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THESIS
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Summary: *Theatre in Urban Regeneration: Global Cities, New Narratives and the Regeneration of Ballymun (1998-2010)*

This study examines the role of community theatre within an urban community undergoing regeneration at the beginning of the 21st century. The current phase of globalisation has prompted reconsideration of the meaning and legitimacy of social networks which are commonly taken to constitute 'community'. Pressures from the impact of globalisation have urged scholars to redefine what community actually means, and to question the suitability of contemporary rhetoric, organised around a dichotomy of communities of location and communities of ideology. One of the most evident and direct consequences of globalisation in the western world is the pursuit by cities of global status (Sassen, 2001). This pursuit has created an era of widespread urban regeneration, and the role played by the arts and culture in supporting such endeavours is a central focus of this research. The commodification of culture for economic purposes (place promotion, tourism, etc.) is understood as a key signature of the global city approach to urban regeneration projects.

This study, while acknowledging the possible economic advantages of cultural commodification, sets out to evaluate the social impact of the provision of arts within an area undergoing regeneration, and its perceived value among the local population. In selecting the Ballymun Regeneration Project (1998 - 2010) as a case study, this researcher questions how global trends in urban development play out in practices emerging in the specific circumstances of one locality. This study offers an intensive, in-depth interrogation of a selected community undergoing regeneration, with particular focus on the significance for the community of arts provision, via the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. The *axis,* developed as a community initiative independent of the regeneration programme, and its work became central to perceptions of its success. By concentrating on a unique dramatic project, *The Ballymun Trilogy* by Dermot Bolger, staged at the *axis* (2004-2008), this study examines and documents the particularities and complexities of theatre positioned at the very heart of the community of Ballymun. Both *The Ballymun Trilogy* and the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre are located in the broad theoretical field of applied theatre (with reference to work by Kershaw, 1992; Nicholson, 2005; van Erven, 2001 and others).

Figure A3. C

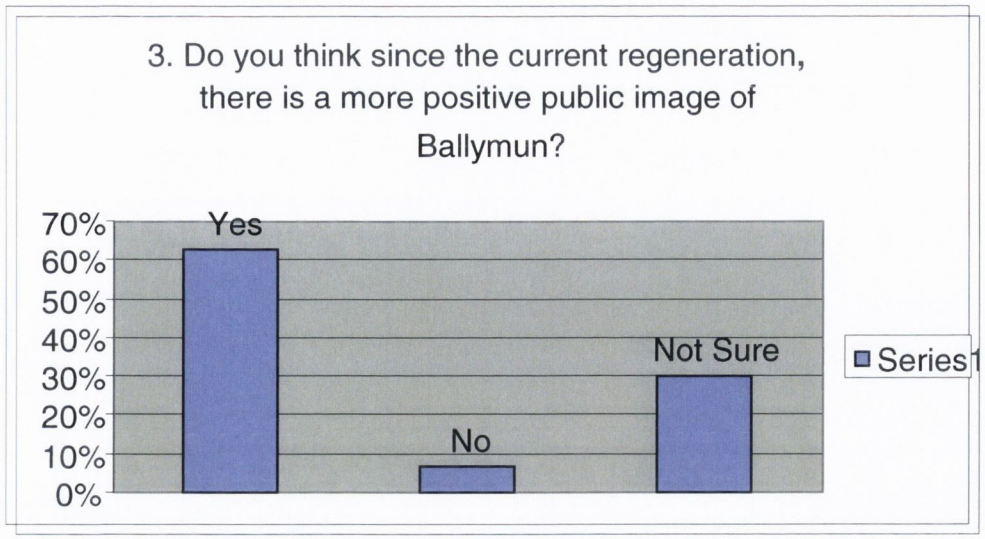
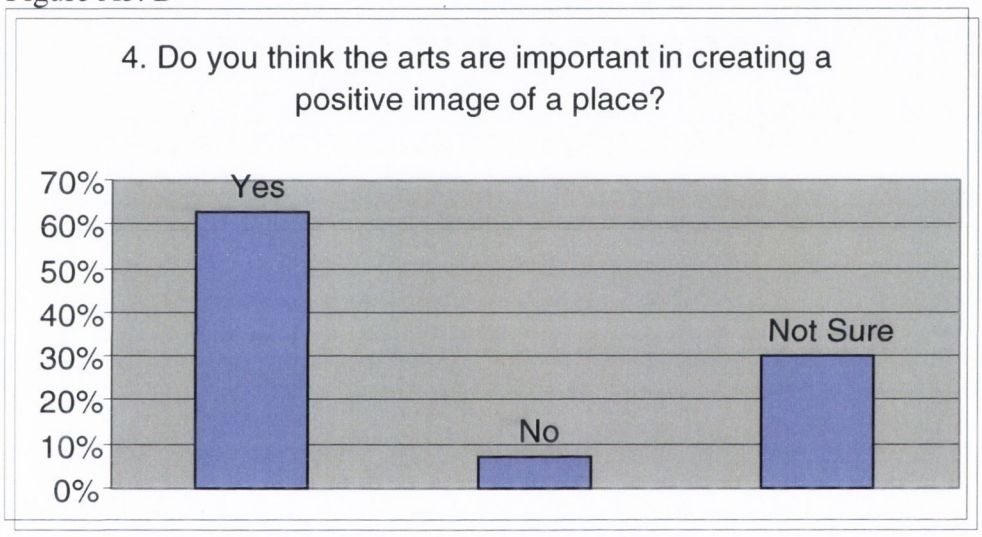


Figure A3. D



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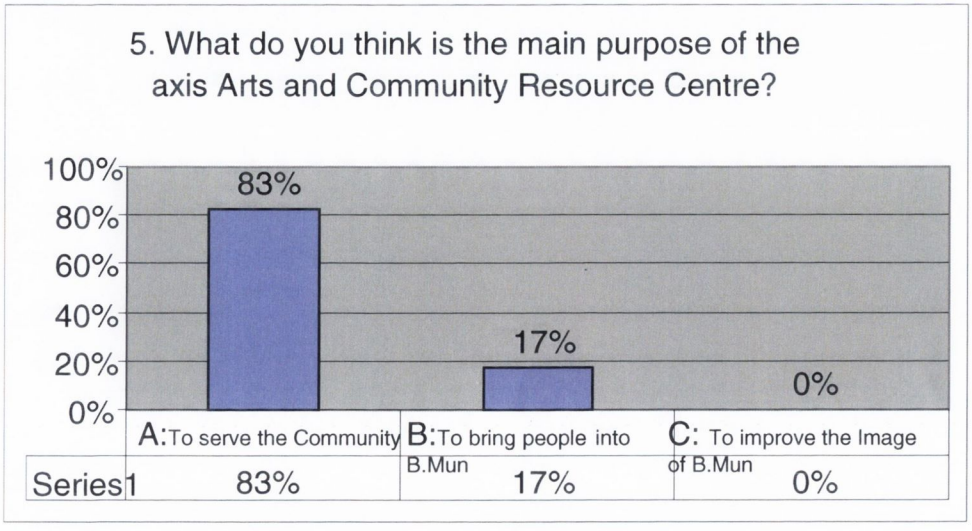


Appendix 3
Results

Figure A3. A

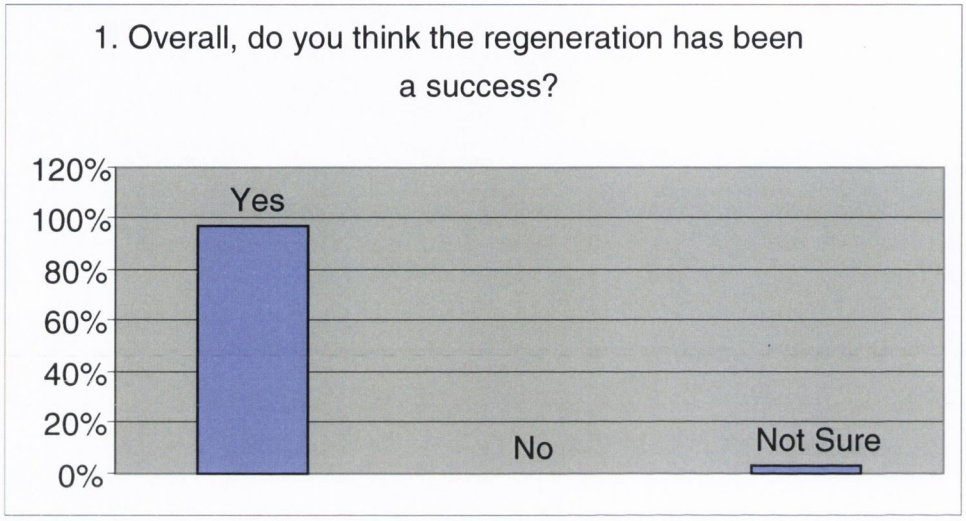
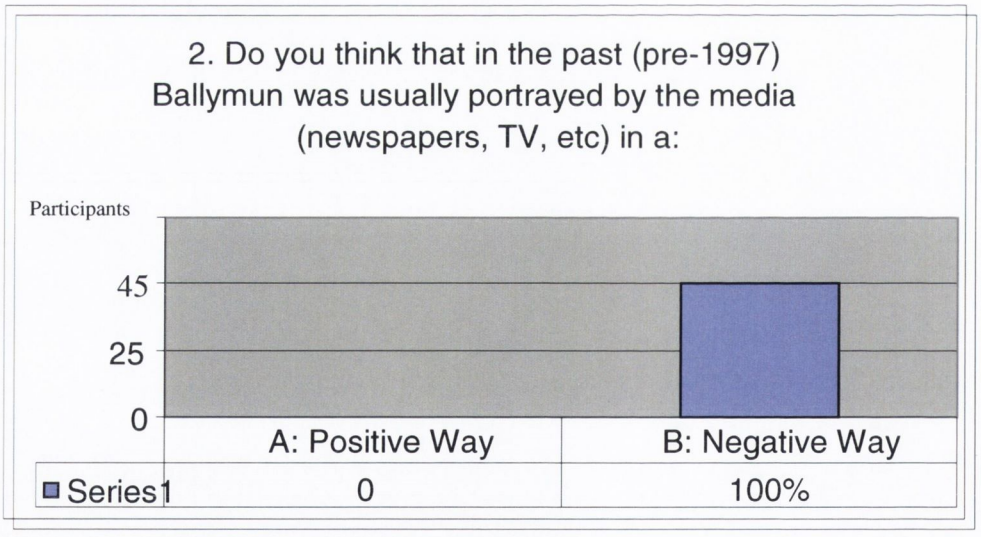


Figure A3. B



PART TWO

Please use X to show how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements:

6. The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre is an essential facility for the community.

Strongly agree:____ Agree: ___Not Sure:____Disagree:___Strongly disagree:____

7. The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre has become the focus of the community.

Strongly agree____ Agree: ___Not Sure:___Disagree:____Strongly disagree:____

8. There was a strong arts culture in Ballymun before *axis* was established.

Strongly agree____ Agree____ Not Sure: ____Disagree: ___Strongly disagree:____

9. When I am in the *axis* I am exposed to a range of art forms and artistic activities.

Strongly agree: ___Agree:____Not Sure: ___Disagree: ___Strongly disagree:_____

PART THREE

10. Do you feel it is important that the Ballymun story (history and present) should be explored through the arts? (eg. Bolger's plays *From These Green Heights, Townlands of Brazil* and *The Consequences of Lightning*)

Yes: ____ No____ Not Sure: ____

11. If you use the *axis* Arts and Community and Resource Centre, what do you primarily use it for?

Any other comments are welcome:

Thank You for Your Time

Appendix 3

Have your say on the Arts in Ballymun:

Questionnaire for Ballymun (Dublin) Residents

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, which is part of research into the role of the arts in urban regeneration areas.

Please put an **X** beside your chosen answer.

PART 1

1. Overall, do you think the regeneration has been a success?

Yes ____ No____ Not Sure_____

2. Do you think that in the past (pre-1997) Ballymun was usually portrayed by the media (newspapers, TV, etc) in a:

A: Positive way_____

B: Negative way _____

3. Do you think since the current regeneration, there is a more positive public image of Ballymun?

Yes ____ No___ Not Sure_____

4. Do you think the arts are important in creating a positive image of a place?

Yes ___ No___ Not Sure_____

5. What do you think is the main purpose of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre?

A: To serve the community_____

B: To bring people into Ballymun _____

C: To improve Ballymun's image_____

Figure A2. E Question 5:

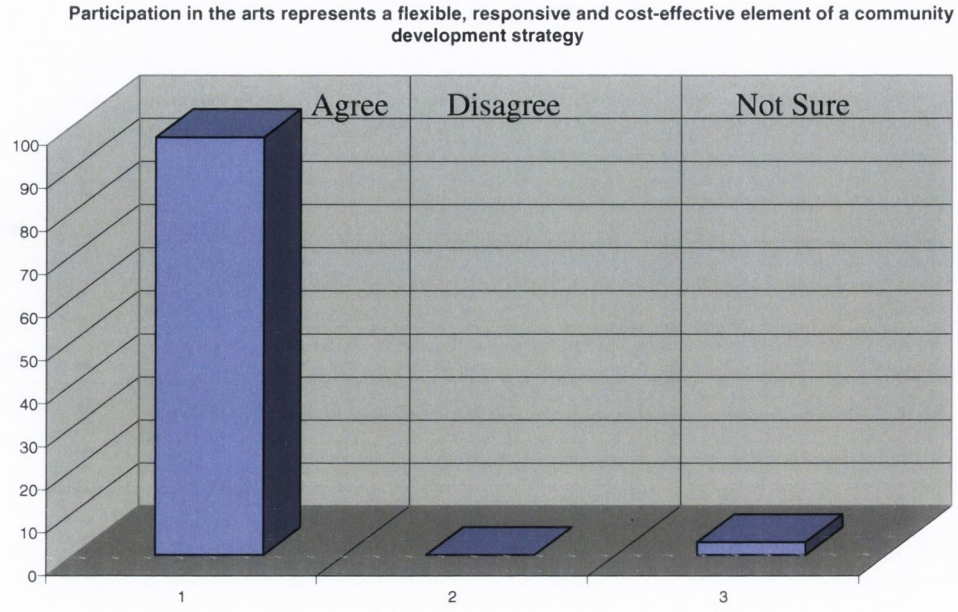
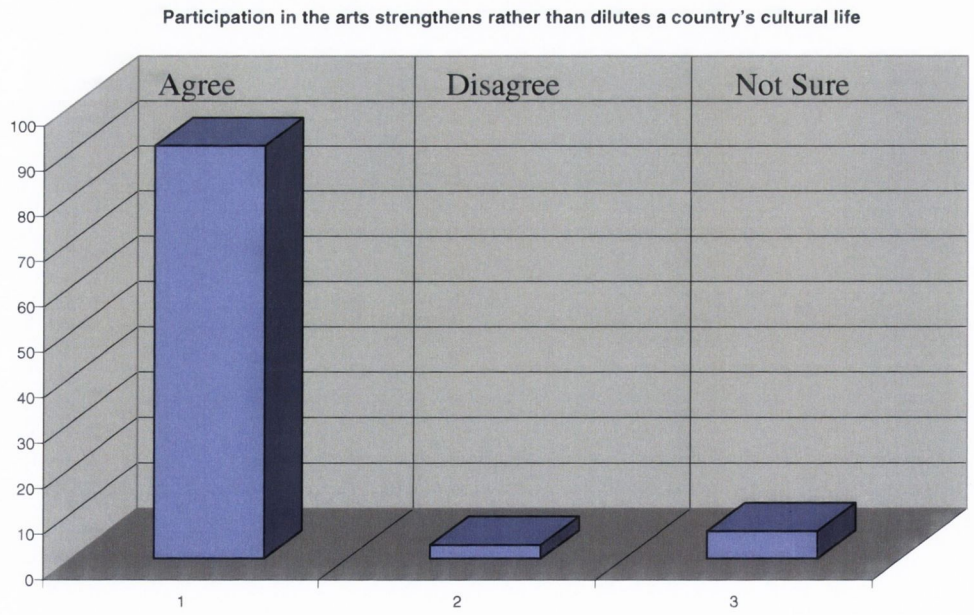


Figure A2. F Question 6:



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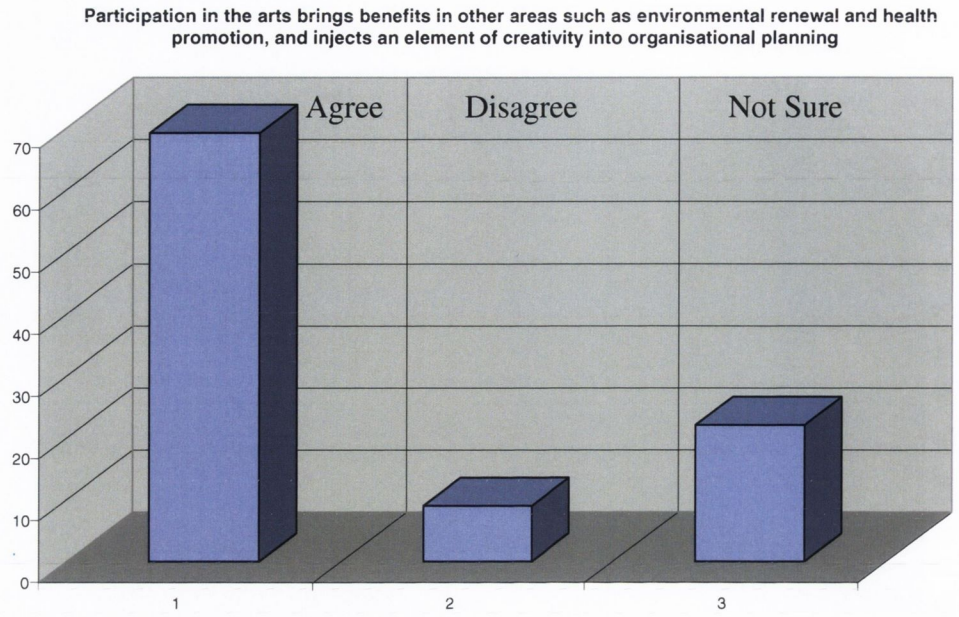
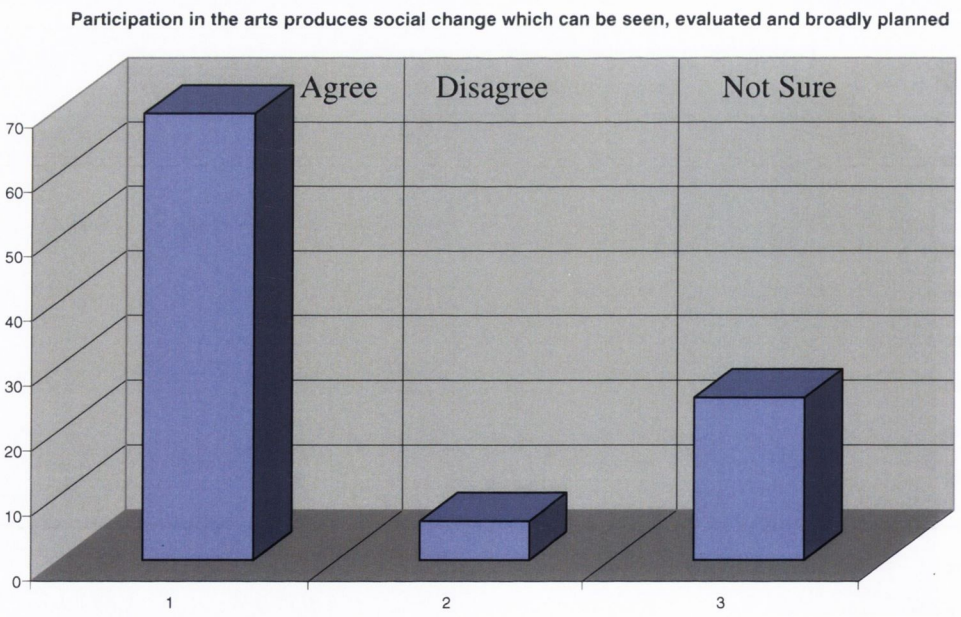


Figure A2. D Question 4:



Appendix 2
Results

Figure A2. A Question 1:

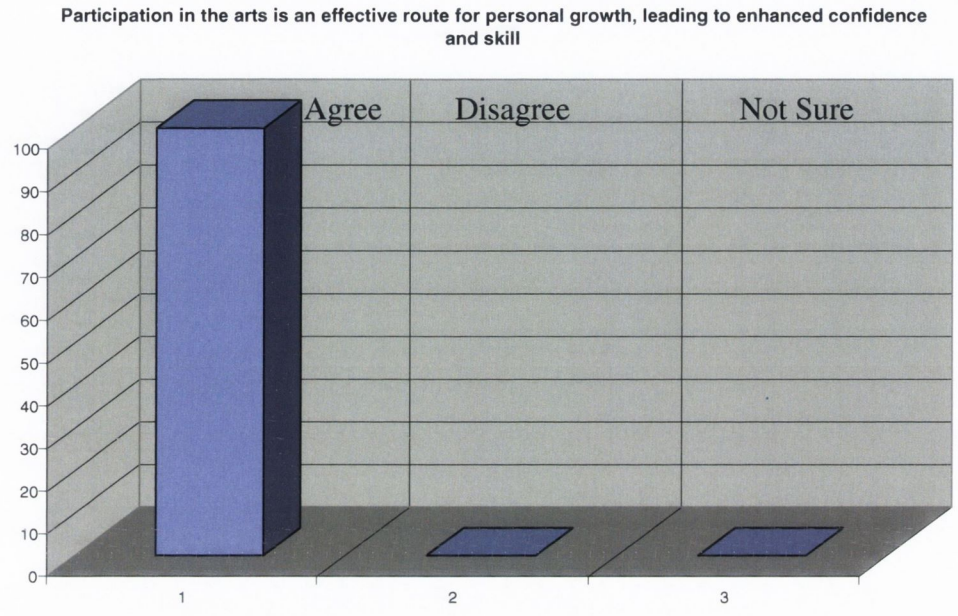
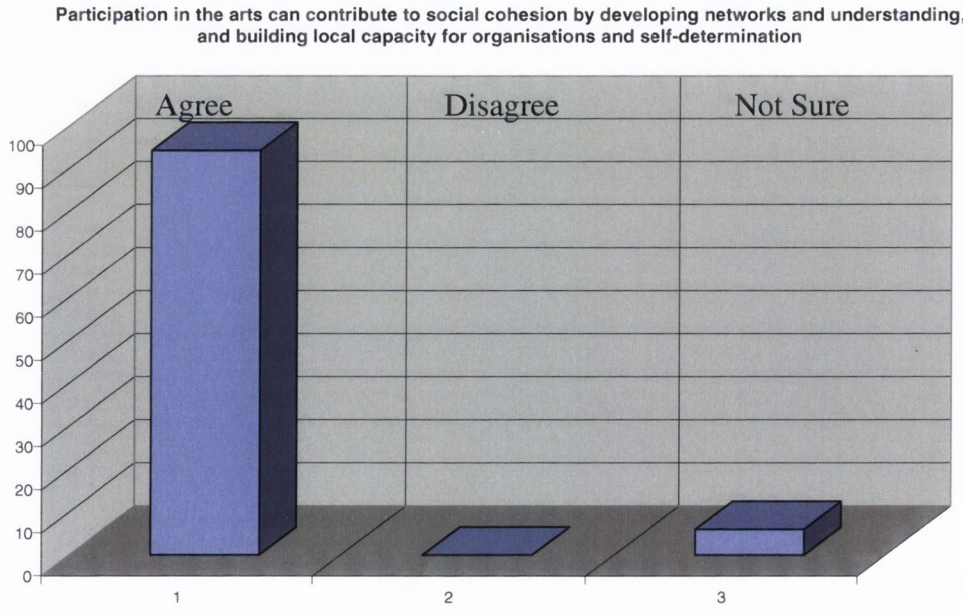


Figure A2. B Question 2:



Appendix 2

Arts Participation Questionnaire

Matarasso's national report (UK, 1997), concludes that arts participation is the area that is most widely claimed to enhance personal and community development.

Please circle your answers.

1. Participation in the arts is an effective route for personal growth, leading to enhanced confidence, skill – building and educational developments which can improve people's social contracts and employability.

   Agree Disagree Not sure

2. Participation in the arts can contribute to social cohesion by developing networks and understanding, and building local capacity for organisations and self-determination.

   Agree Disagree Not sure

3. Participation in the arts brings benefits in other areas such as environmental renewal and health promotion, and injects an element of creativity into organisational planning.

   Agree Disagree Not sure

4. Participation in the arts produces social change which can be seen, evaluated and broadly planned.

   Agree Disagree Not sure

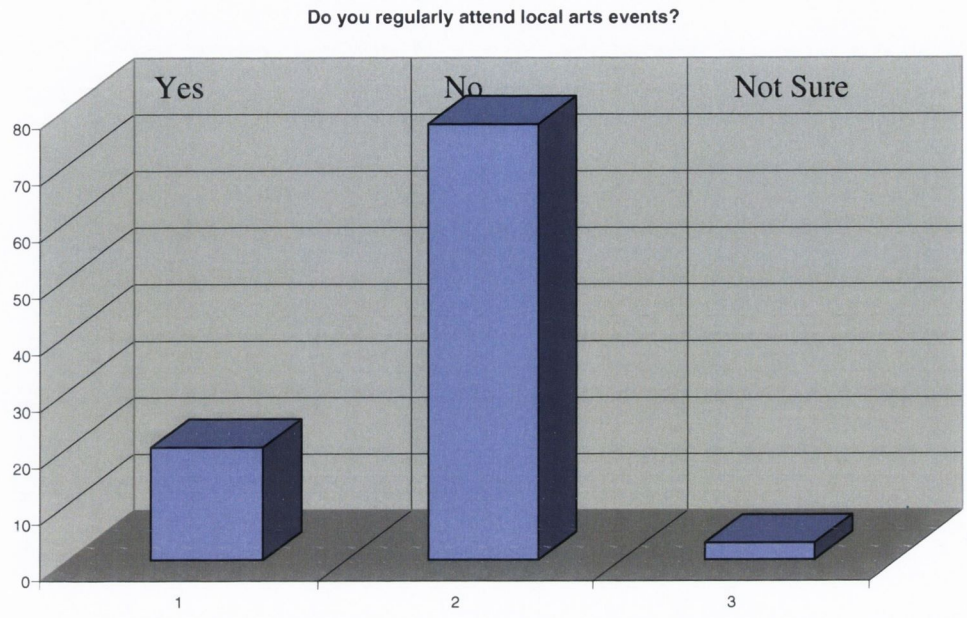
5. Participation in the arts represents a flexible, responsive and cost-effective element of a community development strategy.

   Agree Disagree Not sure

6. Participation in the arts strengthens rather than dilutes a country's cultural life, and forms a vital factor of success rather than a soft option in social policy.

