact on the enlargement of participants' social network, the growth in cultural and arts interests, the increase in self-esteem, trust in institutions or even the impetus to start a new educational training. From this (a "pilot" experience) there clearly emerged a question of how subjective the understanding of participation was in the art-making and how subjected to a "reflexive capability" was the ability to answer the questions[12]. Therefore, the questionnaire's main outcome has been a reinforcement of the research' focus on the way public art commissioning and delivery have been conceptualised and have acted with respect to their social goals. In particular, two have been considered as key variables under investigation: the targeted *spaces* of public art initiatives and the targeted *communities* of users, participants or spectators. Crossing these two dimensions, it has been observed that most of the public art initiatives have followed an economic rationality, being located in newly redeveloped areas, such as the city centre, Granger town and the Quayside. None or very few examples have been settled in peripheral/marginal areas or social housing estates.

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[12] Rather than totally relying on the extent to which the interviewees were able to interpret their skills, interests, social network and future expectations in relations to art experiences, it has been considered worth integrating this kind of information – without neglecting their usefulness – with a better understanding of the way public art commissioning and delivery have been conceptualised and acted with respect to their social goals

Similarly, most of the public art policies targeted non-spatially defined communities, as in Helix Art's young offender project. However, even when a specific community was targeted, as in the case of the Byker estate, it was through a sort of "paternalistic" approach (see the case of the Byker Pavilion in the Appendix), or involved the participation of already existing groups – such as the YMCA or the Asylum Seekers - where participation in art making is just one among other ways to promote social inclusion, as in the case of the art development projects in Byker Metro foyer. None of these projects was aimed at carrying out a new, non-mediated, approach to involve local inhabitants.[13]

However, as in the previous paragraph regarding the notion of publicness, it is possible to identify frictions and disagreements among City Council officers working for different directorates or departments. There are notable tensions between those who want to promote public art with city-centre oriented beautification aims, and those who are more local-community focused. Another problematic issue is the varying degree of gentrification and resulting exclusion considered "acceptable". These questions represent two debatable elements within the treatment of the conceptualisation of social benefits. It is precisely the existence of these conflicting rationalities and perspectives that represent a space for a further reflection and the object of the next paragraph.

Concluding remarks: art, regeneration and the negotiation of place making

The conflicts, frictions and diversity of approaches embedded in the wide range of definitions given to the concepts of publicness, or in the many approaches to territory and its population along with the localisation choices, are the tangible elements of a non-integrated approach to *place making*.

Public art initiatives in the research context seem to be promoted strongly in accordance with the resurgence aims of the development and re-launch of the city. However this link between art and place-making means basically that the artist is financed through the funding scheme of regeneration or redevelopment, but maintains

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[13] This explains that public art itself is not conceptualised as a clustering or involving tool in itself, but as an instrument or support to already existing projects.

an independence in the conceiving and delivering of the work. The majority of public art initiatives in the area – unless participation is clearly targeted as the main aim – do not provide any kind of negotiation/collaboration with the inhabitants nor with the planning/ regeneration department. And this is true also for the delivering of public art initiatives in the cultural district, where different bodies of the public administration (the regeneration office, the public art officer and the art development team, for instance) work without any specific agreement or common action plan.

This lack of communication and sectoral integration produces some consequences, and in particular:

- the lack of effectiveness of each policy[14] and sometimes the creation of counter effects, such as the production of new exclusionary dynamics;

- a reinforced symbolic primacy of the city centre and the cultural district against the more peripheral and disadvantaged areas, or a spread of the gentrification phenomenon with consequent displacement effects.

In this respect, the example of the Ouseburn Valley regeneration is emblematic. Despite a strong commitment from part of the council to achieving a successful regeneration of the area, improving the environmental quality, raising employment rates and re-launching the local economy, the negative impacts on the surrounding communities, and the exclusion of the more disadvantaged communities from the new wave of businesses animating the valley, are widening the gap among neighbourhoods and increasing the social polarisation.