   Agree Disagree Not sure

Figure A1. S Question 17:



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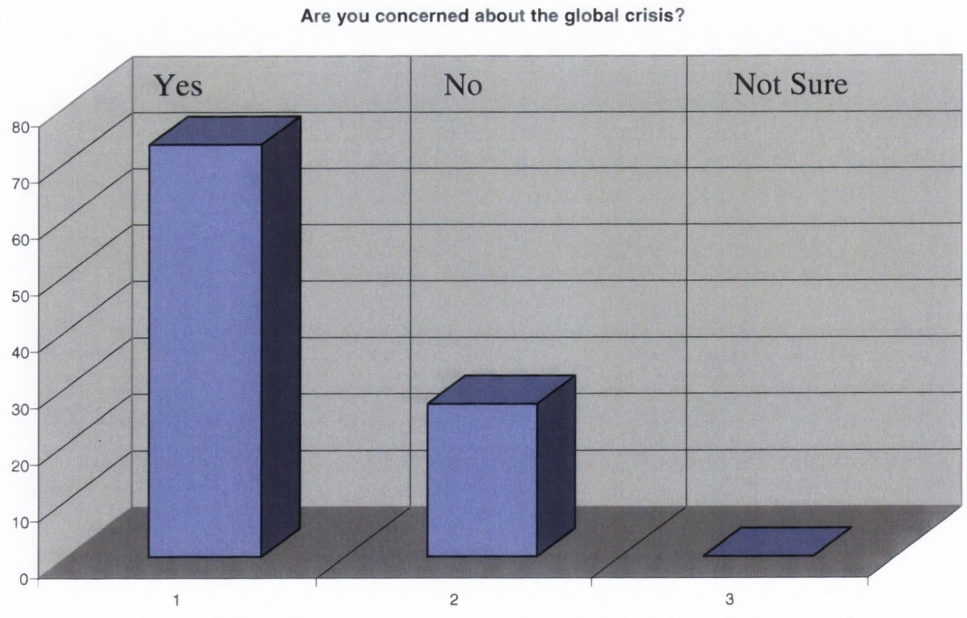

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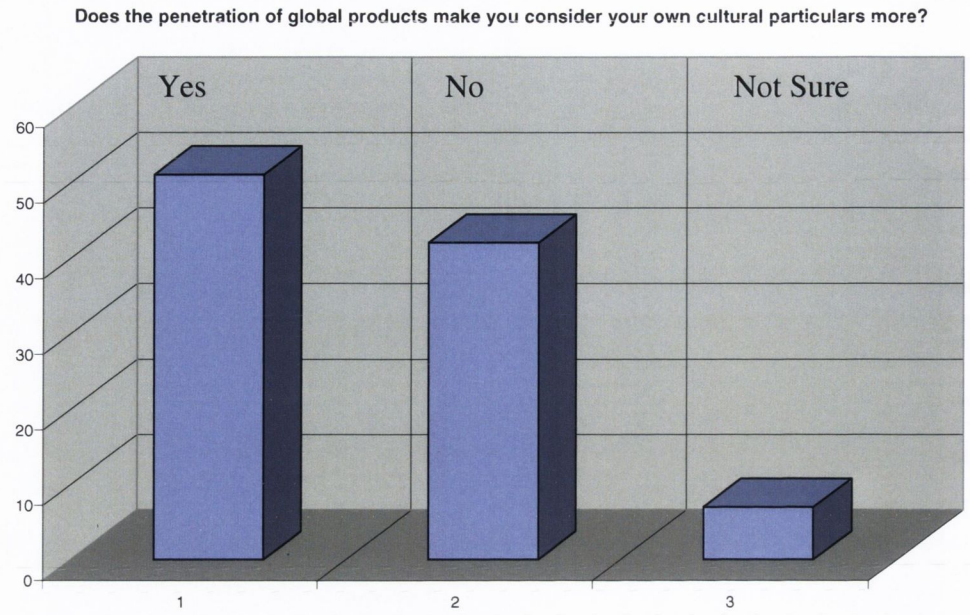
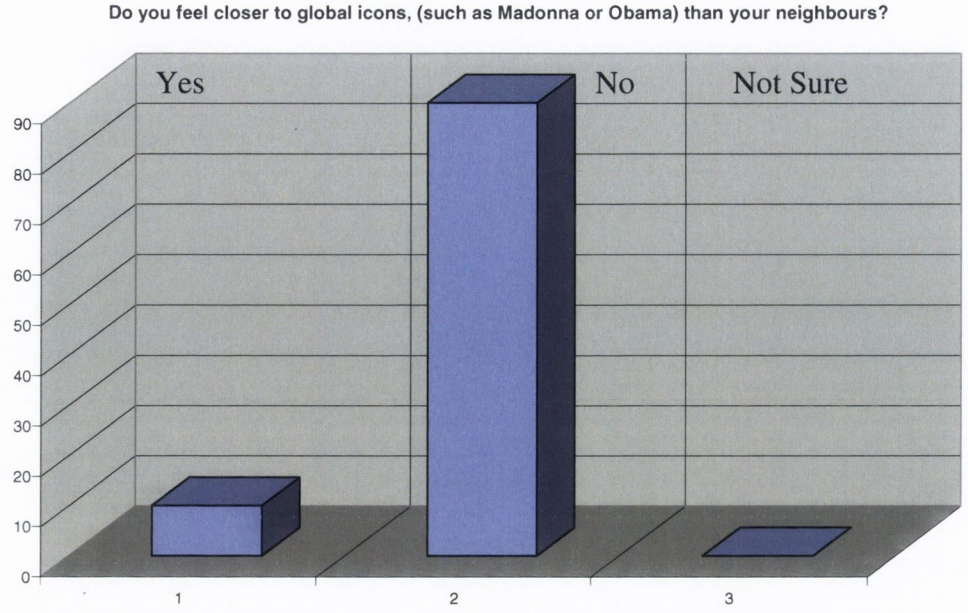


Figure A1. R Question 16:



Figure A1. O Question 13:



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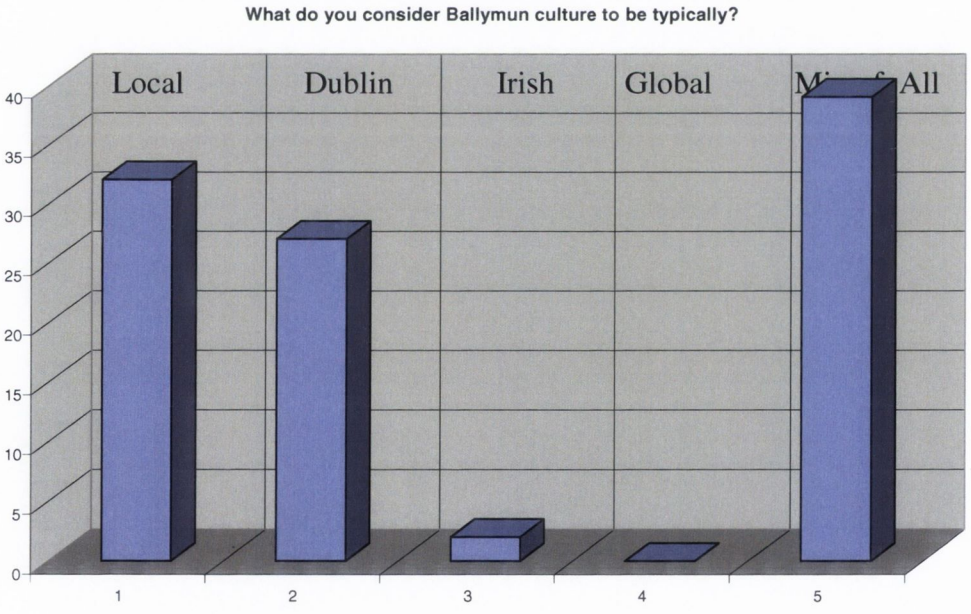

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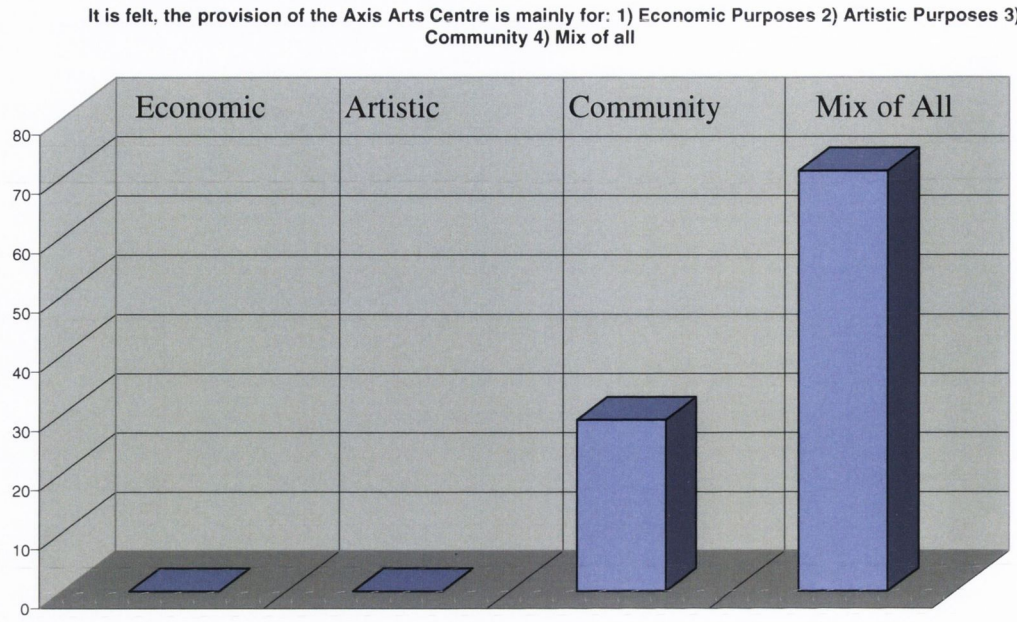
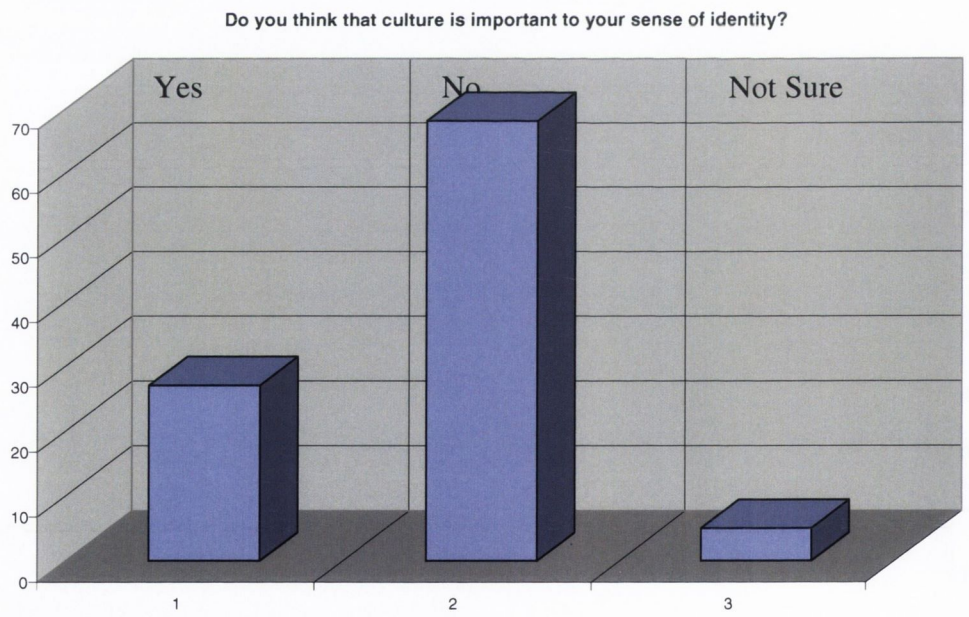


Figure A1. N Question 12:



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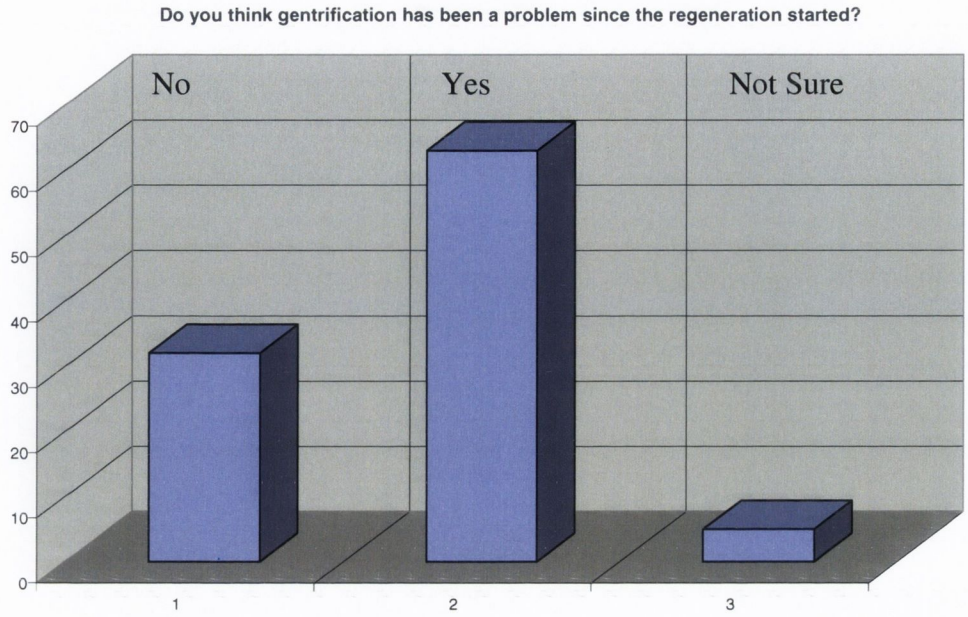

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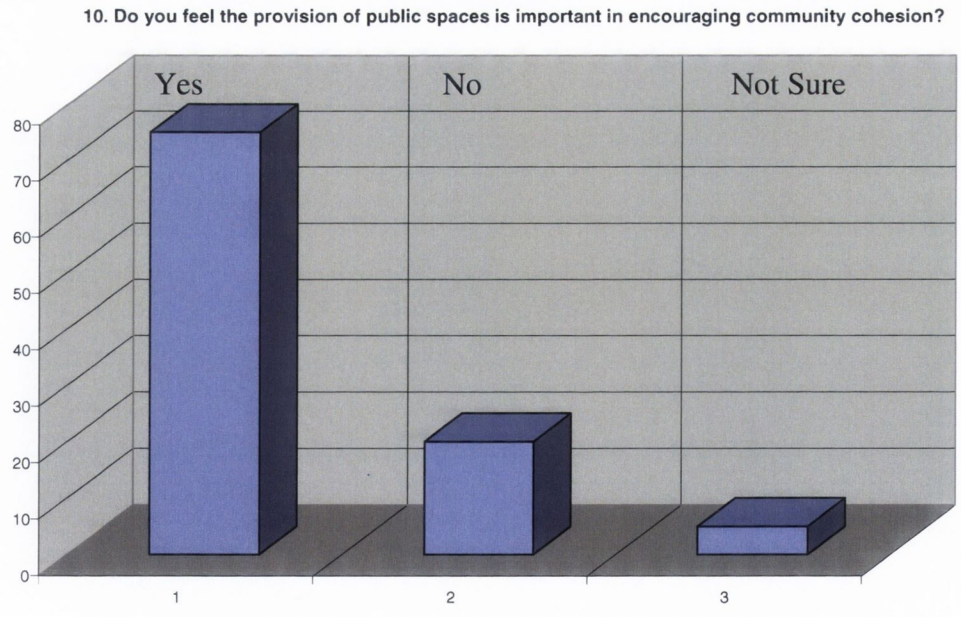

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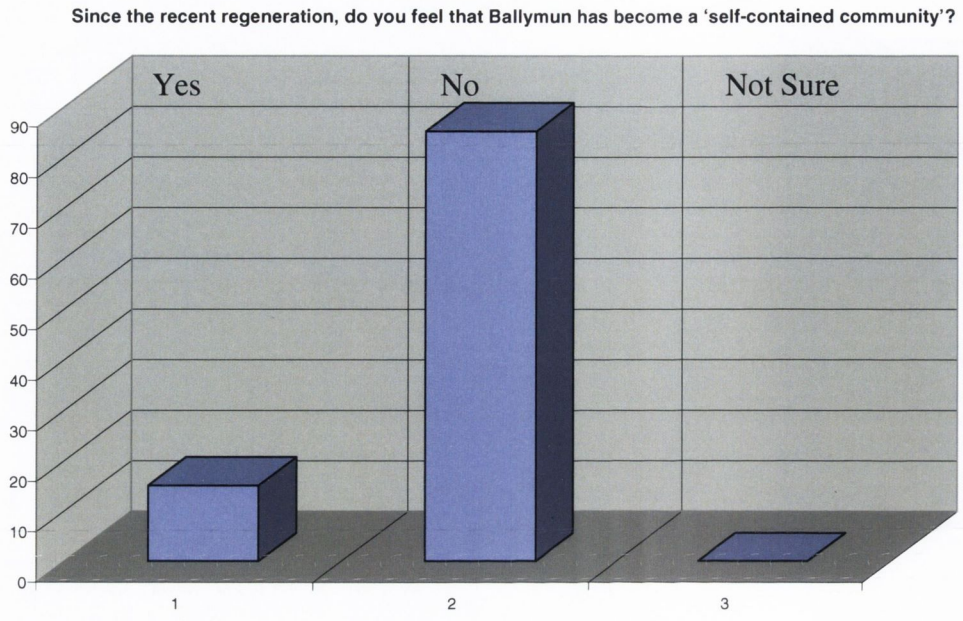

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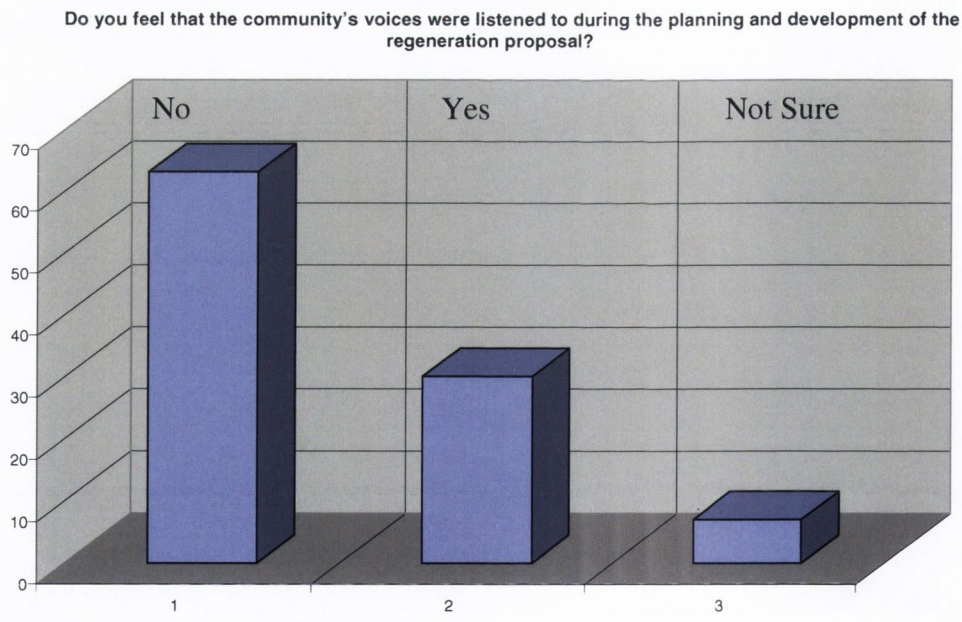

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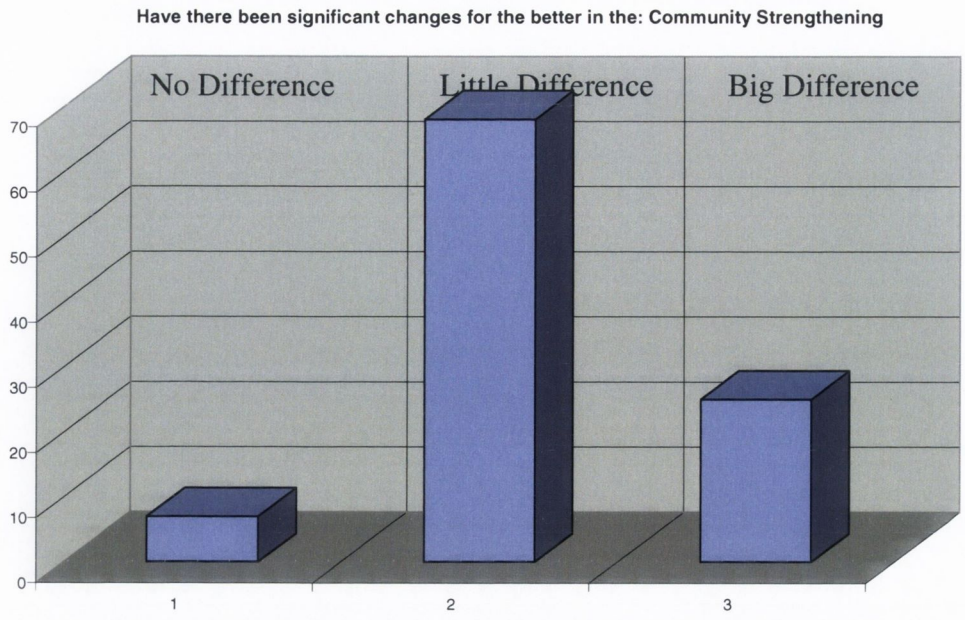

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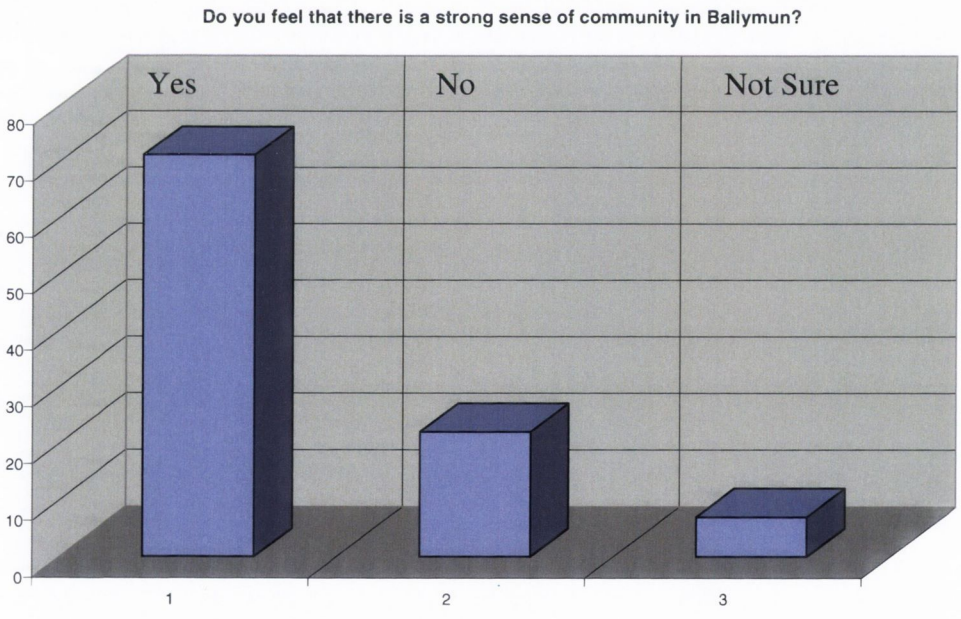

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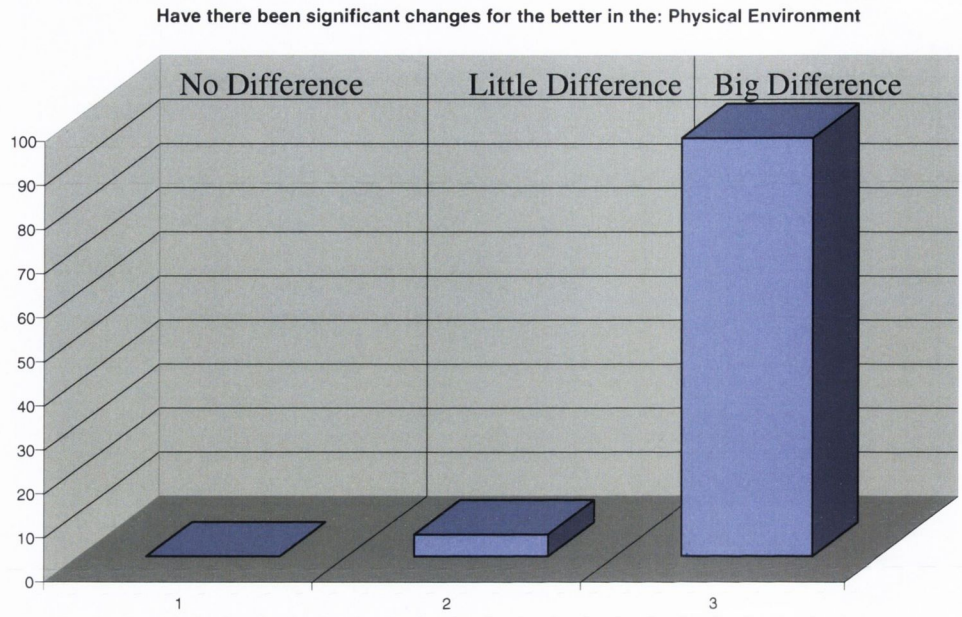
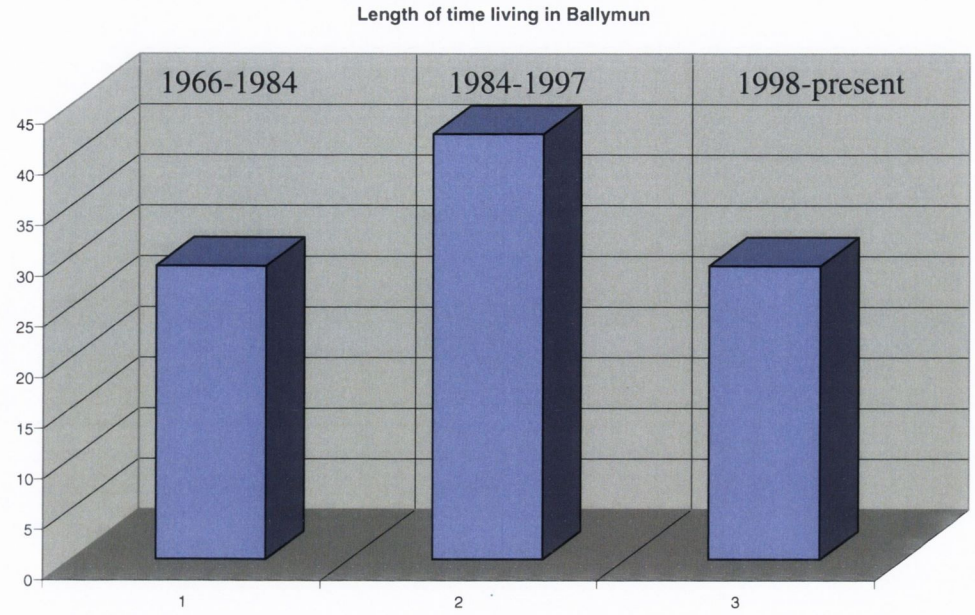


Figure A1. F Question 5b:



Figure A1. C Question 3:



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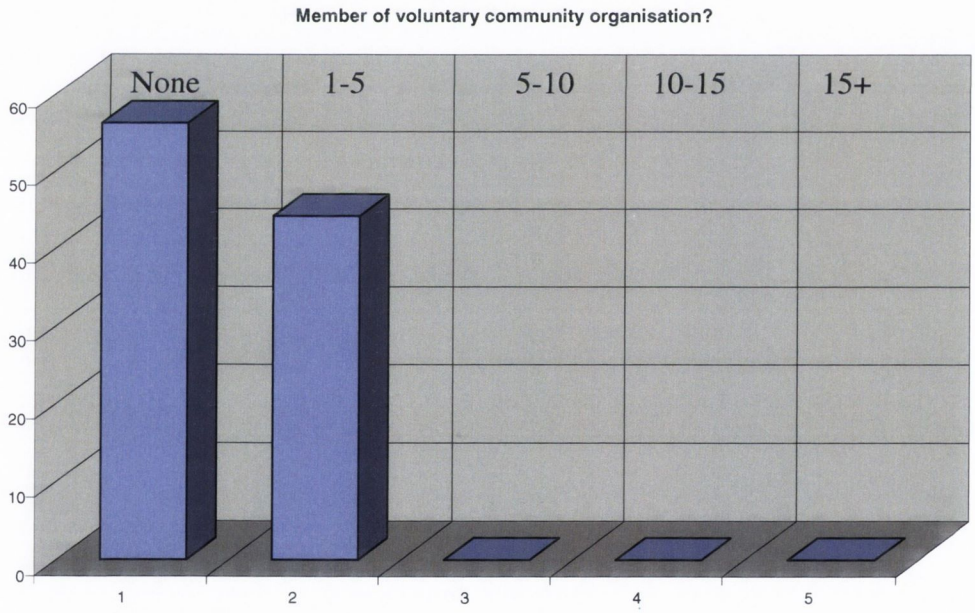
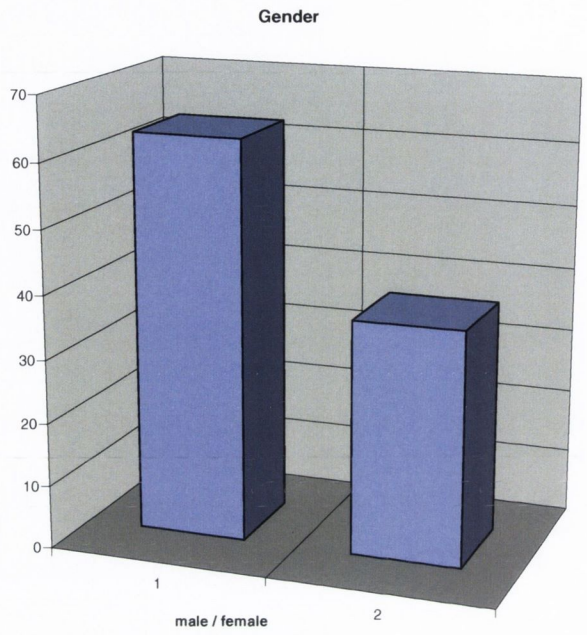


Appendix 1
Results

Figure A1.A Question 1



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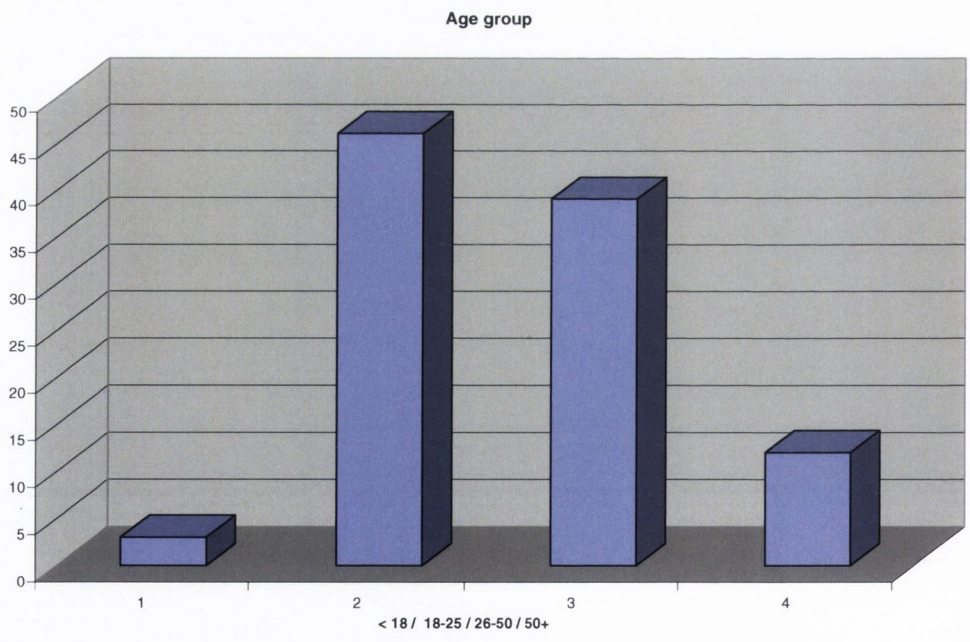

18. Are you concerned about the global crisis?

Yes No Not Sure

Any Further Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Yes No Not Sure

8. **Do you feel that the community's voices were listened to during the planning and development of the regeneration proposal?**

   No Yes Not Sure

9. **Do you think gentrification (rise in property prices, people moving into the area) has been a problem since the regeneration started?**

   No Yes Not Sure

10. **Do you feel the provision of public spaces (eg the plaza outside the axis Centre) is important in encouraging community cohesion?**

    Yes No Not Sure

11. **Do you feel the provision of the Axis Arts Centre is mainly for:**

Economic Purposes Artistic Purposes Community Mix of All

12. **Do you think that culture (the arts) is important to your sense of identity?**

    Yes No Not Sure

13. **Do you feel closer to global icons, (such as Madonna or Obama) than your neighbours?**

    Yes No Not Sure

14. **Do you consider Ballymun culture to be typically:**

    Local Dublin Irish Global Mix of All

15. **Does the penetration of global products (eg. USA, UK T.V. shows, food products, clothing etc) make you consider your own cultural particulars more?**

    Yes No Not Sure

16. **Do you deliberately try to buy local produce?**

    Yes No Not Sure

17. **Do you regularly attend local arts events?**

    Yes No Not Sure

Appendix 1

Ballymun: Living, Regeneration and the Arts
Questionnaire for Residents of Ballymun.

Please circle your chosen response.

1. **What is your gender?**

   Male Female

2. **What age group do you belong to?**

   Under 18 18-25 26-50 50+

3. **How long have you being living in Ballymun?**
   Since: (please circle)

   1966-1984 1984-1997 1998 – Present

4. **Are you a member of any voluntary community organisations? (please circle)**

   None 1-5 5-10 10-15 15+

5. **Have there been significant changes for the better in the following areas, since the start of the regeneration project of 1998? (please circle)**

   Physical Environment:

   No Difference Little Difference Big Difference

   Economic Opportunities:

   No Difference Little Difference Big Difference

   Community Strengthening:

   No Difference Little Difference Big Difference

6. **Do you feel that there is a strong sense of community in Ballymun?**

   Yes No Not Sure

7. **Since the recent regeneration, do you feel that Ballymun has become a 'self-contained community'?**

List of Interviewees:

Bolger, D. (2008c), Writer of *The Ballymun Trilogy,* Recorded Communication.

BRL Representative, (2008), Senior Planner, Recorded Communication.

Darcy, D. (2010), Overview of the Irish Community Arts Movement, Recorded Communication.

Hanaphy, N. (2010), Local Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Hickey, K. (2009), Local Actor from Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Keegan, M. (2008), 1st Generation Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Kelly, S. (2011), Local Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Laird, B. (2011), Professional Actor, Recorded Communication.

Local Resident (2008), Refers to the many local residents this researcher talked with in Ballymun. All requested that their responses not be recorded formally, but were happy to converse off the record.

McCabe, V. (2011), Professional Actor, Recorded Communication.

Murphy, A. (2011), Local Actor from Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Ní Chonchubhair, N. (2008), Programme Manager for *axis,* Recorded Communication.

O'Brien, M. (2008), Arts Development Manager for *axis,* Recorded Communication.

O'Cuiv, R. (2009), Overview of Participatory Arts in Ireland, Recorded Communication.

O'Sullivan, D. (2011), Local Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Roe, L. (2011), Local Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Seymour, M. (2010), 2nd Generation Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

Yeates, R. (2009), Artistic Director of *axis,* Written Communication.

10 Year Old School Child (2010), 3rd Generation Resident of Ballymun, Recorded Communication.

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Woodward, K. (2002) *Understanding Identity,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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research, which, paradoxically contributes to the status of this work as a contribution to knowledge. The community is very tightly knit, for all the historical reasons explored in Chapter 7, and as the researcher's own outsider status proved somewhat problematic, considerable effort went into overcoming issues of trust, and the difficulties these led to in accessing data. Finally, the conclusions reached in this work are based on one case study, and this may mean that there are limitations on its transferability.

9.4 Areas for Further Research

While the Ballymun case study (history, regeneration, size and social demographic) is unique within an Irish context, it would be a worthwhile research exercise to locate the Ballymun story within an international frame.

This research project looked at one community theatre project within the regeneration of Ballymun, and its methods and findings point the way both to similar projects, and to research on a larger scale. For example, a more extensive project might seek to locate *The Ballymun Trilogy* in the *axis* theatre within a detailed documentation and analysis of all work produced, staged and created in the *axis* and the Ballymun community at large since the beginning of the regeneration.

A flexible template for evaluating the social impact of the arts participation needs to be devised, with the ultimate intention of producing a portfolio of work documenting best evaluating procedures for arts participation programmes.

As recognised by Bolger (2008a) and van Erven (2001), community theatre struggles to secure recognition as an area of academic research within the broader field of research in drama. This research exposes the core contribution of acts of community theatre to community identity and cohesion in areas experiencing urban regeneration, a likely widespread phenomenon in the global cities of the twenty first century. Community theatre's ability to counteract cultural erosion, a by-product of globalisation, makes the study of its processes and practices not only desirable, but absolutely necessary.

Ballymun Trilogy project would suggest that such a change in direction is indeed a good development within community theatre practices in Ireland and perhaps further afield. Research findings also indicate that there is real human enhancement arising from participation in the arts, including opportunities for personal, social and professional development of community members. These values are at least as important as any outcomes relating to economic activity or corporate profile, and are likely to be the reasons why community cohesion develops and is sustainable over a longer term. For this reason, the intrinsic value of arts practices and processes needs to be acknowledged and supported in public policy, including regeneration strategy. Local level policy development must provide for arts facilities from the outset, as happened in Ballymun. Even though there was no clear road map in the Masterplan, the local community itself had an arts provision plan, which ultimately materialised by securing funding from the EU and working closely with BRL to actually effect and implement the plans. The realisation of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre also acknowledged and integrated the need for public, communal space which enables the community to come together and share space - ultimately translating it into place.

9.3 Limitations

According to O'Toole (2006) the applied theatre field is young and therefore lacks the extensive body of research that very often accompanies older, more established arts movements. Despite this, Kershaw (1992) shows how, from the 1960s onwards, this new field of research began to flourish. This study brings together two areas of research which seldom share the same academic platform. Theatre and urban regeneration are two very different areas, and very little documentation exists that explores the relationship between them. While this posed certain challenges for the researcher initially, in sourcing material for example, the completed study offers perspectives on under-researched aspects of theatre in community contexts. Very few publications explore community theatre and globalisation, with the two most recent publications Rebellato (2009) and Lonergan (2009) failing to convincingly document the impact and consequences of globalisation on community theatre.

Three further limitations are worth noting: Ballymun is Ireland's most ambitious regeneration project ever, with no other comparable study of similar scale or social particulars available in Ireland. This resulted in a lack of directly comparable

their own stories through the arts (theatre in particular) with 90% surveyed testifying to the importance of such artistic projects.

Intention 4 draws upon the conclusions reached from the evaluation of the case study, which reveals the importance of the provision of the arts via the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. The centre's projects have been pivotal in ensuring the success of the Ballymun regeneration project, not only as a physical regeneration of the local environment and economy, but also of the social health and cultural confidence of the community. It is difficult for this researcher to conclude that there is a definite model of practice evident in the establishment of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, and transferable into other communities. While this centre has proven to be central to the success of the regeneration of the area, establishing a standard formula for practice elsewhere is always going to be problematic, as the fate of the Matarasso and DCMS evaluation models during this research demonstrates. The range of particulars associated with the Ballymun community may not exist in other communities proposed for, or undergoing regeneration, and therefore a formula modelled on the Ballymun experience may not travel well, 'you can try and transfer formula but you can never transfer the result' (Ní Chonchubhair, 2008: RC).

Despite this reservation however, this researcher concludes that the provision of art for the values intrinsic to art, will make a significant contribution to the social health of a community, and will greatly enhance individual and group experiences in areas zoned for regeneration. *The Ballymun Trilogy* demonstrates that theatre in particular, gives a community a voice, a medium through which it can have a conversation about itself with itself. Theatre also enables a community to communicate with the outside world, and place itself in relation to other communities. Theatre articulates narratives of the community and strengthens collective identity by providing opportunities to participate in shared acts of interpretation. Another significant finding from the research is the identification of a new approach in Irish community arts programmes, where there has been a shift away from the established sense of community arts as specified by O'Cuiv (2008: RC) to participatory arts. Such a shift was exemplified in the engagement of the internationally recognised playwright Dermot Bolger working directly with and for the community of Ballymun. The impact and success of *The*

assessing the social impact of arts programmes; however, no generally accepted transferable template of evaluation has been established. A broader acknowledgement of the social purpose of community theatre is offered by Kershaw (1992), Prentki and Selman (2000), Nicholson (2005) and van Erven (2001), and this researcher draws upon available templates of evaluation to investigate the social impact of arts participation. In relation to the Ballymun case study two areas were considered. First, the perception of the importance of arts provision via the *axis* centre was explored through the employment of Matarasso's (1997) template (as adapted) and the DCMS (2008) template. The research concludes that the employment of such templates as questionnaires in this study enabled a clear conclusion to be reached, whereby the provision of the arts was acknowledged by the majority of those surveyed to be very important to the health of the community. Secondly, in relation to assessing the social impact of *The Ballymun Trilogy,* a template proposed by Prentki and Selman (2000) was applied. The research indicates that such a template is suitable when evaluating a community theatre event in that it enables the entirety of the arts project from its original intention through to delivery to be assessed. Based on the limited evidence of this study, a flexible range of evaluation tools that can be applied to assess the social impact of the arts needs to be established, so that best methods of practice can become available for widespread use.

Intention 3 explores the relationship between narrative and identity and the extent to which the dramatisation of local stories acts as a form of affirmation for the people of an area, and investigates the value and purpose of community theatre as a powerful medium of communication within communities. The discussion of inter-relationships between, narrative, place and identity (see Chapter 5 (5.3-5.9)) concludes that identity formation is dependent on the establishment of cultural co-ordinates, where one can make sense of oneself in relation to space/place and others. The dramatisations of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, audience responses as recorded by this researcher, conclusions reached from the range of interviews conducted, and the afterlife of the plays, all testify to the power of stories within communities, especially communities undergoing regeneration. *The Ballymun Trilogy* speaks directly to the community about itself, enabling people collectively to acknowledge their past, present and possible future. Research data collected supports the value of communities telling

Irish practice (Norris, 2001) and has actively engaged with what Hall (2002) refers to as the 'three-way partnership' where the active and critical role of the community has been central to the implementation and success of the project (see Chapter 7 (7.4)). Apart from *axis*, the Ballymun regeneration project (1998-present) is indeed a microcosm of the 'global city' approach to regeneration. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, such an approach to regeneration may have repercussions for the people of the area in terms of eroding their local identity and introducing a threat of gentrification (as discussed in Chapter 7 (7.6)). The establishment of the *axis* centre as an accessible platform for a variety of arts events directly relevant to the community has served to reduce the erosion of local culture by exploring and celebrating who the people of Ballymun are in arts projects such as *Hotel Ballymun* and *The Ballymun Trilogy.*

Intention 2 investigates the public perception of the value of arts provision within the community, while also assessing the social impact of theatre on the community of Ballymun with particular emphasis on Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy.* Evidence from data collected from the local community suggested that while the majority of the cohort surveyed declared that there should most definitely be arts provision in the area, and that the arts contributed significantly to the social health of the community, only 20% surveyed said that they regularly attend local arts events. As noted earlier, such an apparent contradiction between high levels of positive association with arts provision and participation, and significantly lower levels of actual participation draws attention to the role of perception in Prentki and Preston's (2009) *Poetics* equation. Such a finding highlights the challenges that confront a newly established arts centre in a regeneration area. As in the Ballymun case, with neither a prior history of a dedicated arts facility nor a background of community or professional arts, translating people's positive perceptions of the arts into actual participation is very difficult. However, artistic projects such as *The Ballymun Trilogy* succeeded in drawing huge numbers of local people into the *axis* theatre. Such a mode of practice offers a very positive template for fulfilling important social goals for regeneration programmes, as it serves to build community cohesion and identity in a non-threatening and reflective manner. In relation to assessing the social impact of the arts (theatre in particular), as noted in Chapter 3 (3.16), the last quarter of a century has seen a variety of agencies throughout Europe incorporate the arts in urban regeneration programmes, producing considerable documentation in relation to

Intention 1, where Ballymun regeneration was considered as a microcosm of the 'global city' approach was discussed in detail in Chapter 7 (7.6). The state's approach to the regeneration of this part of Dublin follows trends established as central to an aspiring global city's quest to reinvent itself, and become economically and culturally competitive with other similar cities. Ballymun's (1998-present) pursuit of such a transformation may have taken place on a much smaller scale, but its close fit with the 'global city template' qualifies it as an exemplary project. The role of culture has been recognised as essential for cities seeking to successfully re-brand and re-launch themselves on the global stage, and culture (including the arts) has been central to the redevelopment and 'branding' of the new Ballymun (see section Chapter 7 (7.7 and 7.7.1)). Cultural standardisation (Hassan, 2007), a direct consequence of globalisation, is most immediately recognised in the 'placelessness' of the architecture of these newly regenerated cities. As in Ballymun, the new architecture could belong to anywhere and shows no direct attachment to the particularities or cultures of the Ballymun community (see Montague, 2008). As noted in Chapter 3 (3.5) however, the signature of a city/area lies ultimately with its inhabitants, and even if the architecture is the result of serial reproduction, the distinctiveness of the resides in the people and their culture particulars. In Ballymun, this is especially apparent in the celebration and dramatisation of the community's experiences over four years in Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy*.

Chapter 3 notes that the development of cultural industries coincides with successful urban regeneration (see 3.5-3.8), and the establishment of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre could be seen to correspond to the 'globalization response' to regeneration (Abrahamson, 2004: 4). However, the fact that the *axis* centre was initiated and realised by the community and not imposed by Dublin City Council as a non-negotiable feature of a regeneration project, suggests that the overall purpose of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre is service to the community first and foremost, and not the pursuit of commercial goals. The *axis* is an example of what Stern and Seifert (2008: 1) would call a 'culture-based revitalization from the bottom-up', where the 'shallow' use of the arts solely for economic gain (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993) is evaded. Ballymun's current regeneration project (1998-present) has been recognised from an early stage as 'progressive' in terms of

power on the part of theatre, to provide a public platform to a community for its multiple voices to be heard in this globalised era. The attempt to arrive at a rounded understanding of *The Ballymun Trilogy* raised issues around sociological and aesthetic categorisation, since the community of Ballymun could be defined as a community of locality, while also satisfying Delanty's (2003) definition of community of ideology. Mapping Bolger's work onto templates offered by McGrath (1981) and Prentki and Selman (2000) reveals ideological similarities between Bolger's work and the alternative theatre movement of the 20th century. The onset of the current wave of urban regeneration has posed new considerations for defining community theatre as a practice, and the analysis of Bolger's work exposes the complexity of community theatre as a self-contained category. The broad definition of community theatre as theatre made 'for/by/with' a community, offered by Prentki and Preston (2009), has had to be renegotiated in this study to accommodate the work of Bolger and the community of Ballymun. It has been concluded that this new approach to community theatre prefigures one direction for the development of community theatre in the 21st century. *The Ballymun Trilogy* is both a direct response to the cultural pressures communities find themselves under, and a successful disruption of one direct consequence of globalisation (as noted in Chapter 2), the erosion of particular local identities and cultural practices.

9.2 Major Findings and Recommendations

While this study was broad in scope, four clearly identified intentions were central to the research,

1. To examine the extent to which the Ballymun regeneration may be seen as a microcosm of the 'global city' regeneration approach.
2. To investigate the perceived value of arts provision in Ballymun, while also considering the social impact of theatre on the community of Ballymun with particular reference to Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* (2004-2008).
3. To explore relationships between narrative and identity, to establish the extent to which dramatisation of local stories may act as a form of affirmation for the people of the area in their particular struggles.
4. To make recommendations in relation to the efficacy of arts provision within an area zoned for regeneration.

Conclusion

9.1 Summary of Study

This study examined the role of community theatre within an urban community undergoing regeneration at the beginning of the 21st century. The current phase of globalisation has prompted reconsideration of the meaning and legitimacy of social networks which are commonly taken to constitute 'community'. The complexity of defining community preoccupies Chapter 2, where it was established that pressures from the impact of globalisation have urged scholars to redefine what community actually means in contemporary rhetoric, organised around a dichotomy of communities of location and communities of ideology. It was noted that one of the most evident and direct consequences of globalisation in the western world is the pursuit by cities of 'global status' (Sassen, 2001), a pursuit which has fuelled an era of widespread urban regeneration. The role played by the arts and culture in supporting such endeavours has underpinned much of this research. The commodification of culture for economic purposes (place promotion, tourism, etc) has been understood as a key symptom of the neo-liberal approach to urban regeneration projects. This study, while acknowledging the possible economic advantages of cultural commodification, has been more concerned with evaluating the social impact of the provision of arts within an area undergoing regeneration, encluding its perceived value among the local population. The chosen case study, Ballymun Regeneration Project (1998 to the present) has enabled this researcher to illustrate how trends identified in the literature review (Chapter 2 (2.5)) play out in practice. This study offers an intensive, in-depth interrogation of a selected community undergoing regeneration, with particular focus on the significance for the community of arts provision, via the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. One artistic project in particular – *The Ballymun Trilogy* by Dermot Bolger (2004-2008), provided a suitable opportunity to examine and document the particularities and complexities of a unique dramatic project positioned at the very heart of the community of Ballymun. This study locates both *The Ballymun Trilogy* and the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre in the broader theoretical field of applied theatre (with reference to work by Kershaw, 1992, Nicholson, 2005; van Erven 2001, and others). The interaction of narrative, identity formation and place which has informed the overall analysis, suggests an eduring

community. Secondly, *axis* adopted the highly unusual practice of combining the arts centre with the community resource centre, fostering an integrated role for the arts in the everyday lives of local people.

Throughout this study, the social role of theatre is questioned in light of the impact of globalisation on urban environments. Characteristically, the art form is 'live, local and public' and, for some, it has 'the potential to disrupt the homogenising tendencies associated with globalisation' (Nicholson, 2009: 44). *The Ballymun Trilogy* responds to all these characterisations. Otherwise, it is not so easily categorised, as it blurs the boundaries between working class theatre and middle class theatre as defined by McGrath (1981), ideas of popular theatre as defined by Prentki and Selman (2000), and broader categories of community theatre as defined by van Erven (2001). The plays share with all these models one distinguishing feature however, and that is their perceived status in relation to mainstream theatre. Bolger (2008a: 254) writes of a lack of recognition for *The Ballymun Trilogy*, where despite its success on a national and international scale, individual plays and the trilogy itself were repeatedly turned down by the Dublin Theatre Festival, have never transferred to any mainstream Dublin venues, and have seen some Irish critics refusing to attend performances at the *axis*. van Erven (2001: 2) suggests that such disregard is characteristic of mainstream responses to community theatre in general, and seeks to confine its practices to the periphery of canonised cultural endeavours. In consequence, its artefacts are denied recognition by cultural theorists and theatre scholars, thus strengthening what seems to be the impenetrable shell of the traditional (even conservative) canon of critical practice in drama - a fact which sharpens the need for research of this nature.

enabled this researcher to establish with confidence perceptions of the benefits of arts participation within a community undergoing regeneration and the efficacy of community theatre as a means of enabling a community to have a conversation with itself, encouraging community cohesion and strengthening collective identity.

The Ballymun Trilogy challenges existing classifications of community theatre. Its importance in the context of the regeneration of Ballymun, and the development of policy and practice at the *axis* Centre has been shown. Both its form and the circumstances of its production and reception are innovative and intimately tied to people and place. Local perceptions of the quality and value of the work are very positive, and the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy* in the *axis* theatre has, in its turn, had a significant positive impact on the self-perception of the community of Ballymun. This research points to a conclusion on the provision and role of an arts facility in an area undergoing regeneration, which needs to be clearly set out: it is not enough to parachute in a venue offering cultural packages as part of an overall regeneration plan. The success of a centre, in terms of its impact on community cohesion depends on its commitment to producing work which gives the community a voice and a platform on which to be heard. The centre must not just be a receiving venue that fails to create its own original work, and must foster local participatory arts. *The Ballymun Trilogy* in the *axis* theatre was itself unique in many ways, and particular to the people of Ballymun, but its success testifies strongly to the benefits to the community of a producing arts centre in an area undergoing regeneration.

This research also concludes that while there is extensive activity within the community theatre sector, methods of evaluation which expose and respect the nature and integrity of the experience being evaluated need to be documented, shared, and acknowledged. It has been noted that the nature of community theatre projects requires forms of evaluation that address the entirety of the project, from its inception, taking account of intention, to its realisation through to reflection. While the regeneration programme of Ballymun is unique in the Irish context for reasons mentioned earlier, perhaps what is ultimately significant about the project is the integrated and central position of the *axis* centre. This research concludes that this is due to a combination of two features: firstly, *axis* was the initiative of the community from the outset and therefore there is a real sense of ownership from within the

> great feeling; people were amazed I was going to be in it. It was such a special time of my life.
> They seemed to just take to me I was blown away in awe of them but they didn't look down on me actually they were very encouraging, supportive and loving. I felt very special and proud to be among them also privileged. We sat and talked like normal people drinking tea or coffee. It took me a long time to realise exactly who they were. When that dawned on me it overwhelmed me but made me feel important.