Participation in public art-making is clearly not a "hot" issue on the public agenda, even though existing claims for a more locally targeted and participatory cultural policy or for the right to exhibit citizens' art works in more central public spaces represents current unresolved problematic issues[15]. These problems lie untreated within the neglected question of access to the negotiation of place-making.

The divergent rationalities featuring the several actors involved in public art delivery –which involve different definitions of publicness and locational choice - the lack of consciousness about the negative effects of an extensive use of culture and art

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[14] An example is the failure in establishing a healthy cultural economy able to attract endogenous resources such as the young local population approaching the labour market.
[15] Regarding the first, emblematic is the position of the Scotswood Strategy Group. With respect to the second I am referring to the Newcastle City Council Art Development team claims for wider access to public spaces to exhibit and install local groups' collective art works.

in urban regeneration, and the very centralised control of place-making, seem to be the main problems in achieving social goals through public art projects.

Image 7: Children using the Byker Pavilion during the unveiling event – Image 8: Baby, dummy and hammer, Gateshead, 21st Family Sculpture Day – Image 9: Artist Andy McDermott and children, making a newt with wasted materials, Bill Quay farm, Gateshead

However, as the two local administrations are consolidating a culture-led regeneration model some important initiatives are being organised within the most recent regeneration projects. They are aimed at reflecting on how to transfer to these neighbourhoods what has been experimented until now. The recent and on-going projects of the Scotswood Housing Expo in Newcastle and the town centre redevelopment in Gateshead, show promising positive improvements towards a more effective integration of policies with a more convincing commitment to the achievement of social goals.

With regard to the first, the intention to better integrate cultural policies and urban regeneration is remarkable. After appointing the Polish artist Dan Dubowits to develop a cultural master plan for the involvement of citizens in the making of the Housing Expo, and having arranged that the NGI development agency will organise a series of cultural festivals, a workshop with local stakeholders has been organised. After having explained what sort of cultural activities have already been implemented or planned for the area, a wide range of actors – social workers, planners, regeneration officers, representatives of local associations - have been invited to discuss in three focus groups how to better integrate culture into the regeneration of the area and, in particular, into the planning document guiding the place-making process. Participants in the focus groups asked for more informal spaces, spaces for

citizens' own creativity, places appropriate for the organisation of cultural events (particularly music performances), and, in general, a wider participation of local residents in place-making through self-design, self-building and self-refurbishment of the existing facilities which had been dismissed.

Even though participatory planning and consultation are not a novelty, the attempt to widen the participation of actors to better integrate art and culture in place-making and to maximise the possible benefits is surely remarkable. However, at the moment, it is still not clear whether the issues raised in the focus groups will be integrated in the regeneration of the area and who will be in charge of the process.

Gateshead Council is leading in a similar direction. The Public Art officer's on-going initiative is to write an Art Brief, a set of instructions to be used in the Town Centre redevelopment process. It seems that the old attitude of simply adding public art to public spaces, without appropriately elaborating an integration process, is coming to an end. The "Art Brief" seems to give public art a steering role in re-development projects. However, the extent to which this integration of art in place-making and participatory projects will effectively be achieved in the implementation of the projects themselves, remain to be observed in the following months.

Policy makers should take note of the existence of the above mentioned different interpretations of publicness, art, social benefits, types of population targeted, and so on. Success in delivering socially committed, culture-led regeneration requires awareness of these differences, and an investment in the process of negotiating the different rationalities. The raising of consciousness about clashes in rationalities among social actors and the un-achieved goals of many social policies has recently led towards a new wave of research projects. The most recent novelty of the EU research agenda is its focus upon the experimentation with social platforms aimed at bringing to a round table different actors for the negotiation of individual interests in favour of more largely shared social goals[16].