Hickey's (2009) and Murphy's (2011) personal stories illustrate the range of potential benefits that arts provision can bring to individuals within a community undergoing regeneration. As recognised earlier, arts provision within urban regeneration projects is very often associated with economic gains to an area, however these personal stories testify to both the social gains of arts provision and the human value of arts participation. In-depth accounts such as the above, coupled with data generated through surveys and reports go some way towards documenting the complex and multilayered task of evaluating what a phrase like 'the social impact of arts participation' actually means.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has made use of Prentki and Preston's (2009) model of poetics to demonstrate that the social capital which is to be gained by the provision of arts participation projects within communities undergoing regeneration is real and must be highlighted alongside the economic benefits of such projects. While the study acknowledges the necessity of arts participation projects being economically viable, it is the human value of such projects that has preoccupied this chapter. The advantages of communities collectively sharing stories which contribute to strengthening their sense of identity and attachment to place has been demonstrated. Assessing the social impact of the artistic project *The Ballymun Trilogy*, alongside a more general discussion of the perception of the value of arts provision via the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre echoes Kershaw's (1992: 16) study of the value of examining an individual performance programme on a 'micro-level' within a broader frame, 'macro-level' of the community theatre movement as a whole. Denscombe (2003: 30) takes a similar view, suggesting that it is possible and most effective to 'illuminate the general by looking at the particular'. The power of carefully chosen personal testimonies, coupled with comments elicited from the local people has

her own life and the fictional life of the character in the play, were in fact according to Murphy (2011: RC), therapeutic for her as

> it fit my character very well and to be honest to this I believe *These Green Heights* saved me and my life as I know it to be now, thank God, as it allowed me to express embedded emotions that not even the rape crisis centre could help me with although they were very good too.

The opportunity for the girls to work along side professionals in the field was one which they cherished and really benefited from. Hickey (2009: RC) recalls how such experiences were pivotal in encouraging her to pursue further education,

> With the advice and guidance from the professionals I had worked alongside, I decided to try to further my actor training and return to third level education. Prior to the *The Townlands of Brazil*, I had given up on education and decided it wasn't for me, but the experience proved to me that it wasn't third level itself that was wrong rather my course choices. Through listening to the wrong advice previously I had rubbished the idea of drama/theatre as a degree subject choice yet following the experience on *The Townlands of Brazil* not only have I pursued a drama degree I am currently living in Liverpool studying on a course which I discovered during a tour of another play written by Dermot Bolger and commissioned by axis *Walking the Road* which became available to me through my previous professional experience with the axis in-house production company. This play was also directed by Ray Yeates.

Murphy (2011) speaks of how the prospect of working with professionals in the field was a very daunting one for her initially, but how in fact it turned but to be a most fulfilling experience,

> My initial thoughts were of admiration for the real people of the story, for the actors I was surrounded by, Dermot Bolger, Ray and Mark they were all so accepting of me and were very good to me. I was very proud and fascinated but there was a huge ball of nerves racing throughout my body and mind how big this actually was. I didn't feel I deserved it and was beside myself with worry and joy. People began to talk about it. There was a hum in the air. I was terrified of making a mistake and what these high rise actors thought of me but Ray worked with me and handled me and my personality very well. I began to feel very new in myself. It was a

> for this new discipline. This filtered into my own work and strengthened me as a person, and allowed me to make this risky decision of making this art form my vocation.
>
> (Hickey, 2011: RC)

Murphy's (2011) background was somewhat different to that of Hickey's as she had no previous experience of drama/theatre practice but was active in other arts such as painting and writing. Due to her interests in the arts, she got a work placement in the *axis* centre and from there she met Yeates and sat in on rehearsals for the first play in *The Trilogy,*

> *These Green Heights* had been auditioned for. I didn't really understand what was going on. I was completely unaware of how big this all was. I was just thrilled to be there me working with Ray and the team, I could not believe it .When they had most of their actors the time came to rehearse the script I was fast becoming aware how big it was especially on that first day meeting the actors. Wow. Ray invited me down to meet with them and fill in for a missing person not found yet. I agreed of course and then after a while he asked me to play the part. I was so over whelmed with excitement but also a lot of fear.
>
> (Murphy, 2011: RC)

Hickey (2009) was very conscious of performing a play about her own community back to that community and the responsibility she felt that the depiction be accurate,

> With *The Townlands of Brazil* I felt extremely honoured to be working on a project that centred on the past and present of the place I was born and raised. It was exciting, from a personal perspective, to delve into the history of Ballymun, and look at the impact Ballymun's constant redevelopment has had on the people who most feel the benefits and repercussions – the locals. I was also very happy to be tackling the very current situation of the immigrant population and to work on a play which served as a gentle poetic reminder of the similarities, we as an Irish population, have shared with our new immigrant population. It felt like I was serving my own community well.
>
> (Hickey, 2011: RC)

Murphy (2011) 'based my character on real life experience' of the misfortune and challenges she had to confront as a young person growing up in Ballymun, with crime, drugs and abuse being a devastating reality for her. The similarities between

immediate project and its impact on a broader scale. In making use of Prentki and Selman's (2000) template, the researcher faces the reality that only persons intimately involved with the detail of the work will be able to provide the rich data which the template is designed to expose. For this reason, it is most usefully used as a particularly valuable component of a mixed-methods approach, and this is the approach taken in this study. As this project spanned a four year period, Yeates was the only person who was qualified to answer it as he was the artistic director who oversaw the entirety of the project from beginning to end. When combined with a range of other sources - in depth interviews, surveys, reports, observation records and critical literature, the application of this template makes a significant contribution to the overall findings. The social impacts that are sustained beyond the project (Reeves, 2002), are particularly evident in the case of local actors, Kelly Hickey and A. Murphy, and the impact that participating in *The Ballymun Trilogy* has had on their lives. In conversation with Hickey (2009) and Murphy (2011) the impact of the provision of such arts projects within a community undergoing regeneration became evident. The democratic approach to casting, as employed by Yeates, enabled two local girls to participate in professional productions, telling the stories of their own community. The experience for the two individuals has had different effects, with Murphy staying within the community of Ballymun and anticipating a possible revival of the plays and a tour to America, and Hickey ultimately going to third level education to pursue an honours degree in performing arts.

When the two girls were offered the opportunity to work on a professional production in their own community theatre, they both were delighted and recognised the value of such an opportunity,

> To be a local girl from Ballymun, with previous experience being mainly youth theatre and T.I.E. [Theatre in Education] the transition to the professional stage was an extremely daunting one. It was clear from an early stage that this was a whole new discipline that required rapid adaptation. To move from hanging around on the blocks, to suddenly acting alongside people who flashed on the t.v. screens on a daily basis was such a massive transition, one which served as a constant reminder of just how huge this opportunity was for me. Working with the professionals provided me with a chance to observe them in rehearsals, to journey with them through their work process and learn new skills

when taken together with aspects of the analysis undertaken by this researcher in the quest to define Bolger's work (see section 8.3). The question itself draws attention specifically to the aesthetic decisions reached in the course of the project, and asks the respondent to consider the implications of choices made in relation to dramatic narrative. This is an interesting point when considered in a broader frame of critical discussion of theatre. Yeates refers to the somewhat episodic nature of Bolger's work and claims that such a style sits comfortably within Irish theatre tradition, serving the fifty-year range of the overall dramatic narratives well. This suggests an interesting dialectic at work, with a more traditional means of dramatic representation juxtaposed with the more radical social intentions of the work, and embodied in the mix of amateur and professional actors, for instance. Point 6 requires the respondent to reflect on 'The Nature of the Audience', and is particularly important to this research. In responding, Yeates poses bigger questions about the meaning of the word 'community' (resonating with the focus of Chapter 2) and verifies that a working class theatre, producing a specifically local theatrical project, *The Ballymun Trilogy,* achieves a highly unusual mixture in its auditorium with local people, regular theatre-goers and a wider population. Reference was made earlier to the many schemes employed by the *axis* to ensure that members of the community who don't necessarily consider themselves theatre goers, have an alternative reason for attending the theatre, such as a benefit night for the local school and sports clubs. Such actions promote community involvement, sustain the sense of community ownership within the centre, and resonate with Kershaw's (1992) idea of democracy of culture. As to the broader population, Yeates argues that it was Dermot Bolger's status and achievement as a playwright which was the key factor in attracting them to the plays. Among this mix of spectators, Yeates testifies to the sense of community forged in relation to the communal act of sharing the space and the dramatic experience.

This template does not just produce data on the 'product' – in this case *The Ballymun Trilogy* – in isolation, but places the project within a broader social framework. The structure of the model and progression of questions, as answered by Yeates, testifies to the efficacy of the trigger questions in terms of eliciting information on both the entirety of the project and particular significant effects in the moments of dramatic presentation. When asked to comment on the suitability of such a template, Yeates was very positive and emphasised how its application enabled him to focus on the

The application of Prentki and Selman's (2000) template to *The Ballymun Trilogy* has enabled a form of social analysis to be documented that exposes the impact of *The Ballymun Trilogy* during its staging, and its subsequent legacy. The first point of reflection, 'the work's intentions' embeds in the research tool a sensitivity to a key concern in MacIntyre's (2007) work, and requires the respondent to consider the major issues associated with work of this nature and its ultimate impact on the community. Yeates emphasises a commitment to the project's producing long term effects which benefit the community at large. From the outset, the project was socially targeted toward enabling the development of professional theatre practices within the community as vital in nurturing local talent, as in the case of the actors Kelly Hickey and A. Murphy. Point 2 encourages the respondent to examine 'the context' in which the work is being pursued. This is especially important to this research, given earlier references to the value and need of a community collectively sharing stories and remembering its past. Yeates links the potential of an artistic project of this nature to evoke critical and historical consciousness to the central role of the arts in the regeneration programme. Point 3 – 'the process', is a particularly interesting factor to evaluate in community based projects because it offers an insight, not only into the finished product, but also into the processes involved, and the ultimate aims and objectives of such a process. Yeates' response highlights the democratic, even novel, approach that was employed by the *axis.* Such a commitment to nurturing local talent and supplying a platform on which local people could begin a professional career as an artist is a concrete example of the *axis* striving to realise its own manifesto commitment to place the 'community at its heart' (www.aixs-ballymun.ie). Point 4 – 'the relationship of its creators to the material and to the community which is most involved' invites reflection on the relationship between the creators and the community. Yeates' response emphasises the influence the production team's past experiences had on *The Ballymun Trilogy* with reference to a concern with 'social justice' informing all of the creators' work. The decision to cast amateur actors alongside professional actors reflects this, and makes the production unusually democratic and accessible in its approach, in contrast with mainstream practices. Reflecting on point 5 – 'the forms used', Yeates' comments are given added authority

A purpose built theatre and arts centre. A Government funded Regeneration in which the arts are central. A new beginning that remembered past difficulties and losses.

3. The PROCESS that is undertaken

Casting involved identifying the best actors with the understanding and sensitivity to the area and its challenges and the vocational ability to work alongside local people making their debuts in smaller roles.

4. The RELATIONSHIP OF ITS CREATORS to the material and to the community which is most involved.

Dermot Bolger, Ray Yeates, Mark O'Brien, Marie Tierney and Conleth Whyte have long histories in theatre that engages with themes of social justice. These values were reflected strongly in the cast. These were plays about Ballymun premiered in Ballymun with a highly experienced team with good resources, well used.

5. The FORMS used.

The narrative storytelling form coupled with scenes and vignettes underpinned by strong characters is quintessentially Irish and universal on the Irish stage until relatively recently. This traditional approach served the historical nature of the first play well, was difficult to sustain in the second and was altered to a more filmic approach in the third.

6. The NATURE OF THE AUDIENCE.

Audiences at axis have combined social and economic classes of people in a way rarely seen in Ireland. Dermot Bolger was one of the few authors who could set this context. So it was for the trilogy local people ordinary theatre goers checking out Axis and the wider population of the north west of Dublin. This democratic sense of community is difficult to analyse but is a commonly reported experience by those who attend theatre in axis.

professional debut with the project, Ms Kelly Hickey and Ms A. Murphy (name changed by request).

In conversation with Ray Yeates, it was revealed that there was no formal in-house evaluation of any of the plays in *The Trilogy* other than quantitative methods such as house numbers and group bookings. The success of the project was measured by a mix of box office statistics, and general perceptions of how audiences responded to the plays, based on comments, audience reaction, etc. noted by *axis* personnel. This situation, where there is no formal documentation for evaluation purposes, and perceptions of the success of projects depends on institutional knowledge held among employees of the *axis* theatre, reflects a more general lack of rigorous evaluation of arts projects, identified by Reeves (2002). Having considered the nature of Bolger's work and its affiliation to models of community theatre, this researcher selected Prentki and Selman's (2000) template of evaluation (as referred to in Chapter 3 (3.9.2)) and applied it to *The Ballymun Trilogy* project. Prentki and Selman's (2000) template enables evaluation of the project in its entirety from its conception, intention, through to delivery. For an accurate evaluation of the large scale project, the artistic director of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, and director of *The Ballymun Trilogy* Mr Ray Yeates was seen as the key respondent, as he was the core member of the artistic team involved with all three plays, and he was fully responsible as director of *The Trilogy* for the project's delivery and overview. Yeates responded to Prentki and Selman's (2000) template thus:

Table 8.1 Yeates' (2009) Application of Prentki and Selman's (2000) Popular Theatre Evaluation Template to *The Ballymun Trilogy*

1. The work's INTENTIONS.

To begin the process of developing professional theatre production and practice in Ballymun that was appropriate to the area and the Regeneration.

2. The CONTEXT within which the work is being pursued.

problem in that, because each of the points were worded so positively and were so general, the response from those surveyed was 100% in agreement with the manifesto. While this researcher is not suggesting that research findings overwhelmingly in favour of or against the particular topic under scrutiny should always be disregarded, it was decided for the reasons just mentioned, that on this occasion the research tool might not have enabled a reliable reflection of the opinions being sought. This prompted this researcher to question the value of the questionnaires referred to as *Arts Participation Questionnaire* (Appendix 2) and *Arts Contribution to Building Community Pride Questionnaire* (Appendix 4) as tools of research. Having arrived at unsatisfactory results, this researcher formulated original questionnaires (see Appendix 1 and 3) with a view to enabling the participants to reflect more comprehensively on their relationship to Ballymun, arts provision within the regeneration project and *The Ballymun Trilogy.*

Arts provision for the community of Ballymun via the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre has been discussed previously in Chapter 7 (7.9), and the study now focuses on the task of assessing the social impact of the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy.* It has been reported already, within this body of research, that several benefits are made available to a community from collectively sharing stories, including affirmation of collective memory (Jenkins, 1996) and strengthening of group identity (Conway, 2008). Reeves (2002) suggests that 'impact' implies the effects that are sustained beyond the actual arts experience (in this case the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy)* and how such experiences have resonance with the life activities and processes of the individuals involved. While this researcher conducted general research into the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy* (employing questionnaires, observation records and interviews) it was found that the most effective tool of research was lengthy one-to-one interviews with people who were directly involved with the project. These in-depth interviews enabled the identification of the social 'impacts' that were sustained beyond the actual project of *The Ballymun Trilogy.* Many people associated with the project were interviewed, but the research is particularly informed by five interviews which document the thoughts of the artistic director of *The Ballymun Trilogy,* Mr Ray Yeates, two professional actors associated with *The Trilogy,* Mr Vinnie McCabe and Mr Brendan Laird (both of whom have been quoted in the discussion earlier) and two of the local actors who made their

> likely really to go to the theatre, who most often acknowledge that 'the theatre *elevates* the mind'.
>
> (Bourdieu cited in Merli, 2004: 2 [emphasis in original])

This phenomenon appears in this study in the apparent paradox of high approval for arts events among those with low attendance or participation rates (see Chapter 7). As this research is interested in documenting the perceived value of arts participation within a community, the decision to adapt Matarasso's six findings into questionnaire format was taken because it was felt that Matarasso's (1997) summary enabled a concise overview of arts participation to be communicated in six succinct points. This questionnaire was then employed in the service of assessing the perception of arts' value within the Ballymun community, the basis of the *Arts Participation Questionnaire* (see Appendix 2). The actual wording of Matarasso's (1997) findings was put as a set of questions to the people of Ballymun. One possible limitation emerged in that where participants disagreed with a statement, they seemed reluctant to risk being interpreted as being negative, a problem identified by Merli (2004: 2), 'if one answers "no" it might seem that one was not able to grasp the opportunity of doing something creative and becoming more confident, thus some respondents may answer "yes" just to protect their own sense of self-worth'. The positive phrasing of his statements was such that this researcher found that the majority surveyed responded positively, and only succeeded in confirming sweeping generalisations that failed to contribute any significant new insights to the field, (see Appendix 2, Figures A2.A, A2.B, A2.C, A2.D, A2.E, A2.F). What is interesting about the findings of this particular questionnaire is that the questions are so general and positive, that while the majority surveyed agreed with the findings, the second highest percentage demonstrated that people were unsure of what such sweeping, general statements actually meant. A very small percentage overall were negative, which suggests that even though Matarasso's (1997) template was adapted for this study in order to establish people's perception of the value of the arts, Merli's (2004) criticism is borne out by this researcher's findings.

Similar findings were obtained when this researcher drew upon the DCMS 2008 manifesto for *Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion* (as referred to in Chapter 3; see also Appendix 4). When the five central points of the manifesto were reformulated into a questionnaire, this researcher was confronted with a similar

evaluating the social impact of *The Ballymun Trilogy* as an artistic project within a broader regeneration scheme is central to this researcher, a general response to the provision of arts within the Ballymun community was outlined initially, enabling a broader picture of the role of arts within the community to be established (as discussed earlier). The decision to concentrate on evaluating the impact of one out of a number of possible arts participation projects implemented via the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre annually, was undertaken due to the unique and complex nature of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, its development over a four year period, and the strength of response to it within the community, witnessed and documented by this researcher.

Research in Ballymun, which was predominantly concerned with evaluating the perception of the value and role of arts within a community, suggests that many of the established templates for evaluating arts participation within communities (Matarasso, 1997; DCMS, 2004) fall short of representing a true reflection of the perceived reality of the situation. Matarasso's (1997) template emerged from the first British government-backed national project to formulate a general template that applicable to arts participation projects in community settings. Merli (2004:1) recognises the status that Matarasso's (1997) template has secured: 'While earlier publications on the social impact of the arts had attracted relatively little attention, Matarasso's study has played an important role in establishing a near-consensus in Britain among cultural policy makers'. She is quick to point out, however, that there are significant methodological problems attached to his study. One such problem was the wording of Matarasso's questions, and his insistence that respondents must be subjective in their responses as opposed to objective. She questions his choice of language and suggests that 'the wording of questions in Matarasso's questionnaire may actually have led respondents to biased answers' (Merli, 2004: 2). She supports such a claim by drawing on Bourdieu's work *Distinction – A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979),

> The imposition of legitimacy in the course of the survey is such that, if one is not careful, one may, as many cultural surveys have done, *produce* declarations of principle which correspond to no real practice [...] it is no accident that it is the culturally most deprived, the oldest, those further from Paris, in short those least

project is unique in time and place. This fact alone would require the reworking and adaptation of any central template to accommodate the specific contexts and purposes of the arts project in question. Despite such reservations however, Reeves (2002: 66) does acknowledge the need to develop a collection of 'comprehensive, robust and comparable methodologies for evaluating arts effectiveness, and toolkits for promoting and sharing best practice'.

A number of existing evaluation templates were referred to in Chapter 3 (3.9.1), with particular emphasis on Matarasso's (1997) work. For the purpose of this research, two distinct areas were selected for evaluation. Firstly, people's perception of the value of arts provision and participation within the community of Ballymun was addressed and secondly, Prentki and Selman's (2000) evaluation template was applied to the artistic project *The Ballymun Trilogy.* To assess the perception of arts provision/participation within the regeneration programme of Ballymun in-depth interviews were conducted and supported by views offered by the general public via questionnaires. Matarasso's (1997) six findings from his national survey of arts participation in Britain were adapted for this study, alongside the DCMS 2008 *Manifesto for Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion,* where the five central points were reformulated into a questionnaire and specifically targeted at the people who are directly responsible for arts provision within Ballymun (BRL and *axis* personnel). Comment will be made on the suitability and effectiveness of such evaluative templates as tools of research, and, as all templates use the term 'participatory arts', it is important for this researcher to examine the meaning of such a term in relation to Bolger's work. As was seen in Chapter 4 (4.5), An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council of Ireland has in the last decade officially replaced the phrase 'community arts' with the term 'participatory arts'. The principal function of participatory arts, as recognised within the community theatre arena, is empowerment, (see Kershaw, 1992; Prentki and Selman, 2000). According to this criterion, audiences for *The Ballymun Trilogy* could be said to be empowered participants, as they are the source of the narrative, and by the collective act of witnessing their shared history dramatised on the community stage, a form of affirmation for them as a community and their past struggles takes place, with the therapeutic benefit of collectively sharing stories contributing to the community's sense of a shared identity. Casting decisions meant that the act of 'participating' was very much a reality for the local actors concerned. While

Selman (2000), Prentki and Preston (2009), Boler (cited in Nicholson, 2005: 78)). It is of passing interesting to note that even though the narratives are intimately particular to the local community, the plays have since been successfully staged elsewhere in Ireland, in Poland, Spain and America, 'The more local you get, the more universal something becomes' (Bolger cited in Keating 2006: 2).

This section has documented insights offered by a range of people who were directly involved in *The Trilogy,* and also referred to statements made by the general public. The next section explores the viability of available methods of evaluation to assess the social impact of the overall project, as referred to in Chapter 3.

8.4.2 Assessing Social Impact

Chapter 3 documents the contemporary trend in urban regeneration programmes toward the recognition and employment of the power of culture. The discussion acknowledges the economic advantages of culture-led regeneration, which in turn contribute significantly to improving the social aspects of urban living. Drawing on a number of sources (Reeves, 2002; Diamond and Liddle, 2005 and Abrahamson 2004), it has been noted that in regeneration projects, the arts are very often employed in the service of something other than the art form itself, and that many arts projects are used to achieve social objectives. Questions as to why arts provision is important in urban regeneration zones have been addressed, with issues concerning the evaluation and documentation of social impact preoccupying the closing section of Chapter 3 (3.9.1). The conclusion reached suggests that while there are a number of templates available to evaluate arts participation projects in urban areas undergoing regeneration, there is no universally accepted template for measuring the social impact of the arts. This exposes the difficulty of trying to evaluate a social art form, where issues concerning the judgement of value and interpretation are raised. Evaluation is important for encouraging critical reflection on the art form for the benefit of the facilitators/practitioners, but primarily it is a requirement of funding bodies. Reeves (2002) cautions against the very idea of trying to develop a universal template for arts participation, emphasising that most art forms are interdisciplinary in nature and therefore cannot be isolated as independent entities. This idea is developed further by Moriarty (1998), who suggests that it is futile to try to formulate an over-arching template for evaluating the social impact of participation in the arts, as each

> character where she had to go to England to have the baby and escape the nuns.

Bolger (2008c: RC) comments on how theatre in particular is a medium which invites people to respond to, and openly discuss what they have collectively witnessed on the stage. Out of all the art forms it is in that sense, according to Bolger, the most democratic and the most suited to igniting community discussion,

> I think theatre works well. I mean because it's live. There's engagement with it. You meet the actors after it. I think if you read a novel it's individual, also because it's [theatre] a communal thing. I think if we go and go with, you know one hundred and fifty other people to a performance in the same area, into a darkened space and something happens that relates to that life, there's a dynamic at work there. That's very exciting for the cast. And if it goes wrong it goes disastrously wrong.
>
> (Bolger, 2008c: RC)

While the following comment offered by Bolger (2008c: RC) may not be an impartial statement due to his involvement with the project, his essential point is supported by this researcher's observation record of the first play *From These Green Heights.* Bolger speaks of the overall reaction the first play received from the predominantly local audience,

> It was received very well actually. It was received very, very well. It was, there wasn't a night went that it didn't get a standing ovation, you know? And there probably wasn't a night when somebody didn't cry during it. People were affected by it in different ways.
> So it was pressure as a playwright, that was when the play went very well, people cried every night, gave it standing ovation and things, it was actually a nice experience because you sort of felt that you had actually, that this was a more understanding audience, than maybe another theatre audience who had just gone to the play and who doesn't want to be emotionally involved in it.
>
> (Bolger, 2008c: RC)

Such a statement stresses how effective a play is if the narrative is directly relevant to the community, and the place of performance is within their own area. Such factors are embedded in the popular theatre practice as discussed earlier and reaffirm Bolger's work as that which is in keeping with such practices, (See Prentki and

Laird (2011: RC) acknowledges that local cast members have access to more insightful and truthful reflection from the general public, as they are representative of that community and therefore perhaps more open to direct and uncensored comment due to their insider status. The amateur actor Michael Byrne (Sam, *The Consequences of Lightning)* had a direct link to the community,

> The comments were generally of a positive nature, Michael Byrne had a direct line with those who would offer criticism e.g. 'Ballymunners don't talk like that' but the strength of Dermot's writing along with Ray Yeates' direction offered another perspective to those who were aware of the negative view of Ballymun. The audience's vocal participation was a very strong indication of the level of engagement and that has now become a regular feature in the *axis*, particularly for actors who don't always get that type of reaction.
>
> (Laird, 2011: RC)

Other local amateur actors, who participated in *The Trilogy,* were also the recipients of uncensored comments, and their testaments provide a very valuable resource for this researcher. Murphy (2011: RC) records how,

> Many people were very vocal to me about my part and how they felt. Some of the things they said really touched my very being like 'My God it was so intense', 'My hair was standing on the back of my neck'. Some embraced me. I was overwhelmed. I was congratulated by many people young and old, they remarked at how they felt emotionally at the scene which sometimes brought me to tears myself during the play and after. Everyone was talking about it [the play]. The older crowd remembered it and felt our people were finally heard and also portrayed very well. The younger were blown away by the whole play and the very fact it was real, it happened.

Hickey (2009: RC) also refers to the feedback she received, and emphasised that the majority of comments were extremely positive,

> A lot of people felt that it was their story being told and were really happy about how they have been depicted. People found the contrast of the tough times the Irish went through in the 1960s is reflective of what the local Polish population in Ballymun are going through now, and therefore challenging stereotyping. As the character of Eileen, I got a lot of responses particularly from older ladies because they identified with the plight of my

Generally, feedback from individuals, reports and reviews tended to be very positive about Bolger's *Trilogy* plays, however one dissenting voice was articulated by the professional actor Vinnie McCabe,

> By way of information I should inform you that in the end I pulled out of the final part of Bolger's trilogy as it descended into a Mills and Boon type masquerade (Ballymoon) which served no-one well and sabotaged any prospect for a radical addressing of the social, cultural and economic landscape of the half started, half finished, half conceived and half deluded reality that is called Ballymun. (McCabe, 2011: RC)

What is interesting about this statement is that it runs contrary to the observations made by this researcher in the auditorium of the *axis* theatre. As noted earlier there was an overwhelming emotional response to the final play with the majority of the audience in tears by the final curtain. McCabe's (2011) suggestion that this play was something of a 'Mills and Boon' which failed to critique the more serious issues, as identified by McCabe, of the half started, half finished Ballymun is interesting. It could be concluded that McCabe's perception of the purpose of community theatre adheres to van Erven's (2001) central idea of explicit 'socio-cultural intervention', where theatre is recognised as a powerful medium to critique the current circumstance/reality of that community and provoke the spectators into action. However, as stated earlier the real strength in Bolger's work was its ability to give the Ballymun community a platform to dramatise their own stories and to collectively engage in remembering the past, recognising the present and anticipating the future. In Bolger's storytelling theatre the emphasis is on the act of communal reflection rather than social/cultural/ economic intervention. The benefits of such theatre have been acknowledged in earlier discussions; suffice it to say here that while Bolger's work may not conform completely to more deliberately radical definitions of community theatre discussed by van Erven (2001) and Kershaw (1992), it does reflect other influential models of practice such as popular theatre defined by Prentki and Selman (2000), aspects of McGrath (1981) and community based performance categorised by Cohen –Cruz (2005), where the power of storytelling is in itself recognised as an effective and powerful means for community identification.

> The predominant feedback was attentiveness and laughter. There were examples of inexperienced audience members answering mobile calls during the play, but this was not a regular occurrence and did not disturb the performance but maybe unsettled the audience a little. For the most part they were young people and it was good to see them there.
>
> (McCabe, 2011: RC)

Laird (2011: RC) also refers to the inexperienced audience with observations similar to those documented by this researcher, and reported in Chapter 6,

> There were instances during the run of *Consequences* where some of the audience (Shangan Ladies' Club) would comment as I was making an entrance- 'Ah here he is again, Moneybags'. When I was trying to 'get back' with my ex (Anne O'Neill) in another scene, the audience (women again) would freely comment with things like, 'She doesn't want anything to do with him', etc.

As noted in the earlier section on 'Application', the challenge confronting the playwright as 'outsider' was one of representation and how his depictions of local people would be perceived by the audience. This research reveals that firstly, the majority of the local people surveyed (45 participants) were of the opinion that plays such as those in *The Ballymun Trilogy* are important for telling the story of the community (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.J). Such statistics are supported by the data collected through interviews with local people, all of whom (those who attended the play(s)) expressed similar attitudes, Roe (2011: RC) 'I enjoyed the plays, if anyone had a problem with how his characters from Ballymun were presented then they should not go to the theatre. Characters are fictional, stories come from experience or word of ear' and,

> I thought the characters were very well displayed. I felt a sense of truth and justification having seen them, having seen so many shows where we had been seen as 'second class citizens'. I didn't feel like 'Ballymunners' were being portrayed in a certain way that people may see them. Just more of some fantastic, honest performances. Speaking for myself, I wanted to know more about Ballymun's history having seen these shows.
>
> (O'Sullivan, 2011: RC).

reviews, were a central component of this research. Generally, local people were very positive about the plays with comments such as those offered by Hanaphy (2010: RC) typical of the majority of those recorded for this study 'I really enjoyed the plays. I went with friends, and all of them were happy with how Balllymun was represented' and 'I learned a lot about the history of Ballymun through *Townlands* in particular. It was really important that it wasn't just about the people from Ballymun but also the people who have moved into our area'. Similar sentiments are expressed by Murphy (2011: RC),

> I feel it was very apt and true to life. I saw *The Consequences of Lightning* it had me laughing and crying so much, very effective acting wired with emotions like electricity. I believe all the plays process this magnitude. From the writing to the directing to the actors it was all very well done. Some of these problems still exist to this very day and we continue to change and grow despite the hardships. Ye have to take the good with the bad. The strength of the people is alive in these plays.

Bolger also comments on how local audience members identified with the plays and vocally responded as the action unfolded,

> So you are trying to create a piece of theatre that is true to Ballymun [...] and I remember one night and now there's a line in the play [*From These Green Heights*] early on where Christy is out of work and he says something like "you go to the FAS training and they send you into an interview you have no chance of getting but that was just to justify the system, move pieces of paper around you know." And there were two fellas in the back row around fifty, said "too fucking right" [...] this line was true to him, and he couldn't stop himself agreeing with it. That's the sort of discourse you get between audience and actors on stage.
>
> (Bolger 2008c: RC).

Vinnie McCabe and Brendan Laird are established professional actors, and had central roles in two of the plays in *The Trilogy* – McCabe (*From These Green Heights* and *The Townlands of Brazil*) and Laird (*The Townlands of Brazil* and *The Consequences of Lightning*). In conversation, both commented on how the work was received by the predominantly local audience,

in assisting and in the embedding of economic development. The already proven potential for the arts in affirming Ballymun as an artistic district within the city and country as a whole is considerable' (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 45). Local people interviewed by this researcher and referenced directly in Chapter 7 shared a similar outlook, as seen in comments offered by O'Sullivan (2011), Kelly (2011) and Hanaphy (2010) (see Chapter 7 (7.8)). Responses to questionnaires document a more general appreciation of the benefits of arts projects, with 62% of 45 participants stating that the arts were an important factor in creating a positive image of the area (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.D). Research results presented in Chapter 7 also pint to public recognition of the central role of the *axis* Community and Resource Centre (see Chapter 7, 7.9).

The *axis* centre houses the first professional, dedicated performance space in Ballymun, and the role of the theatre and its ability to offer the community a public platform for the dramatisation of their own stories was acknowledged as a necessary amenity for the community at large (see comments offered by Murphy (2011), and Roe (2011), Chapter 7 (7.9) and Appendix 3, Figure A3.J). An apparently odd correlation between positive association with arts participation and relative lack of actual participation illustrates the centrality of perception in Prentki and Preston's (2009) *Poetics* equation. Once the form (the arts) is provided for, its role within the community is validated, and this then contributes to the creation of a positive sense of its centrality to community well being; in Ballymun's case, this contributes also to positive responses to the regeneration project. This suggests that the real progress emerging from the pivotal community role of the *axis* may be found in the shift in local attitude, reflecting perceptions of the contribution of arts provision to enabling positive images to materialise.

The staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy* in the *axis* Theatre (2004-2008) not only gave the local people an opportunity to witness the story of their own community unfold through dramatic narrative but also invited the audience to interpret the representation of their people and their area as appreciated through the eyes of the playwright Bolger and realised through the artistic team of director, designer (set, lights, music) and actors. Perceptions of the actual plays, as articulated by the local people, recorded in the observation records, and reported in formal documentation such as theatre

the rebirth of Ballymun. The last play could be seen to be a celebration for the community of Ballymun, collectively acknowledging their chequered past and looking toward brighter prospects for the future. It is a play that belongs to everyone in the community and it is fitting that it, as the last play in the series, it unites all sectors of the community, not only in its narrative, but also in the theatre auditorium,

> Having tried to bring many Ballymun residents into the theatre for the first time with *Green Heights,* the staging of *Townlands* was an attempt by *axis* to reach out to the migrant communities starting to settle in Ballymun. I could no more truly capture the totality of their experience than I could capture all that had happened in Ballymun over the previous forty years, but for myself and *axis*, staging this play was putting down a marker that their lives had now become part of the collective history of Ballymun. (Bolger, 2008: 254)

If globalisation tends to swamp particularity with a kind of mono-culture, one of the more unique features of *The Ballymun Trilogy* at the *axis* is that it appears to move in a different direction; led by a community theatre project, an urban regeneration programme is accompanied by the strengthening of local community identity, with narrative and place (geographical and performative) interacting to articulate and value local narratives and identities.

8.4.1 Perception

Established outside perception of Ballymun, and the community's own perception of issues concerning their area, was explored in some detail in Chapter 7. Perceptions were documented by data generated through interviews, questionnaires and official reports. Particular issues, such as the negative perception of Ballymun pre-regeneration, which had infiltrated Irish society at large, was widely associated with the role of the media as articulated by the local community (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.B). As noted earlier, a recognition of the potential of the arts to alter image and perception was a significant factor in the provision of the arts in the regeneration programme, which also benefited from the community initiative which established the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. Chapter 7 noted specific recognition in official reports of the central role played by arts provision in moving towards sanitising Ballymun's once stained image. BRL's Completion Report states, 'The Arts have been to the forefront in changing perceptions of Ballymun across all media and

simultaneously as actual landmass and the location of an idea of home, there is however the issue of how place as a social construct, something that is actively constructed (Nicholson, 2005), resonates within the plays. The significance of status/class structures is explored by the playwright, mainly through the two central characters of Jane and Carmel in *From These Green Heights*. Jane, originally from a middle class background, falls on hard times and finds herself part of the working class community of Ballymun,

> *Jane*: God forgive me. There's nothing more pathetic than a snob with no arse in her trousers. I remember watching these towers go up from the bedroom window in Pinewood and wondering how anyone could live here. Your daddy organised a plebiscite to change the postal address of the area to Glasnevin and build a wall to keep us safe from this sort.
>
> (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 1, 34)

Carmel's working class status is confirmed through recurring references to the lack of economic opportunities for her husband Christy. Bolger (2005) emphasises the stigma that was attached to the working class inhabitants of Ballymun and the implications that had for employment opportunities, *Christy:* "They just hear this address and their minds are already made up" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 1, 29). *The Ballymun Trilogy* explores place both as a physical location, and a metaphorical landscape where class structures are established.

The writing of *The Ballymun Trilogy* gave the stories of the local people a public platform on which outsiders were offered an opportunity to view the world of Ballymun and its people through the artistic expression of theatre. It was also an attempt by the *axis* theatre to broaden its audience base by telling the community's own stories. The three plays, all of which could be said to be the property of the local audience, enable the community to have a conversation with itself (Ní Chonchubhair, 2008). The first play *From These Green Heights* was marketed strongly at the local population, many of which had no history of attending the theatre, (see Chapter 7). *The Townlands of Brazil* was pitched at both an indigenous local audience and also the growing migrant sector of the community. The final play in *The Ballymun Trilogy*: *The Consequences of Lightning*, while recognising the past, embraces the future and

The relationship between place and common identity is forged through the shared tools of interpretation, drawn upon by the collective to articulate shared experiences, thus contributing to the sense of a shared identity (see Benson, 2008). Additional questions concerning identity are posed for the audience in *The Townlands of Brazil.* The cultural particulars of the Irish character Eileen, referred to through traditional song, language, status within the local community, are heightened when the character of Monika, who is Polish, makes reference to the particulars of her heritage in relation to Irish customs. Bolger's work, while on the one hand highlighting the differences between the two characters and their cultures, subtly draws a parallel between them that moves beyond the cultural tools of interpretation and asks the audience to consider the human similarities that connect the two protagonists.

Place attachment is, according to Benson (2008: 117) 'formed through interactions within place and is composed of memories associated or anticipated to be possible within place'. The last play in *The Ballymun Trilogy, The Consequences of Lightning* (2008), is set in the new Ballymun, mid-regeneration, where six of the seven towers have been demolished and most of the population has been re-housed in smaller, more family-friendly housing clusters around the area. The play constantly refers back to the past and the lives that were. It comments on how the environment of the earlier Ballymun, with all its pressing social and economic issues, created the residents of today. The play centres on the death of one of first tenants in the towers - Sam. The characters are brought together to mark Sam's passing, which prompts extensive conversations about the Ballymun that was and the new Ballymun that has mushroomed around them. The play notes the challenges that faced the community for over three decades and adopts a commemorative tone, with the narrative suggesting that by contrast with the darkness of the past, the present is illuminated with a hope that makes investment in the future possible. The play stages the forging of identity in relation to the environment and the people in it. It also echoes Jenkins' (1999) observation (as mentioned above) that recognition of the past is essential for collective identity formation.

Thus far, it has been acknowledged that place is a vital component in establishing group and collective identity. While in *The Ballymun Trilogy* place is referenced

> *Dessie:* You always say you hate this place, Da?
>
> *Christy:* I do, son, with an intensity. But there are only two sorts of people. Those who think Ballymun is brimming with the salt of the earth but would never dream of living here. And then there's those like me who think it is a God-forsaken kip and wouldn't dream of living anywhere else.
> (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights* Act 2, 80)

The Townlands of Brazil is preoccupied with different perspectives on the idea of place and the theme of home. Emigration is the vehicle through which questions of location and belonging are explored, and place attachment and the challenges of trying to create a new home in a foreign land are recurring themes in the play. The structure of the play, with two very different acts, one set in 1963 and the other in 2006, explores issues around self and place, nationality, racism and belonging. The characters in the play are caught between,

> The homes which they have come from and the lands in which they find themselves. It is a dangerous no-man's-land where they hover outside history, not belonging to the place that they have come from anymore, but unable to integrate fully into the social landscapes of their new lives
> (Keating, 2006: 2)

The play asks particular questions about the effort of becoming part of a new, foreign community. The two principal narratives, those of Eileen (Act One, 1963) and Monika (Act Two, 2006) mirror each other in that both protagonists' lives and dreams are dictated by the places in which they find themselves. Bolger is acutely aware of the transient nature of place, and the implications that has for establishing a sense of identity, reflecting Aristotle's idea of *Becoming* rather than *Being* (see Chapter 5),

> If place is truly alive then it is never finished. It is a constant work in progress, refreshed and enriched by the life experiences of those who come there and start the process of moving from being outsiders to slowly beginning in their hearts and minds to see a new place as home. It is also the story of those who become lost in that process and wind up belonging nowhere – those lives that are forgotten but which are an essential part of the secret history of any place. (Bolger, 2008: 253)

The play stages responses drawn from memories of the initial build and the struggles of people in Ballymun to establish a sense of community and shared identity. The dramatic narrative also exposes what became the dominant outside perception of the area and the stigma that became attached to the place and anyone associated with it.
Christy: They just hear the address and their minds are already made up
(Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights*, Act 1, 29).

In spite of this, Ballymun became a place by means of the struggles of people to establish, slowly and painfully, a viable community with its own sense of identity (see Prichard, 2008). Time and again, Bolger places before the local audience a critical discussion of what it means to belong in the 'setting' (MacIntyre, 2007: 208) of Ballymun. This example dramatises two generations and their responses to the development, decline and regeneration of Ballymun,

> *Christy (first generation):* Their instincts should tell them this is no bloody home.
>
> *Dessie (second generation):* It is home.
>
> *Christy*: Not for me.
>
> *Dessie:* Well it is for me and you can't take that away. I don't remember Bolton Street. I love this flat and hate you always going on about Ballymun. I belong here even if you don't.
>
> *Christy:* This isn't how Ballymun was meant to be.
>
> *Dessie:* But it is the way it is.
>
> (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights* Act 1, 41)

The contrast in feelings about place and sense of belonging in the above dialogue specifically places before local audiences the question of the role place plays in informing identity.

Paradoxically, the social problems that ravaged the Ballymun community from the late 1970s onwards generated a collective sense of identity (see Norris, 2001). As people joined together for their voices to be heard, a sense of attachment to the area emerged,

relationship between teller and receiver is taken further by Bolger's insistence on casting local actors in each play, so that 'the local community was represented onstage as its story was being told'. This deepens the already strong sense of ownership of the narrative in the local audience. In most moments of theatre, the actor may be seen as a form of proxy for the principal storyteller – the playwright - but with *The Ballymun Trilogy,* the local actors' status as a proxy more for the audience than for the playwright makes the matter of ownership of the narrative a very complex one, and shifts authority over the meaning of what is staged to the audience and the wider community.

Telling, remembering and interpretation all happen within Lefebvre's (1984) 'logico-epistemological space', and MacIntyre's (2007: 208) point that settings interact with storytelling and authorial intention to produce narrative effects is an important one to bear in mind when approaching performances of *The Trilogy*. Benson's (1988) argument that when space is humanised it becomes place, has an array of implications for understanding the place and the plays, as the meanings associated with any given place in turn inform identity. In all his work, Bolger gives significant weight to place and to the idea of place, and in *The Ballymun Trilogy* all narratives explicitly explore peoples' relationships to the area. This is a specific example of how the experience of being local to Ballymun is offered for contemplation to the audiences for the plays at the *axis*. In this way, the moments of performance foreground the reality that place is always contextually tied, and dramatic representation - narrative and action - and its interpretation offers a working model of a two-way system where place informs identity and identity informs place. In important ways, *From These Green Heights* is a play about the gradual transformation of space into place. The play stages the reflections of the original tenants, as they experienced the alien environment of the newly built high-rise estate of Ballymun (1966). For these chosen tenants, Ballymun was ironically placeless, due to the lack of ancestral ties usually associated with communities, and the lack of attached meanings associated with the humanised environment,

> *Christy:* There was something bleak about Ballymun. It seemed mad to move people into what was still a building site, where even the buses had to stop a mile away because they couldn't get through the mud.
> (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights*, Act 1, 15)

community, by means of dramatic narrative, it makes sense that Bolger, an accomplished poet, novelist and playwright, selects this art form to explore the history of this small, stigmatised urban community.

In a real way, Bolger's *Trilogy* demonstrates MacIntyre's (2007: 214) view of the function and effect of the storyteller, who 'imposes on human events retrospectively an order they did not have while they were lived'. Bruner (2002: 15) sees historical reference as an essential component of story creation, and narrative as a dialectic between what was expected and what has come to pass. Bolger's is a theatre of storytelling, and his dramatic narrative documents a social history while at the same time placing for the audience's consideration, questions raised by that history, of identity and attachment to place. Gathered in a performance site uniquely owned by the community, local people participate in a multi-layered experience in which they contemplate narratives of the local place, and negotiate their relationships with them. Boler (cited in Nicholson, 2005) argues that the more historically specific narrative material is to its audience, the greater its significance, not least because, in moments of performance, interpretation is a collective action as opposed to an individual, empathetic act.

Acts of collective remembering set up a circular relationship between teller, material and receiver where memory, imagination and reality are engaged. Benjamin (1936) recognised the relationship between teller and the receiver of the narrative and how this pattern of exchange was altered by the desire – what he sees as the ultimate wish of the receiver – to become the teller. It is very interesting to consider Bolger's work in light of Benjamin's (1936) idea of reversibility. Whereas Benjamin (1936) acknowledges the teller as the provider of narrative, there is another layer of reversal in Bolger's case, with the receivers (audience) ultimately being the teller, as the narratives of the plays emerge from their stories. Benjamin's (1936) relationship is modified even further in the case of Bolger's audience, as the receivers are not concerned with retelling the dramatised narrative, but could be said to be validated by the fact that their story has eventually been told and has been given a public platform. This act could be seen to be a form of affirmation of their past struggles, as even though Bolger is the storyteller and it is through him that their story is being retold, they are the primary source of the narrative. This reversal of Benjamin's (1936)

study around the ethical position of artists such as Bolger, Yeates, the cast and production teams of the plays of *The Trilogy*, in light of Preston's (2009) advice, 'The reality that representations depict the real lives of individuals or groups who may be vulnerable and/or marginalised from the dominant hegemony is an ethical as well as a political concern' (Preston, 2009: 65). Bolger's response to this dimension is included in section 8.2.2 above, and he makes it clear that he and others involved in producing the plays were very aware of its implications, and sought to address it from the outset of the production process. The act of performance brings together not only the facts of social, cultural, economic and historical views of Ballymun; it does so in a structured form and in a place purpose-built to enable local people public to contemplate and critically discuss those things that really matter among all the assembled facts, collectively. The intention of the playwright toward narrative and audiences makes a crucial difference in terms both of ethics and efficacy, and is acknowledged in Prentki and Selman's (2000) template for evaluation which is applied below to the task of establishing how *The Trilogy* is perceived (8.4).

In addition to action, place, identity, intention and ownership, narrative foregrounds the matter of the past, how it is understood, and how it is available to be re-made. Conway (2008) points out the important role played by the memory of past events in informing present practices and possibilities, 'The remembrance of the past brings concerns about the present to the surface of social life' (Conway, 2008: 10). This is a key characteristic and effect of the dramatic worlds of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, and Bolger's constant return to the past in these dramatic narratives echoes Jenkins' (1996: 28) view of the importance of the past as a resource to draw upon when interpreting the present and forecasting the future. One of the most unique outcomes of Bolger's work is that it offers the community a chance to remember historical events collectively, and this, according to Conway (2008: 141), plays a 'central role in the formation of a collective identity'. Such an outcome cannot easily be achieved in other ways, as a theatre moment, in particular, has the power to evoke critical and historical consciousness in a way that enhances the formation of collective identity. Nicholson's (2005) observation that identity is established through dialogue with others acknowledges the effectiveness of theatre as a site of dialogue where a conversation about who people are in relation to others can be had. Given the power of theatre to put questions about a community and its identity directly to that

'McWorld' and 'mono-culture' (Rebellato, 2009). Paradoxically, culture is also the means by which globalisation is most strongly resisted, and Smyth (2001) recommends a strategy of cognitive mapping, to secure a position from which a person or a community can perceive the world, their position within it and their relationship to others. This strategy is rooted in an idea of establishing cultural co-ordinates which can anchor a sense of belonging. If living spaces are disturbed by these great contemporary struggles, then sites of performance, spaces 'occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias' (Lefebvre, 1984: 12), are troubled even moreso. Such spaces are, after all, dedicated to engagement with poetry, music, dance and theatre and 'the vast store of non-formal knowledge' (Lefebvre, cited in Smyth, 2001: 16) they contain. Where in daily living the difficulties of existence are experienced in an often painful and confusing flow of events, in performance sites, human troubles, how they play out and how they affect life experiences are selected, shaped, slowed down and presented for contemplation and critical reflection: 'Human life is composed of discrete actions which lead nowhere, which have no order; the story-teller imposes on human events retrospectively an order they did not have while they were lived' (MacIntyre, 2007: 214). Performance sites are always both involved in and apart from the actual world in which they are located; it is this paradox which is negotiated in Kearney's 'gap', and which Bennett's (1990) diagram sets out to capture in spatial and critical terms (see Chapter 6).

8.3.3 Representation - Narrative and Identity; Intention, Place and Ownership

Chapter 5 analysed the complex relationship between narrative, identity and place and argued that community theatre occupies a key role as a locally owned means of communication in this era of globalisation. Narrative constructs life as a series of events organised and understood within a particular timeframe (Abbott, 2008; Bruner 1996, 2002; MacIntyre, 2007), which makes identity formation possible. Storytelling, like life itself, gives substance and meaning to a particular time and place. MacIntyre(2007: 208) introduces the central issue of intentions, both in structuring and interpreting narratives, and argues that 'we cannot characterize intentions independently of the settings which make those intentions intelligible both to agents themselves and to others'; actions, intentions and setting are interlinked in the formation – the writing - of a narrative history. This insight poses a question for this

8.3.1 Application

8.3.2 Place of Performance - the *axis* Theatre: Physical Location, Metaphorical Space (Dramatic World), Site of Interpretation

Sites of performance are always involved in the ideological battles of the places in which they are located, and arts venues struggle with perceptions of elitism, inaccessibility and detachment from reality (Kershaw, 1992). The mission statement for the *axis* Centre, includes the highly unusual pairing of 'excellence' and 'community' in one phrase, suggesting that it sees a need to define itself within these contests: '*axis* is a centre for excellence with the community at its heart' (www.axis-ballymun.ie). This suggests something exceptional about the centre, and its Artistic Director, Ray Yeates, sees the *axis* theatre in particular as a principal site in which the democratisation of culture can take place, 'Yeates argued that this state of the art theatre space in the very heart of Ballymun could be an exception to the socially exclusive world of the arts' (Bolger, 2008a: 250). Taken together, the history of the *axis* and the attitudes expressed in interviews, reports and surveys – including those undertaken for this study – point to a strong argument for seeing the very existence of the *axis* centre as embodying the collective will of the community. It is a space which was willed into being, and which accompanies and enhances the regeneration project, but does not depend on it for its existence. That means that when Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* is staged in the *axis*, it occupies a space which aspires to being both a practical resource and a symbol of the will and the pride of the people of Ballymun.

According to Benson (1988, 2001), space and its transformation into place in 'acts of living' is at the centre of how humans achieve meaning, by negotiating a sense of self, other and the world. As recognised in earlier chapters (Chapter 2, 3 and 5) culture, which is so intimately linked with identity, is one of the primary fields in which globalisation is taking place (see Abrahamson, 2004, Bryman 2004, Pieterse, 2009). There is no definitive account of the severity of globalisation's impact, not least because it is such a varied phenomenon that even documenting it poses huge challenges, but initial trends which threaten the particularity of space and human relationships to it are already visible enough to be captured in phrases such as

production places it comfortably within the ideological framework of the community theatre genre, where the art form is used in the service of a working class community. Kershaw (1992) suggests that the alternative (community) theatre movement was at least in part associated with the broader international counter-cultural movement of the late 1960s/70s. This counter-cultural movement questioned the relationship between culture, class structure and society. The ideological framework for the counter-culture movement was provided by the Marxist idea of dominant and subordinate social classes, where the exploitation of culture and cultural production always served the interests of the ruling classes and reinforced hierarchical structures of power. Counter-culture ultimately was concerned with the democratisation of culture by challenging mainstream cultural institutions and practices. Culture was deemed to be the property of all, not just the select few. The worlds of Bolger's plays mirror the realities of the lived experiences of a working class community whose economic and social status is dictated by hierarchical structures within a capitalist society. References to a lack of educational and economic opportunities within the community litter the plays, in keeping with Marxist critiques of direct relationships between persons, class structure and freedom (see Nelson and Grossberg, 1988). The ideological framework which best accommodates Bolger's work is, according to this researcher, ultimately a materialist analysis based on Marxist ideology. Such an ideological framework is in tune with the ideological bases of the community theatre movement of the 1960s/70s (see Kershaw, 1992). It is perhaps this point, above all others, that enables Bolger's work to be seen as 'community theatre'.