At a smaller scale, as in the local context of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead, a similar process could be the organisation of a series of meetings, to be organised using action-research methods. Meetings would be aimed, firstly, at sharing local knowledge among actors, concerning the existence and mapping of social

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[16] An example is the recent project *Social Polis*: *social platform of cities and social cohesion*, with the participation of eleven university departments, several research international institutions and hundred of stakeholders spread around Europe. The project is leaded by the GURU, Newcastle University and coordinated by Prof. Frank Moulaert, Leuven University, Belgium.

exclusion dynamics in the urban context as well as the existing resources and projects working at the crossroad of the above mentioned three policy fields. Secondly, a recognition of specific sectoral/technical languages and definitions used is to be addressed. This overview of knowledge, practices and languages is a starting point for the real challenge: understanding which incentives can be useful to augment cooperation among officers and government agencies, or what limits can/cannot be overcome. These "incentives" are to be understood as inputs for changing actors' practices. This is why this social platform building process is expected to end with a negotiation, an agreement and a commitment to experiment new ways of implementing urban policies according to the peculiar contribution and innovation potential of the actors to be involved.

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Credits:

Images 1-2: TyneWear Partnership – Visual Audit
Image 3: Mark Pinder/Baltic/PA
Images 4-7: Chiara Tornaghi
Image 8: Paolo Reposo
Image 9: Liz Beech

Appendix 1: The questionnaire submitted to citizens

PUBLIC ART in your town -

Questionnaire: please, fill in!!

1) Have you ever been _consulted_ about your opinion / taste / need / preference on a Public Art work (sculpture, performing art in public spaces, etc.) that has been settled in your town? (for instance, by the local council, by an artist, etc.)

- Yes and I participated. I have been consulted by_____
  When?_____
- Yes but I didn't participated. Why?_____
  _____
- Never. Would you have been involved? Why?___ Giving local people a voice + choice + involvement.

2) Have you ever been _directly involved_ in the construction of a piece of art (for example, working with the artist to a sculpture or a mural, collaborating in the organisation of a public performance or festival, etc…)? (or the SCULPTURE FESTIVAL...)

If NO: would you like to have been involved? ___Why? _____
_____
_____

If YES: When? In which project? _Sand-castle building_____
What did you do? _Built sand-castle as part of inter-school competition_
How long? (for example, one day, one week, etc)___ One day._____
Did you work alone with the artist or with other citizens, too? _With pupils / teachers_
While collaborating, did you learn any specific skill? _Team work / communication_
Did you, then, start practicing any particular creative activity for your own? _Yes._
Did you meet new people that you still meeting as friends today?___ Yes_____
Was it the occasion for thinking in a new job career?_____ No._____
Was it the occasion for starting a new educational training? (for instance, start attending art schools? Joining educational training at Baltic Gallery, etc) _____ No._____
_____
Have you since been more interested in art expositions in your town? ____ Yes_____

3) Would you like a piece of Public Art to be installed, or a festival to be organised in your neighbourhood? (Yes or No?)___ Yes._____Why? _Brings people together, allows growth of creativity - childrens cognitive ability / communical_
_____

Please, now, could you give me any additional information? **Thank you!!**

- **Your Postal Code:** _NE2C 4NS_
- **Do you live in Newcastle or Gateshead?** _W/ BAV_
- **Year of residency in the town:** _10_   **Age:** _40_   **Gender**: F___ M ✓
- **Do you belong to any local association?** (YES/NO) _N_ (which one?_____
- **Do you practice any creative activity** (painting, video-art, music, sculpture, etc.)?

If you allow me to ask you further details, please, write here your e-mail or contact number:

Appendix 2: Public art initiatives of main relevance to the paper

Byker "Pavilion"

The "Pavillion" is a steel and acrylic sheet street shelter. It consists of some seating, a table, a chandelier, an ashtray, roof panels, a shop like counter and blackboards and was designed to be used by residents in the neighbourhood (see image 7).

Commissioned by the Newcastle City Council Public Art Officer to the Dutch artist Rob Voerman, the public art work was installed in a small shopping area within the social housing estate of Byker, Newcastle, in summer 2006.

The project, costing several thousand pounds, was intended to be temporary and to be moved around different deprived neighbourhood in town. Despite its intention to be a sort of educational tool for suggesting how to use and enjoy public spaces, its making has not been participatory, nor has its installation been announced or negotiated with people who live nearby or with shopkeepers. As the pavilion was used by a young and vocal population as a meeting point, there were complaints regarding noise, together with a general annoyance over the lack of consultation. Despite being popular with some people, it was removed after six weeks. Since then, it lies dismantled in an artists' workshop, without any specific plan for re-installing it in any other neighbourhood of the city.

Byker Foyer

The Byker "foyer" is a 500 m^2 area in the ticket hall of Byker Metro. With an open access to the east side, the entrance comprises of large, boarded up windows to the west, measuring 3 x 25m, used as an exhibition wall.

Organised by Newcastle City Council Art Development team and Nexus (the company owning and managing the Metro system) the project aims to raise citizens' place-attachment. Through a programme of temporary displays, the foyer has been transformed into a 'gallery'.

Since 2005 the space is regularly used to exhibit participatory arts projects made by local groups (such as the children of the YNCA) and appointed artists. The work (including graffiti, wire, IT and lens based media) was displayed on to sheet vinyl.

Bill Quay Farm

Located on the River Tyne, 3 miles from Gateshead town centre, the farm is managed through Gateshead Council and a community management association. The farm was set-up in the mid-1980s on the wave of the city farm movement, popular in 1970s and 80s Britain. Its main aim is to provide access to leisure and education experiences through a dialogue with nature, gardening, animal husbandry and environmental management. Among these activities, the farm provide opportunities for involving weak social groups, such as children, teenagers and young offenders, in projects aimed at develop their creativity through practical activities. Of particular interests are the public art sculptures created and installed on-site, some made out of waste materials (see image 9) and integrated in the natural environment of the farm.

"Spank the monkey" exhibition

Spank the Monkey was a public art exhibition promoted by Baltic Contemporary Art Gallery in partnership with Nexus Transport Company. Several internationally renowned 'street artists' were invited to create 'interventions' inside and outside Baltic, in squares, on building facades, on the walls of the underground Metro tunnels. What is particularly remarkable is the special accessibility that the artists had to access areas usually forbidden to normal citizens, like the pedestrian-restricted part of the tunnels, beyond the waiting area. Considering the very strict and controlled approach to art intervention in public spaces shown by the local authorities, the promotion of an art exhibition focused on normally unconventional, outlawed (if we consider the recent banning of graffiti) and irreverent artistic expression is at least weird if not a manifestation itself of unequal rights to place management.

Family Sculpture Day

The "family sculpture day" is an initiative promoted by the Gateshead Council Art Development team jointly with the public art officer, since 1985 (see images 6 and 8). Organised in Saltwell Park, Gateshead, a large amount of wood, hammers, manual and electric saws and other tools are provided for residents and non-resident families to build wooden sculptures based loosely on a theme. Artists are employed to assist

and a music band is appointed to play during the lunch break. The initiative is an occasion for people of different ages to play and create together, an opportunity for individuals and families to socialise with neighbouring groups or to meet new friends.

Cultural Master Plan for the Housing Expo

The cultural master plan is a document commissioned by the Newcastle City Council regeneration office to the Tuscany-based Polish artist Dan Dubowits. The plan represents a strategy for the development of public art activities aimed at involving the (remaining) local community of the Scotswood neighbourhood in the development of the Housing Expo. The latter is a city council redevelopment initiative, built on the example of Malmo (Sweden), within the larger national regeneration scheme *Housing market renewal pathfinder.* After having experienced several failures in changing the reputation of the area and reducing its stigmatisation, the city council seems now determined to clear the majority of the area and to redevelop it with a strong culture and middle class vocation. Despite the redevelopment of the area aims to follow a culture-led regeneration model, , the cultural master plan seems a tool to involve local residents in art activities parallel with, but not integrated to, the place making itself. The design competition for the neighbourhood, for instance, seems not particularly to target local residents, and almost all the activities in the art master plan have a temporary nature.