The chapter now turns to the application of the form developed over the course of the *Trilogy*, and considers, in particular, the dynamics of actual performances for what they reveal about the role of narrative in the moment of representation, and its relationship to identity, aesthetic decisions and the performance space in which the plays were staged.

community theatre. Secondly, Bolger's work deviates somewhat from one of the founding principles of community theatre, where the theatre is seen principally as a vehicle for 'sociocultural intervention' (Van Erven, 2001: 1). Even though Bolger's work may not offer the same heated platform, where the actions presented on stage provoke the audience into critical awareness, even revolt for social/political/cultural reform, it is by no means completely neutral, and enables a strong critical intervention by local voices in the ongoing struggle to establish and communicat the complex facts of the Ballymun story. *The Ballymun Trilogy* could be said to engage the audience from the other end of a spectrum running from van Erven, in that the plays focus primarily on dramatising stories from the past, while commenting on the current situation of regeneration, and anticipating the future. The central narratives of the plays are preoccupied with recognising the struggles and deprivation experienced by the Ballymun community in the past. The backdrop of the community's past is always present on stage, framing questions about the current regeneration, with each play strongly suggesting that the future for Ballymun is a lot brighter than the past, *Katie*: 'Ballymun grew up and we grew up too. Ballymun is starting out again' (Bolger, 2010, *The Consequences of Lightning,* Act 2, 252). Bolger's frequent references to the struggles endured by the residents of Ballymun in the plays could be seen as a form of affirmation for the community and their stories, *Carmel:* "Finally there was a sense of officials considering our views. Dessie's dream was simple. Start from scratch. Don't break up the community but firstly build new homes and shops and then knock the old towers down' (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 2, 95). Bolger's constant return to the past in these dramatic narratives echoes Jenkins' (1999: 28) idea about the importance of the past as a resource to draw upon when interpreting the present and forecasting the future. This aspect of Bolger's work, which offers the community a chance to collectively remember historical events, according to Conway (2008: 141) plays a 'central role in the formation of a collective identity'.

Dramatising historical narratives specific to a community has been recognised as an effective means of engaging people (Thornton, 2010). According to Kershaw (1992) and Nicholson (2005) the impact of such dramatisations can result in the empowerment of that community. Therefore, Bolger's work could be seen not to conform fully to the definition of community theatre as offered by van Erven (2001), but its ideological premise combined with the circumstances of *The Ballymun Trilogy*

> Ballymun talent like the superb Kelly Hickey alongside nationally famous actors like Vincent McCabe – have now played in the US, Belgium, Britain and Poland. Yet axis shows never transfer to the mainstream Dublin venues, and some Irish critics refuse to attend the plays. To them, Ballymun remains a ghetto, but its isolation and its chance to start anew has made it a hotbed of innovative art. (Bolger, 2008: 254)

Despite the apartheid referred to by Bolger above, the fact that *axis* theatre was, for the first time, a recognised venue in the 2010 Dublin Theatre Festival is a sign perhaps, that while Bolger's work here has still not transferred into any of the mainstream Dublin theatres, the *axis* as a venue has made progress in being recognised as a serious theatre venue. Therefore it could be said that *axis* as the 'hotbed' of innovation has pushed out the boundaries of professional theatre practices by integrating the idea of employing mixed casts of established professionals and local actors, while at the same time gaining acknowledgement as a professional theatre venue within Dublin's circuit. In this way McGrath's (1981) criterion of localism and identification for the working class audience is most fully met in the staging of Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* at the *axis* Arts Centre. The fact that local actors are deemed good enough to perform alongside established professionals is, in a way, a seal of approval for the community and their own capacity to produce talent locally.

McGrath's (1981) scheme of the theatre languages of working class theatre offers a very interesting framework in which to analyse Bolger's work (*The Ballymun Trilogy)* with the majority of his theatrical features being directly applicable. The 'nine points' however are focused solely on the actual theatrical performance without recognition of the process, whereas Prentki and Selman's (2000) definition of popular theatre considers the broader framework in which such work is pursued. Again Bolger's work seems to elude absolute compatibility with Prentki and Selman's (2000) definition of popular theatre. Bolger's work, while fitting many of the characteristics of community theatre, seems to stretch boundaries on a number of other fronts also. Firstly, *The Ballymun Trilogy* was written about and for a particular community and therefore could be considered an example of community theatre; however, it was staged in a conventional theatre space employing professional actors and production staff which are features of Bolger's work that run contrary to Van Erven's (2001) account of

In relating Bolger's work to McGrath's (1981) idea of localism and identification, one point in particular is worthy of note about the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, and that is the highly unusual practice of casting the plays by drawing on the local well of amateur talent alongside professionals from the field. This approach ensured that not only were the stories on stage representative of the local people but so too were some of the actors. A sense of ownership is extended towards the audience and cemented by the realisation that their stories are being depicted by people from within their own community, 'not only should the community see themselves reflected, but they should be doing the reflecting too' (Bolger cited in Keating, 2006: 3). Ballagh (2008) supports *axis'* unusual decision to stage professional productions drawing on local talent,

> The absolutely necessity for art not to be imposed – it doesn't matter how good it is, it can be wonderful but if the people who are the audience for this art are not involved in some shape or form before the art arrives, it won't work. It's a hugely different dynamic when local people are involved.
>
> (Ballagh, 2008: 238)

Ballagh's (2008) statement endorses the practice of mixing local talent and professional actors but his insistence that 'it doesn't matter how good it is' is contrary to the ethos of the *axis* Arts Centre. The mission statement of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre clearly emphasises that the centre strives for 'excellence with the community at its heart' (www.axis-ballymun.ie). Mixing amateur and professional actors is a practice that, within the Irish professional theatre arena, is viewed with suspicion. This combined with the residue of stigma that is still, for some, associated with Ballymun despite the regeneration, has in one way been liberating for the *axis* Arts Centre. Because *axis* is a relatively new theatre venue in Dublin, in a working class area, there is an artistic licence of sorts that has been extended to the venue where decisions to mix local and professional actors can become a reality. Such a freedom however, seems to come at a price,

> A mental apartheid still exists in parts of the Dublin arts world. Successive Dublin Theatre Festivals have turned down the chance to see all three parts of *The Ballymun Trilogy* staged as part of the festival in a way that would bring axis into the mainstream of theatre. Professional axis productions – featuring emerging

a rich poetic language, usually seen as reserved for the richer and more formally educated middle classes.

The dramatic language of *effect* referred to by McGrath (1981) poses questions as to where Bolger's work fits in relation to such a category. As already noted, Bolger's dramatic narratives are expressed through a more classical structure and style than are to be found in McGrath's account of conventions associated with working class theatre. McGrath (1981) suggests that in middle class theatre there is a slower build to the dramatic climax of a play, and each of the plays in *The Trilogy* builds slowly towards a dramatic climax that is reached in latter part of the second act. The more moment by moment effect that McGrath (1981) associates with working class theatre is perhaps present mainly in Bolger's language, in his playfulness with comic references and smart wordplay which very often provides the audience with moments of comic relief. Where Bolger's work does respond to McGrath's (1981) idea of *effect* is in moments when the Ballymun audience openly voiced their opinions during the live performances. This researcher noted, through observation, how the audience in each of the three plays readily spoke back to the actors and commented on the action as it unfolded. Comments such as 'Yeah, you can say that again', 'ah, God love her', 'would you look at that, that's the way it was' and 'don't talk to me about those bleedin' lifts' (Observation Record: 2004) were just a sample of audible responses recorded by this researcher as the performance was taking place. Ní Chonchubhair (2008: RC) comments on audience reaction to *The Consequences of Lightning* , 'people treating *Consequences* like it was a panto, there was something lovely about that'. Such a relationship illustrates a like of inhibition by established conventions of playgoing, made possible because the *axis* is a community based facility, and the stories being depicted on the stage emerged from the detail of the audiences' lives. These facts strongly link Bolger's work with McGrath's (1981) two remaining dramatic elements *Immediacy* and *Localism.* Active, vocal responses witnessed in the *axis* theatre in Ballymun on the opening nights of all three plays of *The Ballymun Trilogy* testify clearly to the importance of immediacy and localism to working class audiences. The subject matter of the three plays arises from the lives and experiences of the community. As the audience recognises and relates to the dramatic narrative, they take up the offer of a chance to reflect critically on what has been, what is, and, what will be.

consequences of death, loss, forgiveness and the need to move on, produced in a sense, a collective articulation for the audience present. The majority of the audience, male and female, were in tears by the end of the play. While many of the audience remained after the final curtain, others simply left their seats and exited the theatre with their eyes reddened from the emotional rollercoaster on which the play had taken them. As an outsider to the community, it was a very moving experience to witness the power of good storytelling and its particular strength when speaking to a community about itself. As a researcher and witness, such responses clearly demonstrate impacts recorded by Nicholson (2005), Prentki and Selman (2000) and Cohen-Cruz (2005) for local community plays.

Bolger's work diverges from McGrath's (1981) 'nine points' in relation to the dramatic element of variety. McGrath (1981) associates variety with past entertainment establishments that were frequented by the working class, such as the music halls and workingmens' clubs, whose influences continue to resonate in working class theatre. In McGrath's (1981: 33) own 7:84 theatre company's production of *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil* the integration of the popular Scottish dance form of the ceilidh was an important element in communicating with the predominantly Scottish working class, highland audiences. Bolger's work on the other hand, while targeting a working class audience and depicting the lives of that community, does not draw upon the theatrical language of variety. The plays in *The Ballymun Trilogy* are extremely sophisticated linguistically, with many monologues and conversations given in rich poetic language. The density of Bolger's language has more in common with writers such as Ibsen and Shaw, whose dramatic writings and structures are, according to McGrath (1981), more the property of the middle class than the working class. The structures of Bolger's plays are also more classical in style, with each of the three plays consisting of two lengthy acts. There is no divide or recognition of individual scenes within the acts, and the dramatic action unfolds without the conventional restraints associated with complicated set changes. In common with McGrath's (1981) view of middle class theatre, the number of characters in Bolger's plays is limited. Variety, in McGrath's sense is something that seems to have no place in Bolger's work and reveals perhaps, an element of McGrath's (1981) template that could be seen to underestimate the ability of a working class audience to follow and appreciate a play dramatised through

The deployment of music in *The Ballymun Trilogy* differs noticeably between the three plays. In *From These Green Heights* and *The Consequences of Lightning*, music contributes subtly to the overall dramatic ambience of the plays, but it is in the second play *The Townlands of Brazil* that the use of music corresponds to McGrath's (1981) definition of the sophisticated use of music in working class theatre. As *The Townlands of Brazil* is a play of two contrasting halves, set into two different eras, music is used not only to enhance the emotional quality of the work but also helps to place the fictional world historically by using instruments and melodies characteristic of the early 1960s and contemporary Ireland respectively. During Act One a musician is stationed on stage for the entirety of the act playing a variety of instruments, and in Act Two she makes occasional appearances. The performance not only uses instruments but also incorporates folk and traditional singing from the cast. While always at the service of the narrative, the music resonates strongly with its audience. It was executed to a high standard by professional musician Tina McLoughlin and the cast in the first production of *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006), and though it is less significant in the other plays, Bolger's use of music is an integrated and essential element of the overall dramatic tapestry.

According to McGrath (1981) the explicit staging of emotion within dramatic narrative is a key signature of working class theatre, as working class audiences are very open to emotional display. In contrast, he argues, middle class audiences are embarrassed by direct emotional exhibition. Bolger's work is layered with emotional references many of which, as mentioned above, are voiced through the use of direct address, with no ambiguity about characters' inner feelings and thoughts. This is intensified by the fact that the narratives of the plays are all based on, and staged in a world and a place that is very real to local spectators – Ballymun. The fact that the audience are seeing, in many ways, the dramatisation of their own lives and experiences in the shared space of the community theatre, predictably enhances the emotional weight of Bolger's *Trilogy*. While all three plays were extremely successful in engaging the audience with the emotional core of the stories, through observation this researcher was particularly surprised at the overwhelming emotional response from the audience to the final play in *The Ballymun Trilogy*: *The Consequences of Lightning*. Perhaps the fact that this play was the last in a series, and dramatised the

From These Green Heights, Act 1, 5). While much of the comedy is directly associated with local references, it does, on occasion, encompass a broader base of reference, as when Christy speaks about his second son Charlie and his move to America, "He went over on an athletics scholarship and married an African runner, a beauty. He thought I'd mind. Listen, Charlie, says I, as long as she's not from Cork" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act2, 103). Again the first play in *The Ballymun Trilogy* was to establish a particular dramatic style that would be further developed in the latter two plays. *The Townlands of Brazil* uses comedy for the very same dramatic impact as the first play. It again encompasses local and international comic references, *Father:* "Khrushchev has more to be doing than bombing North Dublin. He'd have some fun collectivising the farmers here. They can barely share a match to light a cigarette let alone a fleet of Polish tractors" (Bolger, 2010, *The Townlands of Brazil,* Act 1, 113). In Act One, Theresa, a young girl of 1960s Ireland who finds herself pregnant and who is forced to emigrate to England, refers with a comic twist to the social abuse that a girl in her position faced, *Theresa:* "All the holy Josephines are the same once they spot the absence of a wedding ring, especially beef-to-the-heel Mullingar heifers like her who are saving their bodies for St Peter to die of fright looking at" (Bolger, 2010, *The Townlands of Brazil,* Act 1, 146).

The Consequences of Lightning gives similar weighting to the use of comedy throughout the play. Again it is a device that gives the audience cathartic release from what is a very emotionally demanding narrative concentrated on death, loss and forgiveness. The comedy is deeply embedded in the locality, enabling the audience to have a direct relationship to the references, *Jeepers:* Why has he an American accent if he's from Glenageary? *Annie:* That's a Southside accent: California starts somewhere near the Dundrum Shopping Centre, (Bolger, 2010, *The Consequences of Lightning,* Act 1, 202).

Comedy in theatre for the middle class is, according to McGrath (1989), a device that is seen to make the play less serious. In Bolger's work however, the comedy input is sophisticated, relevant and executed through masterly wordplay. The seriousness of the overall narrative is never undermined by the frequent punctuation of comedy, which enables the audience to collectively read, enjoy and relate to a story that is representative of their lives.

robbed young immigrants of their lives, are all smoothly integrated into the overall dramatic narrative by the use of direct address. *The Consequences of Lightning* successfully spins a web of complex personal narratives from the six characters (Sam, Martin, Jeepers, Frank, Annie and Kate) mainly through the use of direct address. As in the two preceding plays, there are also moments of naturalistic playing between the characters on stage. The short naturalistic scenes that pepper the play are contrasted by characters breaking out of the fiction, turning directly to the audience and voicing their true thoughts. As in the earlier works, this enables the narrative to be revealed in a fast and efficient manner while also contributing to the emotional power of the play as audiences are directly confronted with the characters' innermost sentiments, *Sam:* "I gave them everything except comfort, because I knew none and they saw no hope in my eyes. I saw Frank's love turn to bewilderment because you either give your son hope or shame and I made him so ashamed that he couldn't wait to be gone" (Bolger, 2010, *The Consequences of Lightning,* Act 1, 233).

Bolger's three plays draw on a deeply poetic language, rich in metaphor and description. There is also a register of linguistic playfulness, realised effectively in the abundance of comic references which litter his works. In each of the plays comedy is strongly attached to a sense of the local and the particular features of the Ballymun community. While its use in *From These Green Heights* provides moments of release for the audience from what is a very stark depiction of the struggles faced by the community in the past, the comedy is also a vehicle for commentary on social issues. Christy's dismissal of Carmel's teasing account of her youthful courtship with a printer's apprentice from inner city Dominic Street leads to a cutting remark, *Christy:* "Someone from Dominic Street? You must be joking. They're still only getting over the famine in Dominic Street. He must have stolen the bicycle and found the jacket on the skip" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 1, 8). Later in the play however, Carmel's retort is just as sharp, "When I think of those poor girls you used to date from the Home for the Blind. You probably sat at a bus stop and claimed that you'd paid for them to see the silent films" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 2, 91). Christy's reference to the local Bogmen comments directly on the alien environment created by the design of the high-rise estate, *Christy:* "gaping at the tower blocks appearing in their fields like they were alien spacecraft adorned with Dublin Corporation signs picked up in some intergalactic sale of work" (Bolger, 2010,

communicated directly, without the mediation of the sacred fourth wall of naturalistic drama. Characters' innermost thoughts may now be voiced, enhancing their humanity and contributing to the emotional weighting of the stories, *Christy:* "I couldn't let on before the missus, but …I was scared by the newness of everything" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 1, 5). The priority that Bolger gives to directly addressing the audience is reflected in the minimalist staging and direction, 'most of the stage is divided into three interconnecting ramps positioned at slightly different heights to allow the cast to move easily from one to the other … the cast almost serve as the play's internal audience, listening to and silently supporting each other's stories with their presence' (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 1, 3). Direct address enhances narrative pace, and stories can be told and contrasted swiftly and smoothly, with rhythm, energy and efficiency. Direct address suggests that there is a kind of honesty about this work; it is always delivered in character, and is particularly well suited to the narrative demands of documenting the complex lives of three generations over a forty year period. It is especially appropriate that this play, developed from a poem voicing the muted voices of Ballymun's past, spoke directly and openly to the audience. The characters on stage tell stories drawn from lives lived by people present in the auditorium. There is no room for ambiguity or obliqueness in the performance of the play because the voices staged are those of real people in a real place, whose voices had been ignored for over thirty years.

Direct address was so successfully employed in the first play of *The Ballymun Trilogy* that it became the signature style of the two later plays. In *The Townlands of Brazil* it enables the playwright to present two alternative dramatic worlds set forty years apart. Bolger maps the historical narrative of Act One onto the present day narrative of Act Two by repetition of direct address. The similarities between the Ballymun of 1963 and the current Ballymun undergoing regeneration are articulated mainly through the characters Matthew and Monika with the repetition of their dialogue in the opening of both Acts, *Monika:* "A wondrous chance to wash away the sins of the past, a new start named Ballymun" (Bolger, 2010, *The Townlands of Brazil,* Act 1, 108 and Act 2, 150). All of the characters within the play voice their personal journeys directly, offering the audience immediate access to their innermost thoughts and feelings. The play covers diverse and real events, and the stories of a crazed woman who had the authorities search all the boarded up flats for a non-existent baby, and a car crash that

Directness or direct address is the dramatic ploy through which the narrative of the first play in *The Ballymun Trilogy*: *From These Green Heights* is realised. The play is opened by the character of the Junkie directly addressing the audience by reciting four verses of the poem *Ballymun Incantation.* The unusual approach of opening a play by reciting a poem, a poem already familiar to most members of the audience due to its recitation in the Public Wake earlier that year, quickly establishes the style of the play. This opening sequence sets up Bolger's aesthetic choice of a heightened poetic language, which enables ordinary lives to be treated as worthy of rich description. The Junkie's prologue is followed by direct personal statements by three main characters, Christy (first generation and tenant of the newly built Ballymun, 1966) his wife Carmel and their son Dessie (a five year old child). This enables the characters to give both a concise history of rural Ballymun prior to the 1966 build - *Dessie:* "My Da once told me that it had a population of thirty-four souls in 1900 sharing eight inhabited buildings" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 1, 9) - and a sense of the expectations of the new residents, *Carmel:* "No shops were built yet or clinics or schools. But all these things were promised and moving to Ballymun seemed almost as classy as moving to America" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act1, 6). Direct address continues throughout the play, with the six main characters (Christy, Carmel, Dessie, his partner Marie, her mother Jane and junkie sister Sharon) continually directing their thoughts outward into the auditorium. The time period in which the play is set (1966 – 2004) is negotiated seamlessly through direct reference to the era by the characters, *Carmel*: "After seven years I was tired of waiting for Ballymun to be finished" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act1, 33). Act Two opens with Dessie directly telling the audience "It was 1977" accompanied by a cultural reference from *Christy*: "The Sex Pistols were being unleashed from their holsters, God help us" (Bolger, 2010, *From These Green Heights,* Act 2, 49).

As an aesthetic strategy, direct address clearly establishes a strong link with the audience, deepening their involvement in the dramatic action; the telling of the story is for the audience and the gap between passive spectator and actor is challenged. Direct address has the effect of eliminating ambiguity or obliqueness (elements that McGrath (1981) suggests are favoured in middle class theatre) and narrative facts are

McGrath's (1981) analysis of theatre as an artistic form of communication highlights the fact that theatre can never be a neutral space. While recognising the universality of telling stories, the basis of theatre, according to McGrath (1981:1), he emphasises the unequal power relationships between teller, content and audience 'They have power over you, in a real sense while you are there, they make a choice, with political implications, as to which story to tell – and how to tell it' (McGrath, 1981: 1). He suggests that 20th century British theatre can be split into two main monolithic groups, theatre of the middle class and theatre of the working class. It is working class theatre which he distinguishes as 'Popular Theatre'. Such differentiation is necessary according to McGrath (1981: 3) because audiences are different and they have different expectations and values associated with live theatre. The dominance of middle-class values and expectations in British theatre culture cast a shadow over much of the more progressive and radical work that emerged during the 1960s, with the onset of the community drama/theatre movements (see Chapter 4). McGrath's (1981) definition of 'Popular Theatre' is a useful framework in which to view Bolger's work because of the similarities between Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* which was predominantly written for and about a working class community (see www.dermotbolger.com), and the characteristics which McGrath (1981) assigns to the 'Popular Theatre' movement of the latter half of the 20th century. McGrath (1981: 53-60) concludes that there are fairly generalised differences between the demands and expectations of bourgeois and working class theatre. He codifies these differences in his widely cited 'nine points': Directness, Comedy, Music, Emotion, Variety, Effect, Immediacy, Localism and Localism/Identification.

McGrath's (1981) 'nine points' combine to classify a particular form of theatre language that is characteristic of work created for a working class audience. Such a theatre language therefore could be said to be directly applicable to Bolger's work which was created for and with the community, and staged in a community run venue for a predominantly working class audience. While *The Ballymun Trilogy* corresponds to many of the listed categories in McGrath's (1981) 'nine points', Bolger's work, it seems, also fits just as easily into some of the categories for the bourgeois theatre. The three plays, *From These Green Heights, The Townlands of Brazil and The Consequences of Lightning,* will be now analysed against McGrath (1981) as a way of examining aesthetic decisions enacted by playwright and director.

portion of the audience' (Cohen-Cruz: 2005: 2). Bolger's work does indeed conform to this configuration, as the Ballymun community is most definitely the primary source for the content of the plays, they are staged in a community run theatre, they are cast with local amateur actors and professional actors (see Ballagh, 2008), and the *Trilogy* succeeds in engaging a predominantly local, working class audience. While there is an evident correspondence between Bolger's work and Cohen Cruz's (2005) categorisation, the features of the *Trilogy* that map it onto the category of 'community arts practice' are as much in keeping with Prentki and Selman's (2000) and McGrath's (1981) definitions of popular theatre, as they are with Cohen-Cruz's (2005) definition of community arts practice. According to Prentki and Selman (2000) popular theatre is a form of community theatre which combines both process and performance in the service of change for that community,

> When a play is directly relevant to audience members' lives and concerns, a process begins which can lead to deeper understanding and change. Observers recognize the character(s) and their dilemmas and identify with the people portrayed. And because they can watch rather than live the experience, they also objectify the problems and in so doing begin to be able to think about possible solutions or alternative actions.
>
> (Prentki and Selman, 2000: 8)

Prentki and Selman's (2000) statement points out the importance of the content of a play and how the narrative needs to be directly relevant to the intended audience. The dramatisation of local stories, an essential aspect of popular theatre as suggested by Prentki and Selman (2000), is central in extending a critical distance to the audience, what Kearney (2002) refers to as the 'gap', where interpretation by the audience is established initially by the familiarity of the narrative but developed further by the security of the 'gap' and the invitation to question and envisage an alternative future or course of action for the present. McGrath's (1981) account of 'Popular Theatre' remains very influential in categorising forms and models of practice, and the structure and content of the plays of *The Trilogy*, coupled with the need to formally explore the audience, its reception of and response to *The Trilogy* calls for a detailed analysis of McGrath's (1981) categorisation.

> an urban suburb where emigrants are necessary to sustain the thriving economy. (Keating, 2006)

Bolger's merging of two very different worlds subtly poses questions about the future of Ballymun – and Ireland itself - a theme that would be developed further in the final play of the trilogy, *The Consequences of Lightning* (2008).

It is perhaps fitting that the final play in *The Ballymun Trilogy* sees Bolger revisiting the concluding couplet of the *Ballymun Incantation*, 'The living and the dead of Ballymun' (Bolger, 2010: xxi): a dramatic presence is given to a spiritual world, and the action glides smoothly between the living and the dead, the present and the afterlife. The narrative explores issues around acceptance of place and the identity that is subsequently forged through place association. The play's emotional weight hovers not only around the passing of a valued (if contested) member of the community, Sam (symbolically the first tenant of the towers), but also around the idea of forgiveness and the ability to move on and embrace the future, an overarching metaphor for Ballymun as a whole. While the consequences of the past and the lives that were once lived before the regeneration (pre-1997) are voiced, it is, it seems, the therapeutic benefits of collectively sharing stories at Sam's funeral that enable the collection of characters in the play, to accept the past and look forward, positively towards the future, 'Bolger seems to imply that while lightning will not strike twice for them, redemption is on the way for the next generation' (MacRéamoinn, 2008).

8.2.4 Defining Bolger's Work – The Genre and the Aesthetic.

Community theatre, according to Cohen-Cruz (2005:1), is a term that has become associated predominantly with entertainment, lacking any connection between play, place of performance and local people. For this reason, she now uses the term, community based performance (Cohen-Cruz, 2005:1). In light of this, when mapping Cohen-Cruz's (2005) definition of community based performance onto *axis'* staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy* there is a resonance which suggests Bolger's work is actually in keeping with her broader definition, 'A community based production is usually a response to a collectively significant issue or circumstance. It is a collaboration between an artist or ensemble and a 'community' in that the latter is a primary source of the text, possibly of performers as well, and definitely a goodly

development from the poem to the play is that, while the poem was chiefly concerned with documenting the past, the concluding section of the play depicts the change in fortune for the residents of Ballymun with the regeneration, ending on a positive note of hope and belief in the new Ballymun. This is chiefly seen through the character of Dessie and the younger generations within the play. The dramatic narrative surveys the lives of the residents, those who are left and those who stayed behind in Ballymun despite the adverse conditions, and those who sought solace elsewhere 'balancing the lives of those who stayed and those who left but still carried the imprint of their native place in their hearts' (www.dermotbolger.com). The play offers a potted history of the first build of Ballymun through to the current regeneration project. It documents the community's strength in standing up to the authorities, resulting in their voices eventually being heard and their predicament being addressed. It comments on how Ballymun had become nationally recognised as the ghetto of the capital city,

> It grows into a hidden history of modern Dublin life, exploring the relationship between a place which outsiders used to stigmatise its people and those people themselves who gradually begin to take possession of their own destinies, to fight to reshape that place, to see children born and die there, and to call it home.
> (www.dermotbolger.com)

The second play in the *The Ballymun Trilogy* is *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006), a play of two contrasting acts. The first act is set in Ballymun in 1963, three years before the rural landscape was erased by the realisation of the modern high-rise urban suburb. Act Two juxtaposes the small rural community of Ballymun in 1963 with contemporary Ballymun, where a significant number of immigrants populate the neighbourhood. While both acts are set in very different eras, the narrative interlinks questions around migration (physical and psychological exile), motherhood, identity and place,

> The first act is set in 1963, where a young Irish girl finds herself forced by circumstances to emigrate to England, while the second act is set in present-day Ballymun, where a Polish woman finds herself confronted with a similar conflict between migration and motherhood. While the old Ballymun in the play is a rural world where emigration is an economic necessity, the new Ballymun is

labourer from a small cottage in rural Ballymun in 1963. Eileen escaped to England, and raised Matthew alone as Michael had been killed in a construction accident while waiting for her to join him. Matthew arrives in Ballymun as a grown man, working on the demolition of the Ballymun tower blocks. The place he enters was the site of the home to which his mother could never return; it is now home to Monika, a young Polish woman among many immigrants to a prosperous Ireland, who will encounter a tragedy of her own in contemporary Ballymun. *The Consequences of Lightning* takes place around Sam's funeral. Sam was the original Ballymun tenant, the first to re-settle in the new housing project. His son, Frank, who has a past relationship with Katie, is a successful developer living in middle class comfort in fashionable Malahide. Sam is mourned by the immature Jeepers, and Katie's daughter, Annie. Martin, one of a small community of Jesuit fathers who opted to live in Ballymun, mediates the complex unfinished business of the people assembled for Sam's burial. Sam's ghost is present throughout, commenting on place, people and events.

The first play of the trilogy, *From These Green Heights* charts the arrival of the new, especially chosen families for Ireland's most ambitious housing project of the 20th century – the Ballymun estate. The narrative spans a 40 year period, and Act One stages the wilting and fading of enthusiasm and hope characteristic of the initial inhabitants, and its replacement with despair and depression. Act Two comments on the current regeneration project and the hunger of the local people to forge and sustain a community of pride, in a place whose name no longer carries the burden of shame. The new *axis* theatre premiered the first play on November 24th 2004, in the early stages of the regeneration project, in the flagship building,

> When the first part of *From These Green Heights* was staged, *axis* was still tightly hemmed in by the McDonagh Tower – which was by then deserted and awaiting destruction. It was an appropriate but eerie sensation for the audience to quite literally have to pass within a few feet of this empty tower to reach the theatre and watch the lives that had been lived in that tower being recreated on stage.
>
> (Bolger, 2008b: 4)

From These Green Heights was directly grounded in *Ballymun Incantation*, with many poetic references and devices resurfacing in the play. The principal

Every young poet who wrote it out in verse:
McDonagh and McDermott, Connolly and Pearse,
Every name scrawled on walls in each tower block,
Every face that is remembered, every face forgot,

Every life that ended here and every life begun:
The living and the dead of Ballymun.

(Bolger, 2010: xxi, [see Appendix 5])

The poem pays homage to the many voices that were never heard, the broken promises and the suffering that was endured by the local community. Its suitability for the public wake is evident as the content of the poem could be said to be directly relevant to the majority of the audience. Its impact was twofold: it generated such a strong local response that following the Public Wake, Bolger returned by public demand to read the poem himself the following day; and the *axis* commissioned the poet who it might be said had been transformed into a medium for the voice of the community, to write *From These Green Heights*. Bolger read *Ballymun Incantation* to an audience of 5,000 people, many of whom waited to receive a signed copy of the poem, 'A lot of the locals have that poem still on their walls' (Bolger, 2008c: RC). The strength of local response to *From These Green Heights* led to *axis* commissioning the remaining two plays.

The dramatic plot for each of the plays in *The Ballymun Trilogy* centres on the lives and experiences of members of the Ballymun community. At the core of each play is a series of interlocking lives which play out dramas of family, home, place and identity. *From These Green Heights* stages Christy, Carmel, and their son, Dessie, relocated from Gardiner Street among the original selected tenants. Dessie's relationship with Marie brings the family into contact with her mother, Jane, and her sister, Sharon. Jane has moved to Ballymun with her girls from the refined suburb of neighbouring Glasnevin following the breakup of her marriage. The twists and turns of Dessie and Marie's relationship over many years link the families' histories, and their daughter, Tara, born in Ballymun, embodies and anticipates a better future at the play's end. *The Townlands of Brazil* stages the tragic history of Eileen, a tailor's daughter, rejected by her parents when she became pregnant by Michael, a manual

> [T]hat's research but without interviewing directly people. If you do that you feel you have a burden to tell their story exactly and it limits you. You feel a certain conscience, so you almost want to get the facts right. You want to get the actual period right and then you really want to invent characters, and then you don't want to be burdened by saying I misrepresented that man I spoke to last week. I mean again, I would never go into who a character is based on, but there are two or three stories that I would have known that would have formed that play and that some have links to Ballymun, and that's the bit the playwright keeps back. Even though the people may have heard about the story they wouldn't know how it was about them.
>
> (Bolger, 2008c: RC)

Bolger was aware how Ballymun had been misrepresented in the past in other media such as TV, film, novels etc, and was conscious of not following suit but instead creating plays which were true to the lives of the community, without romanticising or glamorising the community's past.

Bolger also spoke about how writing these plays for a relatively new community theatre venue offered him a licence of sorts, a poetic freedom which is seldom associated with commissions for mainstream theatre. He emphasised the unique demands involved in writing *The Trilogy*, including the need to write plays for a mixed cast of professionals and local amateurs, and to write into an actual space which was also embedded in the fictional location of the dramas. From the beginning he was conscious that the people of Ballymun 'didn't want anything whitewashed of Ballymun, but they also didn't want that it was all a disaster because there was a lot of great happiness in Ballymun' (Bolger, 2008c: RC). How such considerations were balanced becomes apparent in the following brief overview of the plays.

8.2.3 The Plays

In the summer of 2004, Bolger was asked to write a poem to be recited at the Public Wake for the demolition of the first tower block. The poem, *Ballymun Incantation,* is a sustained reflection on the lives and experiences of a variety of local people, across the course of the initial build, the years of decline and the eventual regeneration of Ballymun. The recital of the poem was performed by a mix of professional and local talent, an approach to casting that would continue with *The Ballymun Trilogy.*

8.2.2 Bolger's Approach to the Project

In writing *The Trilogy*, Bolger was particularly conscious of his status as an outside artist taking on the responsibility of speaking on behalf of a community to which he had no ancestral link. He was born in the neighbouring district of Finglas, and his relationship with Ballymun started in 1979, when he gave a poetry reading in the basement of a tower block. Ballymun however, has been no stranger to his work in the years since then, and the place has featured in many of his novels, plays and poems (see www.dermotbolger.com). In conversation with this researcher, he acknowledged his enthusiasm for the opportunity of writing for Ballymun, as the place embraced its new status as one of Ireland's largest urban regeneration zones. According to Bolger (2008c: RC) the commission to write the first play *From These Green Heights (2004)* was a privilege that not all playwrights are presented with because 'you don't always get a chance, short of using tv, of communicating directly with the people your plays are written for'. The act of representation of 'the other' (Prentki and Preston, 2009) is one which will be discussed in more detail later, suffice it to say here that Bolger was very conscious of the fact that he was producing a piece of work (ultimately becoming a body of work: *The Trilogy)*, knowing 'where it was going to be staged, and it was a slightly different audience going to it, going to see it' (Bolger, 2008c: RC). The specificity of the narrative in terms of place and people meant that Bolger was very much aware of the task of 'making a piece of work that is so site specific that it can't be played on or be played any where else. So you are trying to create a piece of theatre that is true to Ballymun, so it was pressure as a playwright' (Bolger, 2008c: RC). When Bolger was asked about the challenge of creating a play about a community he was not part of, he acknowledged the need to research the historical and social aspects of the area, but emphasised the importance of understanding and depicting the lives of people he knew, and had heard of, from the area. This researcher then asked him about the ethics of such a practice and the obligation of accurate representation, and Bolger was quick to clarify that in fact, while his understanding and depiction of the people of Ballymun was based on real life characters, he only used aspects of their personalities or their personal stories to inform his fictional/historical storyline,

framework for investigating the perceived value of Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* within the immediate sphere of the Ballymun community. It also produces questions and insights which apply to wider discussions of community theatre, as a genre and/or a field of practice and critical inquiry. The 'poetics' equation is used below as a critical structure, and this chapter begins by investigating the form of Bolger's work, his approach to the project, a summary of each of the three plays and a consideration of issues in categorising Bolger's work. The next part of the equation, 'application', calls for consideration of the actual performances, the role of narrative in the moment of representation, and its relationship to identity, aesthetic decisions and the performance space in which the plays were staged. The third element of the equation, 'perception', exposes particular questions about how people perceive the value of *The Trilogy*, and these are explored using data from interviews, observation records and questionnaires. The concerns of Chapter 5 re-emerge here, and acts of interpretation are examined by focusing in particular on decisions made in staging *The Ballymun Trilogy*.

The chapter concludes by considering how *The Trilogy*'s poetics challenge critical categorisation, and how this may influence understandings of possible future developments in the community theatre genre, especially within the Irish context. The particulars of Ballymun as a community, its history, current regeneration, the establishment of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre and the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy* prompt this researcher to consider whether there may be a transferable formula that can be distilled from the Ballymun experience, and to reflect upon the extent of its applicability.

8.2.1 Form

Chapter 4 explored influential definitions of community theatre, and categories defined by van Erven (2001), Prentki and Selman (2000), Kershaw (1992) and Cohen-Cruz (2005) will be reconsidered in this chapter in light of Bolger's work with the community of Ballymun and the staging of *The Ballymun Trilogy*. Before such categories can be explored in relation to Bolger's work, it is important to give a brief overview of Bolger's approach to the project, followed by a short summary of the plays, which in turn informs the task of categorising his work.

Earlier chapters considered a range of perspectives on Ballymun and its regeneration, drawn from accounts of globalisation, the global city, approaches to community and developments in arts policy and community theatre practice. This chapter seeks to bring these perspectives together in the description and, especially, the analysis of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, so as to understand both the impact of the plays on people in their local place, and the significance of *The Trilogy* as an example of a new kind of community theatre practice. Taken together, the physical location of the theatre on Ballymun's Main Street, the metaphorical space of the dramatic world, and individual and group processes of interpretation, embody the relationship between narrative, identity and place which concerns Chapter 5. Chapter 7 examines the history and significance of the *axis* in some detail, and it may be useful to consider the centre, and its theatre in particular as an example of a 'logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias' (Lefebvre, 1984: 12). In this light, the *axis* is a location in which the people of Ballymun can tap into 'the vast store of non-formal knowledge embedded in poetry, music, dance and theatre' (Lefebvre, cited in Smyth, 2001: 16). Lefebvre's description of this 'third aspect' of space, the 'social space' (1984: 12) echoes Benson's (1988) notions of 'place', and 'place-time', which this study suggests are useful in making sense of the *axis* as a site of performance. Performance locations confirm the importance of 'space' both for acts of living and as a platform for storytelling – for playing out and making sense of those acts. Other factors, such as those emphasised by Boler (cited in Nicholson, 2005: 78) stress the importance of the 'historical specificity' of the narrative when it comes to acts of community theatre. Boler's point is a pertinent one with regard to the efficacy of community theatre in general, but is central when analysing Bolger's work in the *axis* centre. In the case of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, as will be discussed in detail later, the 'historical specificity' of the narrative is the foundation on which the artistic project is based.

Chapter 1 notes that Prentki and Preston (2009) identify a move in the critical literature towards a poetics of applied theatre, of which community theatre is a central practice. They understand 'poetics' as a set of critical relationships between three complementary aspects of a creative process, as follows: Form + its application + its perception = poetics. When applied to this case study, this equation offers a structural

researcher will suggest that Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* challenges the capacity of the term 'community theatre' to capture the development, positioning and impact of plays produced in tandem with a major project of urban regeneration. In this way, the discussion exposes limitations in established critical categories and proposes that in Ireland, as elsewhere, understandings of the nature and efficacy of 'community theatre' as a descriptive and critical term need to be renegotiated to take account of the pressures which define globalisation, global cities, contemporary identity formation and representation come together and interact in the context of urban regeneration.

Staged in the *axis* Centre at the heart of the community, using a combination of local actors and professionals, *The Trilogy* foregrounds complex relationships between local narratives, the construction of identity, and the role of community theatre as a means of enabling a community to have a public conversation with itself – a central concern of this study. The dramatisation of local narratives also raises questions about acts of interpretation, relationships between teller, material and receiver (Benjamin, 1936), ownership of narrative content, and empowerment in acts of performance. In order to position myself, an outsider to the community, as a recorder of, and critical witness to key acts of performance - the premieres of each of the three plays - I undertook extensive research into the history and social composition of Ballymun (Chapter 2; Chapter 7). I supplemented this with structured observations in carefully selected local sites (Chapter 6), and attended and documented first night performances of each play at the *axis* theatre. In addressing the matter of evaluation, I felt it necessary not only to use, but to look critically at the effectiveness of some of my chosen tools: questionnaires adapted from Matarasso's (1997) six point template, and five central points from *Manifesto for Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion* (DCMS 2008). Because of this, the study includes observations on their usefulness as ways of investigating the perceived value and purpose of arts provision within the community of Ballymun. I also reflect on the strengths and limitations of my attempt to document the social impact of Bolger's work, and consider the efficacy of data, including observation records, interviews and questionnaires, and Prentki and Selman's (2000) evaluation template, in monitoring such impact.

Chapter 8

The Ballymun Trilogy by Dermot Bolger: A New Direction for Community Theatre

> Theatre is a way of talking about ourselves, and it is not a privilege that a lot of communities have. (Ní Chonchubhair, 2008: RC)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an evaluation of a major arts project realised through the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre – *The Ballymun Trilogy* (2004-2008) by Dermot Bolger. Bolger's involvement with the *axis* is an example of the implementation of the 'participatory arts' approach, which has developed from and replaces an established policy of An Chomhairle Ealaíon of supporting community artists (see Chapter 4). Even so, the positioning of this major dramatic trilogy as in many ways a piece of community theatre, and its staging in Ballymun, meant that the work was received with what van Erven (2001: 2) sees as a typical lack of respect accorded to community theatre within media and academic circles. This study and this chapter especially, may be seen as redressing such an imbalance by arguing that *The Trilogy* is a unique cultural event with important consequences for local people, which also has the potential to enrich public understanding of Ballymun, its history, and its regeneration. It tests this argument by means of a case study approach to the impact of *The Trilogy* on how narratives of place, past and local identities are communicated and understood.

The *Trilogy* also has implications for how community theatre is understood. As a body of work, the plays of *The Trilogy* (*From These Green Heights* (2004), *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006) and *The Consequences of Lightning* (2008)) pose particular problems for established sociological and aesthetic categorisations, and this chapter will consider them in some detail. While Prentki and Preston's (2009) definition demonstrates the flexibility of the term community theatre and the multiple practices that it encompasses, the focus here is on a form of theatre practice which is produced in dialogue with people's narratives of themselves in their own place. This

Taken together, the history of the *axis* and the attitudes expressed in interviews, reports and surveys – including those undertaken for this study – point to a strong argument for seeing the very existence of the *axis* centre as embodying the collective will of the community. It is a space which was willed into being, and which accompanies and enhances the regeneration project, but does not depend on it for its existence. That means that when Dermot Bolger's *Ballymun Trilogy* is staged in the *axis*, as will be argued in Chapter 8, it occupies a space which is both a practical resource and a symbol of the will and the pride of the people of Ballymun.

attachment to be forged, generating a collective memory, recognising the present and anticipating the future.

The old signature of Ballymun – acres of barren, unkempt space – has been transformed into smaller, more agreeable places which have become strongly associated with the community and its identity, 'I like the way the community come together at certain times of the year. Halloween in particular, they put the festival together and try to get all the kids and that together' (Hanaphy, 2010: RC) and 'There are plenty of activities for everyone to get involved with, youth groups for kids including drama, music and sports. Gardening and cooking for adults' (Kelly, 2011: RC). Such a transformation combined with the rich reservoir of personal and collective narratives that have emerged from the people of Ballymun over the last six decades (see Ballymun Oral History Project), has enabled a community that had been pushed to the margins of society, stigmatised and ignored, to become a symbol of triumph (see Cuffe, 2008). While a combination of factors, physical, economic and social, have contributed to such a transformation, it is the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre which has given the community a public platform for the dramatisation of its stories – stories which both define and constitute the community of Ballymun.

The Ballymun Trilogy is a powerful testament to the lived experiences which underpin those stories. The following chapter will examine Bolger's work and critique the problems such an artistic project poses for sociological and aesthetic categorisations, especially in light of the accepted definitions of community theatre (as referred to in Chapter 4). The analysis will consider whether community theatre is moving in a new direction, responding to the current era of widespread urban regeneration and therefore stretching established definitions of the arts practice, requiring a renegotiation of category to be considered. Data relating to the local people's perception of the value of *The Ballymun Trilogy* will be positioned in relation to the suitability of available templates of evaluation for assessing the social impact of the work (as referred to in Chapter 3). The act of presenting a community with their own stories through theatre, raises questions about the ownership of narrative and the complex relationship between teller, content and receiver (Benjamin, 1936), all of which will be explored in the next chapter.

such as the Plaza outside the *axis* Centre, was important in encouraging community cohesion (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.L). It is clear that the provision and use of such spaces (third spaces) are of paramount importance in contributing and helping to develop a sense of a community as suggested by Scarbrough (2008: 68) 'The third place' is significant for a developed sense of identity, belonging and community cohesiveness in individuals. Third places require communities in which to grow and develop in order that they reflect and provide for the needs of their members, and in this case that means catering for all three generations of Ballymun.



Figure 7.8 The Plaza Outside *axis*

The relationship between space, which through associated meaning is transformed into place (Benson, 1988, 2001), echoes Scarbrough's (2008) idea of the link between the 'third space' and the shared human task of forging a sense of identity. As discussed in Chapter 5, identity is created in relation to others, requiring dialogue and interaction with each other and with space, both of which happen when communal space is provided, such as the Plaza. Kearney (2002: 28) and Lefebvre (1984: 8) suggest that people are carriers of stories, and such stories are generated by people's interaction within a given space, whose abstract nature is transformed into place, contextually tied in a two-way system, where place informs identity and identity informs place. The provision of public spaces within a community enables a sense of

areas for each of the five distinct community areas in Ballymun, 'the ongoing development of three larger parks (Coultry, Balcurris and Poppintree), as well as the completion of a number of pocket parks distributed around each estate' (Montague, 2008: 64). Interestingly, the independent research conducted on behalf of BRL (2010), concludes that the two most frequented amenities within the Ballymun area out of the listed twelve are the parks and the *axis* centre (469 participants). It is perhaps the Plaza outside the *axis* centre, in the centre of the new main street, which is the most obvious provision of Oldenburg's idea of the 'third place'. Its presence is significant in accommodating collections of local people, acting as a venue for a range of activities (such as the weekly Farmers' Market) and developing that sense of belonging and attachment to place that comes from collective interaction with local and visiting people. In conversation with Mrs Keegan, a first generation resident of Ballymun since 1969, she emphasises the impact the provision of such a central communal space has and what it means to her, in words which reflect the UK Urban Task Forces definition referred to above,

> I think that's brilliant. It's lovely. I went there for a walk one Sunday, not long ago now, we went down to Supervalu me and me granddaughter Alex, and we went out, walked around and we sat on the bench there and it was lovely, sitting there. The Farmers' Market is brilliant.
>
> (Keegan, 2008: RC).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Mrs Seymour, a second generation resident of Ballymun who suggested that the Plaza area has

> Become the centre stage of major events that take place throughout the year within Ballymun, and it is very important to have this. All the community get together to enjoy the arts that have been developed throughout our community, great performances every year, lovely atmosphere for all to be part of.
>
> (Seymour, 2010: RC)

A third generation respondent, a ten year old school child, was also eager to point out that the new Plaza is a space that she and her friends often use: 'I think it's good for when it's Hallowe'en and the market every Thursday' (School Child, 2010: RC).

These responses, across three generations of residents, amplify data generated through questionnaires, where 75% of 70 respondents said that the provision of public space,

carriageway dividing the community in two, accompanied by the large and intrusive roundabout that eventually became one of Ballymun's signature features, would be regenerated, creating a town centre where daily community interaction would take place,

> In the first instance, the roundabout – the then meaningless hub of the town – was to be replaced with a real main street formed by domestic, commercial and civic buildings facing directly on to the street on either side. This was to be founded on a civic plaza instead of the vehicular roundabout and dual carriageway of former days. (Montague, 2008: 63)

The new approach adopted by the Masterplan (1998) for the regeneration of Ballymun, directly addresses the mistakes of the first build where, while there was a huge amount of space provided for the public, it was not viable due to its barren design and lack of upkeep. The role of public space within recent regeneration projects has acknowledged the social capital that such provision can generate. According to the UK Urban Task Force Report (cited in Cuffe, 2008) the idea of public space and what it actually means needs to be acknowledged,

> Public space should be conceived of as an outdoor room within a neighbourhood, somewhere to relax and enjoy the urban experience, a venue for different activities, from outdoor eating to street entertainment, from sport and play areas to a venue for civic or political functions; and most importantly of all as a place for walking or sitting out. Public spaces work best when they establish a direct relationship between the space and the people who live and work around it.
>
> (Cuffe, 2008: 215)

Scarbrough (2008) develops this idea further by referring to Oldenburg's notion of 'third places' which are neither workshop nor home, but are crucial to the maintenance of the community and the enhancement of social capital: 'the role of the third place is to provide continuity, regularity and a sense of place, all of which contribute to the construction of the self, the protection of the self within the public sphere and the generation of a collective identity (Scarbrough, 2008: 58). The Ballymun regeneration has been active in addressing (or perhaps redressing) the provision of such public spaces by providing a number of public parks and communal

too early to form conclusive judgements, however the data from all sources would indicate that the arts are being integrated more and more into everyday life and have had a significant impact on the social regeneration of the community in particular.

While arts provision through the *axis* offers the community a public platform to celebrate, inform and nurture their community and their sense of identity, the location of the building in the centre of the main street is no coincidence, and is very much reflective of the ethos on which the *axis* operates, where the centre offers a communal space for all, which is the property of the collective community. The idea of space and the necessary transformation into place (Benson, 1988, 2001; Massey, 1999 and Lefebvre, 1984) which is an essential contribution to building civic pride and community cohesion has not only been addressed in the building of the *axis* but has been central to the whole regeneration project of Ballymun.

7.10 Space/Place in Ballymun

The idea of space as a social amenity is becoming ever more fragile in urban regeneration projects, where very often land is valued for its retail value as opposed to its social worth. This fact has been discussed in some detail in Chapters 3 and 5, where it was noted that the provision of public space has been eroded by the capitalist insistence on commercial opportunism and space colonisation (direct effects of globalisation). It was also noted that in many regeneration projects the efforts to create a sense of place attachment had altered considerably from collective and communal association, in favour of the individual relationship, which is very often cemented through commercial activity. What is emerging as of particular interest about the provision of public space in Ballymun is that one of the contributing factors to the decline of Ballymun was the blight of acres of idle, poorly maintained, uninhabited land characteristic of the Ballymun high-rise estate of the initial build, 'nothing more than land left behind the flats – covered in grass for sure, but by little else. Poorly tended and unregulated, these areas left little opportunity for children to hide, to make huts or to draw on anything that might define their play' (Montague, 2008: 61). Ironically it was the availability of such a vast quantity of deserted land that made the current regeneration project (1998-2010) so comprehensively different from the first build. Ballymun, which was initially seen as the flagship modern suburb, whose design catered for the car before people, with the notorious dual

importance of the arts to the community first and foremost. This may be due to the unusual fact that the creation and establishment of the *axis* centre was a community led initiative that happened from the bottom up. Therefore the integrated nature of the *axis,* as both an arts and community resource, is most definitely assisting the regeneration of an area that was once very bleak indeed. The research collected for this study strongly indicates that the responses from randomly selected respondents and a number of in depth interviews were generally very positive about the arts and community. The role of the *axis* is particularly significant in an area that has no prior history of such a centre or an extensive background of community or professional arts. In the case of theatre, the *axis* initiated a number of different programmes to try and get local people to attend performances, aimed especially at those who did not have a history of theatre going. Yeates (2008: RC) states that *axis* developed its audience profile by hosting a range of benefit nights for schools and many other organisations. The arrangement usually requires the local organisation to block-book a hundred tickets at 15euro each and bring back 7.50euro per ticket to the *axis* box office, thus benefiting both parties. In conversation, Bolger (2008c) refers to the impact of such strategies on the type of experiences and responses which took place in the auditorium,

> There wasn't a great history of theatre going in Ballymun so *axis* sold it in an interesting way, that they would sell benefit nights for the schools and things. So people would come along and say 'Ah yeah, you know, I wouldn't be in the theatre but I'm going to support the school' and it sort of gave them that excuse to come in the door – through to encouraging other agencies resident in the *axis* centre to attend the theatre space, 'There was a special performance for the Drugs Task Force on one afternoon, where a lot of people were recovering addicts and that were wandering around the theatre and saying "Oh Jesus, I can't take this" and were actually directly talking to the actors. So as a playwright it was exciting for me that you were suddenly dealing with a whole new dynamic in the theatre. (Bolger, 2008c: RC).

Thus, it can be concluded that the *axis* centre has become an integrated part of people's experience of the regeneration with the potential to pay dividends to the local community in the long term. On the evidence that is currently available it is still

This is borne out by the following statements, recorded by this researcher during field research on this aspect of the study, 'The kids now love the arts, but it wouldn't be my cup of tea. It takes all kinds' (Local Resident: 2008) and

Researcher: Do you think the *axis* Centre is an essential facility for the community of Ballymun?

Local Resident: Oh, absolutely. We need the *axis,* we deserve it.

Researcher: How often would you use the *axis* Centre and for what?

Local Resident: Who me? Oh no, I've never used it.

This brief transcript illustrates many conversations with people who shared a similar attitude towards arts provision, in that their immediate response was that it was essential for the community to have arts provision, yet they themselves never availed of it.

This seemingly odd correlation between positive association with arts participation and a lack of actual participation illustrates the key role of perception in Prentki and Preston's (2009) *Poetics* equation, whereby once the form (the arts) is provided for, then its role within the community is validated. This then contributes to the creation of a positive sense of their centrality to community well being, and in Ballymun's case contributes also to positive responses to the regeneration project. The real progress then could be said to be the shift in attitude, reflecting the pivotal role *axis* has in enabling such a positive image to materialise. During the data collection process, this researcher noted how there seemed to be a hunger or enthusiasm for change among the local people in general, which manifests itself in a desire for a full range of improved facilities, including arts based facilities, for the community.

Perhaps contrary to the global city response to regeneration where culture is seen as something that should be 'cashed in' (Hassan, 2007), the provision of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre in Ballymun establishes the arts as something much more important than just a means of generating economic opportunity (through enhanced public image, media coverage and tourism). It embodies the social

phrasing (Merli, 2004) and potential bias. Despite these reservations, what is particularly interesting about this data is that when this method is considered not in isolation, but as a contributor to a range of research methods, it helps to frame, and is enriched by the overall findings. The question based on Matarasso's first point is used as part of a quantitative method of research, and results in an overwhelmingly positive account of general perceptions of the arts. However, the point is more fully explored in a qualitative sense in Chapter 8, where arts participation is investigated through the personal accounts of two local amateur actors who participated in *The Ballymun Trilogy*, enabling the research to explore how the essence of Matarosso's first conclusion is worked through in very specific individual cases.

It is important to note however that while 100% of the cohort surveyed agree with Matarasso's first point, data collected from within that same cohort shows that only 20% (75 participants) regularly attend local arts events (see Appendix, Figure A1.S). This is an interesting point because it illustrates that while people may not actively participate in any arts events/programmes themselves, they can see the benefit and value of arts provision and participation within their community. When this data is placed alongside data generated by the independent survey conducted on behalf of BRL (2010), it is interesting to note that 73% of 469 respondents said they sometimes or often use the *axis* Centre. The data collected by this researcher, while on a significantly smaller scale and with a smaller sample cohort, suggests that only 20% (75 participants) regularly attend arts events. It could therefore be argued that the decision to combine the *axis* arts centre with the community resource centre was indeed a novel and effective approach, as people evidently don't only see the *axis* as an arts venue *per se* but as a multipurpose facility. The overwhelmingly positive responses to Matarosso's second (Appendix 2, Figure 2A.B) and fifth points (Appendix 2, Figure 2A.E), acknowledging the role of arts participation in contributing to social cohesion and community development, further suggests that there is widespread approval associated with a generalised view of the arts even if it does not necessarily transfer into actual participation in arts practice or attendance at events.

value: when done well, they attract attention from not just local but national and international audiences'. Such instrumental sentiments, however, are balanced by the creative arts team of the *axis*, who, while recognising other benefits apart from that of an artistic nature, fully appreciate the arts as entities unto themselves,

> You can give the whole art for some other purpose, and I mean arts have a huge therapeutic and social [...] I mean they are all there. But even at the mere practice of doing arts for arts' sake you are getting all the economic, the social, the therapeutic benefits from it.
>
> (O'Brien, 2008: RC)

Arts provision can ultimately fulfil two functions. Firstly, they can be provided for their social benefits, something other than the art form, which very often can be 'music to the ears' of funding bodies seeking to tick boxes associated with social provision (Reeves, 2002). Secondly, arts provision can be solely for the benefit of the art form itself. It is difficult to draw such a clear divide however, as suggested by O'Brien (2008) above. The findings from this study would suggest that arts provision via the *axis* tries to balance such concerns, where each of the art forms is facilitated by professionals in the field who are knowledgeable and passionate about the art form first and foremost. However, additional benefits that arise from the social interaction within the triangular relationship (as referred to previously) between artist, material and interpreter (receiver) seem to be accommodated and even encouraged in the *axis* centre,

> Cultural resources have played an important role in changing outside perceptions of Ballymun; and both the potential for the arts in the area, and the community confidence and self-esteem engendered by engagement with the arts have been shown to be considerable.
>
> (Tierney, 2008: 86)

Tierney's (2008) observation is echoed by findings from this research, where 100% of the people surveyed (45 participants) in Ballymun agreed with Matarasso's (1997) first point that arts participation leads to personal growth and enhanced confidence and skills base (see Appendix 2, Figure A2.A).

The recognised limitations of using Matarasso's (1997) findings as a questionnaire are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, specifically with regard to problems of positive

articles), 6 (TV programmes/features), 14
(radio features).
60 (attended), 70 (pieces auctioned) Art Auction

Nolan's idea for the creation of *Hotel Ballymun* was revisiting the 'utopian architecture of 1960s Ballymun and encouraged the practice of salvaging and re-imagining objects, spaces and resources from the past and reusing them inventively to meet contemporary needs' (Power, 2008: 39; see also www.hotelballymun.com). A number of local residents' responses to the project were recorded by Prior (2008), such as 'Very much end of an era – my era', 'why did I never appreciate the view then' and 'very good. I also seen my picture that I had in my sitting room in the hall of the new hotel'.

In another *Breaking Ground* project, the German artist Joachim Gerz involved the community in sponsoring trees and planting them in the public spaces around Ballymun. The artist presents a very interesting rationale for the creation of such a project as explained by the commissioning body BRL,

> Joachim Gerz is a German artist and his idea in coming to Ballymun was that, he said Ballymun was a no fly zone for birds because there were no trees. And he said, he also challenged the idea of being in an area where all the people were having housing built for them, that people always receive and don't give. So he offered people the opportunity to buy trees. And 600 people bought trees. And then you had to meet Gerz and go through this process, where you said, 'what if the tree could speak, what would it say for me?'
>
> (BRL Representative, 2008: RC)

The benefits of such a project are multiple, but one of the main reasons why Gerz secured the commission was that it was seen as a very important project in fostering a sense of civic pride, as confirmed by the BRL Representative (2008: RC).

Given the positive media coverage that the arts have generated for Ballymun, both from the *axis* and the *Breaking Ground* Percent for Art Scheme, coupled with *axis* attracting approximately 60,000 visitors in 2009 alone, it could be assumed that the arts are most definitely contributing to the creation of Ballymun as a cultural destination as understood by Prichard (2008: 17): 'Interventions by artists offer good

> BRL grasped the opportunity and launched *Breaking Ground,* an innovative public art programme, which soon became the Largest Per Cent for Art Scheme programme ever undertaken in Ireland. [...] Artists working on site become an asset for local schools to exploit for project-based and skill-based work.
>
> (Prichard, 2008: 17)

The *Breaking Ground* project was launched in 2002, one year after the opening of the *axis* centre. The project involves supporting a variety of artists of local, national, and international significance to design and deliver arts projects within the Ballymun area. Community participation and contextual specificity are two very important aspects of the *Breaking Ground* commissions.

According to Prichard (2008) a programme such as *Breaking Ground* provides an

> opening for art in all forms to be made in different contexts and with new publics. Its four strands of engagement with the community, with the built fabric, and through events and education are already internationally known, and establish new links, a new image and a source of pride for Ballymun.
>
> (Prichard, 2008: 23)

One such successful commission from the *Breaking Ground* project was *Hotel Ballymun,* a highly original artistic project, created by the artist Seamus Nolan. In 2007 Nolan converted the top floor of Clarke Tower into a short-stay hotel. The tower block, otherwise empty, housed a wide-ranging arts programme, including art, music, critical seminars and social events within the newly established hotel, engaging the public and a selection of artists and organisations active in Ballymun. Nolan's approach was unique and caught the public imagination, securing positive national media coverage.

Table 7.3 *Hotel Ballymun* Collated Information [summarised] (Prior, 2008)

Participants/Attendants	**Events**
33	Furniture Workshops
18	Hotel Staff
496	Overnight Guests
150 (performers), 1,350 (guests at events)	Evening Events, Guests and Performers
8 (community development groups), 12 (public bodies)	Conference Room Bookings
23 (newspaper/print media), 7 (art journal	Media

the positive perception of work being produced at the *axis* (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.J)

As discussed earlier, many regeneration projects are perceived as 'cashing in' on culture, and as using it not for the sake of the art form or community development, but as a means to something else. When such a view was put to Mark O'Brien, the Arts Development Officer for *axis,* he suggested that the establishment of the *axis* Community and Resource Centre was not so sinister,

> I think that, hats off to the Ballymun Regeneration with regards to the social regeneration, of which *axis* is funded through. I mean *axis* is a separate organisation but it is funded through BRL, also the Arts Council and there is an array of different funders on our board. The board is made up of an independent chair, there are three residents and then there are three statutory bodies. But I think from both the community resource and artistic sides of *axis*, I think the regeneration sees the value of that. [...] And presumably because, as I said earlier it was built originally by the community, obviously people really wanted this.
>
> (O'Brien, 2008: RC)

Data collected on site suggests that a similar opinion is shared by local people 'It's great for the kids especially. There's activities for everyone in the centre' (local Resident: 2008), and '*axis* has been great to introduce the arts moreso into the community' (Kelly, 2011: RC). As recognised earlier the majority of the local people surveyed (71% of 45 participants; Appendix 1, Figure A1.M) felt that the purpose of the *axis* Centre is for a mix of economic, artistic and community benefits, while 17% in Appendix 3, Figure A3.E saw *axis* as a means of bringing people into the area, and 0% associated the purpose of *axis* with image promotion, both of which are prominent features when discussing 'cashing in' on culture in the context of regeneration programmes in this globalised era (see Held, 2004).

O'Brien's (2008) recognition of the significant role BRL has played in supporting the arts in Ballymun is evident not only through its continued support of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre but also its commitment to an arts programme that would see a selection of arts interventions become a reality in varied contexts and locations within the regeneration of Ballymun,

community and on a national and international level. In relation to the *axis* theatre, such an approach is perhaps most evident in the decision for the *axis* production company to draw on both professional and local amateur actors, in casting its productions. This is a highly unusual approach and one that will be the focus of much of the discussion in the following chapter; suffice it to say here that the aspirations of the mission statement are realised through such actions,

> The theatre pioneers the work of local artists, offers local groups the chance to express themselves. It showcases local, national and international talent, and attracts audiences from all over Dublin who are keen to experience the 'new Ballymun' at first hand.
> (Power, 2008: 38)

The commitment to nurture, train and ultimately employ local actors in professional theatrical productions produced by *axis,* coupled with the fact that some of the most successful work to be produced in the *axis* theatre to date has focused on the dramatisation of the stories and lives of the people of Ballymun, contributes to *axis'* unique status. The use of local stories is most apparent in Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* which documents the history, present and the future aspirations of the community of Ballymun stretching over three plays (all of which will be examined in Chapter 8). Not only is Bolger a concrete example of the new approach to 'participatory arts' in the community, where a playwright/novelist/poet of international recognition (see www.dermotbolger.ie) has come into the community to work directly with its people, but so also is the fact that *The Ballymun Trilogy* documents the stories of the local people. Murphy (2011: RC) acknowledges the importance of local stories being told through theatre '[The community] gets to be heard, which is very important if any healing is to be accomplished. They get to express things that weigh heavy on their hearts and minds. It can highlight that a lot of us would have the same issues so only by sharing [such stories, they] realise they are not alone'. Roe (2011: RC) is of a similar mindset, where he states 'we need plays each year to keep telling the stories of Ballymun. Most plays strengthen people's thoughts on concerns of what the play is about'. When surveyed a 90% (45 participants) majority of the local people stated that they firmly believed in the importance of the Ballymun story being told through the arts, which is testimony to

creative team consists of the Artistic Director Ray Yeates, the Arts Development Officer Mark O'Brien and the Programme Manager Niamh Ní Chonchubhair. While, in any given year, there are a variety of arts programmes that work in association with local groups, schools, organisations etc, not all of them are delivered from within the actual centre. Many of the programmes are similar to 'outreach' programmes despite O'Brien's insistence on eschewing the title 'outreach': 'I am fearful of the word outreach. I just think it symbolises masters, or just the font of all knowledge, and we are going to show you how to do, so it is more the other way around with *axis*' (O'Brien, 2008: RC). According to O'Brien it is the two-way relationship between artist and participant, where both are enlightened by each other, which is the ethos on which such 'outreach' programmes are run from *axis*. The variety of 'outreach' programmes that the *axis* centre has to offer annually is extensive, with many associated with drama, such as the three year drama-in-education programmes *Spark* and *Dig It* (2005-2008). The *Spark Report* (2009: 53) documents the relationship that was forged between local primary schools in Ballymun and the *axis* Centre, 'children have been inside the building [*axis*] as part of the Spark experience and parents and carers were invited to Spark celebrations, which led to 2,400 people visiting the venue in one week'. The report goes on to state that due to the high levels of involvement, there was significant media interest, with the programme securing regional and national press coverage for the centre, while also appearing on national television. Such 'out-reach' projects are additional to a range of on-site classes and programmes run by the centre; however, it is the role of the theatre within the *axis* centre which is of particular interest to this study and will be the focus of Chapter 8. It is worth noting here that the *axis* theatre, as seen by the Artistic Director Ray Yeates, is one of the principal sites in which the democratisation of culture can take place, 'Yeates argued that this state of the art theatre space in the very heart of Ballymun could be an exception to the socially exclusive world of the arts' (Bolger, 2008a: 250). Such a stance is echoed in the mission statement for *axis* where the highly unusual pairing of 'excellence' and 'community' in the one phrase suggests that there is something exceptional about the centre: '*axis* is a centre for excellence with the community at its heart' (www.axis-ballymun.ie). This is perhaps most evident in the centre's insistence on erasing the gap that often separates professional arts practice and community arts. The relationship between vocational and professional arts practice is perhaps the most progressive aspect of the centre's approach to developing the arts both within the

disagreeing with the idea that a strong arts culture existed pre-*axis* (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.H).

The difference in opinion here may be due to the fact that O'Brien is the Arts Development Officer for the *axis* Centre, and arguably would be very well informed and immersed in the arts scene in Ballymun; however, the people surveyed represented a random selection of local people who may have little or no interest in the arts and may therefore be unaware of the range of art groups active in the area pre-*axis*.

Ultimately, what the establishment of the *axis* arts centre meant, was that there was now a network of support, space and a public platform in which the arts became visible and from which they could develop. Professional assistance, financial support, encouragement, and links to national and international art networks, are some of the many advantages that have materialised from centralising the arts within one establishment, '*axis* aims to improve local availability of expertise, advice and information, both through the arts programme and by the relationships with groups, individuals and organisations within Ballymun and the wider arts community in Ireland and abroad' (www.axis-ballymun.ie). One art project which demonstrates *axis'* commitment to living up to such a statement is the *INVENT* project (Jan – May 2008), which was an innovative Rap/Spoken word project, engaging young people through music and poetry while at the same time demonstrating a social commitment to identifying and supporting any of the participants who may be at risk from suicide. The evaluation report concludes that 'the young people identified this [the ultimate performance of the Project] as a unique experience for them and an outlet for creative expression. There was a tangible sense of community amongst the participants, the staff, and the audience at the event' (Beston, 2008: 19). This approach is in keeping with the national shift in emphasis away from the idea of community arts and embracing the new approach of participatory arts (as discussed in Chapter 4) where the best, most established, artists are going out into the communities and working directly with the people (a point which will be returned to later in this chapter).

A creative team of three full time employees in *axis* ensures that the provision of arts, on and off site, is delivered effectively (see Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2010). The

43% are not sure and 17% disagreed with that view (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.G), 'It might be the focus now [the *axis* Centre], but that's because we are still waiting on the shopping centre. That will defo be the focus when it's here' (Local Resident, 2008). When local people were questioned specifically about the positioning of the *axis* Centre within the community in isolation they were generally quick to respond positively. However, when, as indicated in the independent survey for BRL (November, 2010) the people surveyed (496 participants) were asked about how crime and anti-social behaviour could be reduced, the arts and culture were considered the least effective activity for deterring such behaviour, with factors such as education, family and children's support, health facilities, deemed to be superior in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour. Such research therefore suggests that arts and culture are more associated with image promotion and cultural destination, as recognised in the official rhetoric referred to earlier in the chapter, than with the instrumental values claimed for arts participation as recognised by Reeves (2002) and Jackson (2007) (see Chapter 3).

The *axis* clearly has two distinct functions, and while the two areas may overlap on occasion and contribute to each other, they are nonetheless quite separate. While acknowledging the value that the community resource centre offers the residents of Ballymun, this study is mainly concerned with the role and provision of arts within the centre (in particular theatre). O'Brien (2008) comments on how, prior to the establishment of the *axis* centre, there was a very active arts scene within the community of Ballymun: 'there was a huge sense of visual art and music, youth theatre particularly' (O'Brien, 2008: RC). O'Brien's view however is not supported fully by the data elicited from some of the people interviewed and those surveyed (45 participants), Hickey (2009: RC) 'Well there was and there wasn't. Everything was very spread out before *axis.* You had to go looking for what you wanted. I was a member of Roundabout Youth Theatre, so that was there. I know there were some poetry groups and dance classes and that, but now things are much better thanks to *axis',* and 'I wasn't really interested in the arts. I don't remember there being much going on, only in school. The *axis* has changed that now' (Local Resident, 2008). Results reached from the survey on the ground suggests that 40% (45 Participants) were unsure as to whether there was a strong arts culture in Ballymun before *axis* was established, with a further 40% disagreeing altogether and a further 20% strongly

Appendix 3, Figure A3.I, the idea of the *axis* as a place where the democratisation of culture takes place, is according to the Arts Development Officer something that is encouraged, where all interpretations and responses to the arts within the centre and the community programmes that *axis* run are appreciated and necessary for the health both of the centre and the individual involved (O'Brien, 2008: RC),

> Like even sitting in the café where we some times hang exhibitions and people have kind of gone [He pulls a negative face] and that's all right. It's fine not to like art. Or going to see Dermot Bolger's play and going 'nah' or saying 'yes' rather than going 'ok yes so I don't have to go to college and then go somewhere to be able to go and see it'. And like, that is really valid and I suppose that is democracy for that individual.
>
> (O'Brien, 2008: RC)

The multi-purpose nature of the building encourages all sectors of the local community to benefit from the facilities should they wish to. 'Well I've only used it for the kids, the children. The ballet was on over there. Our children went, our grandchildren went there and that. I'd go in for a cup of tea maybe' (Keegan, 2008: RC). Such a varied use of the space/facilities has enabled much of the professional rhetoric (official speeches, reports, etc.) about the *axis* Centre, to position it as the 'flagship' building on the main street of Ballymun. It has also developed into the focus of the community and it has become a hub of interaction in the social network of the area, 'The new axis arts and cultural centre has provided a strong focus for many community and arts activities. It is crucial in future years that facilities and support structures ensure that opportunities for social interaction between all residents continue' (Cuffe, 2008: 214). Cuffe's (2008) argument is timely, as data collected in this study shows that many local people regard the *axis* Centre as being a central facility, a finding also arrived at in an independent survey conducted on behalf of BRL (Nov. 2010). The report of the BRL survey listed 12 recognised facilities, ranging from local parks to sports centres, and 73% of 496 participants said they used the *axis* 'often or sometimes', suggesting that it is one of the key facilities for the Ballymun community. Research conducted by this researcher, while on a much smaller scale (45 participants) is generally supportive of the findings of the independent survey for BRL (November, 2010) with 40% of the public surveyed agreeing that the *axis* Centre holds such a central place for the community at large,

However, while there are striking examples of how well the *axis* is working at exposing the members of the local community to a range of arts activities, data collected on the ground suggests that only 33% of 45 participants are conscious of being exposed to a range of art forms/activities when using the facility, with 43% not sure and 17% disagreeing all together (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.I). Such figures are supportive of what local people were quick to articulate when in conversation with this researcher,

> Well you know what you are going in for, wouldn't you? Like I mean if you're going into the theatre to the panto or that, well you're not going to want to go up to the art gallery are you? Or maybe you would? I wouldn't, but I suppose you could if you were early or something. But then I wouldn't be arsed with all of that. (Local Resident, 2008)

Other residents were more conscious about the range of art forms being housed in the centre. One respondent interviewed was particularly enthusiastic about being exposed indirectly to the variety of visual art exhibited in the building - from local children's to professional artists - while using the facility primarily for parenting courses, weight watchers and as a meeting place,

> There is a lot of art displayed all around the building inside the *axis*. It has an art gallery up stairs. Downstairs walls are always covered in children's art, that they have taken part in at the *axis* or around Ballymun. The reception area is full of leaflets with information on seminars or upcoming art events. I also signed up for emails and I get a brochure annually.
> (Seymour, 2010: RC)

This irregular pattern of local awareness of the selection of art forms available in *axis*, may be accounted for by the fact that the dominant experience of progress in Ballymun has been in the change of the physical landscape as testified to by the local residents (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.E), and that such large scale regeneration programmes take time to ensure that all elements are enacted. Progress has been achieved in the social and artistic domain, but not to the same extent as that in the physical landscape. This is in accordance with the literature in the field which notes that the physical changes take precedence in order to facilitate later social and economic changes (see Hall, 2006). Despite the evidence of the data as presented in

experience for a variety of social and/or economic reasons. On two very distinct levels, a centre such as *axis* is active in exposing a variety of art forms both directly and inadvertently. The fact that the building houses two distinct centres means that each attracts its own particular clients/participants, and that all will be informed or exposed to the actions of the other centre just as a direct result of using the same building. Kershaw's (1992) theory is aptly illustrated by playwright Dermot Bolger (2008c) when he offers a striking example of how people using the facility for a selection of purposes often interact with different art forms in the most interesting of ways,

> A security guy told me a story in *axis* one time that summed it up really well. Upstairs there's a balcony, and there's an art space there, and someone had an exhibition that day, and the exhibition was about balloons and they'd helium balloons arranged in certain ways and they were tied down to certain things, and the security guard thought 'ah Jesus, when the kids get at those you know, they'll all be destroyed'. And of course, so after a week we came in and the balloons are up at the ceiling and they have all been untied, so the security guard got the security video and they found that what actually happened - there was a group of women of pensionable age and they all looked around giggling and left off all the balloons and then the children came out of the art class, and they were really upset. The children were trying to catch the balloons and put the balloons back in their place.

The array of excellent facilities that the *axis* building has to offer ensures that their clientele/users come from diverse sections of the local community and further afield (see tables 7.1/7.2). The evidence suggests that the extensive and varied use of the centre ensures that creativity and community participation is an everyday reality for the centre, as testified by the playwright Dermot Bolger,

> Axis contains a superb two-hundred-seat theatre, a dance studio/studio rehearsal rooms, a recording studio, conference centre facilities, office space for ten community development organisations, a crèche for thirty-five babies and toddlers, a café and an events bar. Every morning, children arriving at the crèche rub shoulders with community workers and actors arriving for rehearsal. Building workers sit in the axis café alongside lighting designers chatting with local residents.
>
> (Bolger, 2008a: 248)

> Originally it was meant to be two buildings. It was meant to be an arts centre and a community resource centre, but for different reasons funding, land space, they eventually built one building, for me it certainly came up with a novel, a new idea. Actually, from my experience there aren't too many arts centres that exist like this and there aren't too many community resource centres that exist like this either. So I suppose from the very 'get go' the community was at the heart of it, and it is very much being fed from the community arts side that has kind of fed into the fabric of everything that we do.
>
> (O'Brien, 2008: RC)

Such a set-up offers many additional benefits that would not be possible if the arts centre and the community resource centre had been built as two separate buildings. The building according to Power (2008: 38) acts as a sort of community magnet 'where children, young people, adults and the elderly could enjoy social as well as artistic activities, offering creative ways of bringing people together in a setting where trained organisers were on hand to help'. Power's (2008) observation is validated by data from this research project where local people were quick to claim that the *axis* Centre was first and foremost an amenity to serve the community,

> The *axis* has been a major achievement for Ballymun as a whole. It has brought theatre to people who would probably never have discovered it before. It is great that people of Ballymun can now experience what is happening around them. Every year it hosts major art events and it is always a centre of fun. At Halloween and Christmas events are great and comedy shows, music events, and the best thing is its the people of Ballymun who are involved. Being able to express their own talents, that may have been hidden in the past as they didn't have the good opportunities offered by the *axis*.
>
> (Seymour, 2010: RC)

Murphy (2011: RC) states that 'we have many amenities ranging from the youth to the elderly groups, drop in centres, childminding facilities. *axis* I believe does the biggest job here as it holds most of these aids and activities'. 83% (45 participants) of the people surveyed were in keeping with such opinions, where they primarily saw the purpose of *axis* as to serve the community (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.E).

Kershaw (1992) suggests that a democratisation of culture takes place through community arts. People, who may see the arts as the property of an elite, are exposed by community arts to art forms that they may never have had the opportunity to

which the community recognises as evidence in this study (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.M).

Table 7.1 The *axis* Community and Resource Centre Attendance/Programming 2009

Number of Participants/Attendants	**Event**
22,203	Shows (200) in *axis* theatre
2,719	Music Studio
989	Dance Studio (1,475 hours)
18,000	Café
15,604	Conference Centre
3,332	Arts Development Programme (318)
194	Art Exhibitions (12)

Table 7.2 The *axis* Community and Resource Centre Attendance/Programming 2008

Number of Participants/Attendants	**Event**
21,011	Shows (189) in *axis* theatre
3,114	Music Studio
1,235	Dance Studio (1, 933 hours)
20,000	Café
13,352	Conference Centre
4,701	Arts Development Programme (432)
168	Art Exhibitions (14)

The *axis*' financial stability is becoming ever more a reality, with BRL recognising such a fact 'obviously we fund *axis* to a good, a great extent, although they are becoming more and more sustainable in their own right' (BRL Representative, 2008: RC). For any arts and community resource centre to be able to claim such a status is quite remarkable in the present economic climate. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 represent data gathered for this study which reveal the range of activities being pursued in the *axis*, and also the very healthy numbers of people in attendance at organised events.

The dual purpose of the building, that of arts centre while also playing host to a number of tenant community groups, many of which have no explicit connection to the arts, makes *axis* unique,

delighted with it. There is lots of stuff going on in there though. I hear the comedy nights are good' (Local Resident, 2008) and

> I really feel that *axis* has helped Ballymun grow as a community in a major way. When it was first brought in as an Arts Centre, that brought something that had never been in Ballymun before, it was fresh and new and everyone wanted to be part of it in some way. Now with the amount of activities it hosts (Theatre, Dance, Music, Comedy) I think it is a major influence on the locals and makes them want to join groups that will put on shows there.
>
> (O'Sullivan, 2011: RC)

The survey conducted for this study reveals attitudes in keeping with the opinions expressed above, with the majority of the public surveyed (75 participants) seeing the provision of the *axis* centre as important because of the way it combines economic, artistic and community purposes (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.M).

Its economic purpose and impact is not central to this inquiry, but it is worth noting that the presence of the *axis* centre has given employment and training opportunities to a significant number of local people, from catering, to administrative duties, maintenance, to artistic roles. It has also been nationally recognised as being pro-active in forging relationships which have contributed to the centre's financial survival. 'Its engagement with the business community has recently been recognised at the Allianz Business to Arts Awards, where its artistic director won the Champion of the Arts category' (Tierney, 2008: 86). The programme manager Niamh Ní Chonchubhair stressed the financial diligence with which the centre operates: 'Financially we are very, very careful. We are a very, very prudent organisation. You have to be, and again it is an insult to anybody who has funded, participated, or paid for a ticket, if we don't spend their money well' (Ní Chonchubhair, 2008: RC). The varied programming of artistic events, coupled with the fact that the building is not only seen as an arts centre but also very much a community resource centre, gives the centre a broader financial spectrum from which to generate income, while also securing financial backers that are not just associated with supporting the arts. The diversity and quantity of programmes that are being produced and housed within *axis* annually ensures that while the audience/participant register is growing, so too is its economic viability and its contribution to the community at large, a contribution

building communities and supporting natural integration from the ground up' (Tierney, 2008: 83), the time was right for the *axis* centre to secure financial support from a variety of agencies. While BRL is the core funder for the running of the centre, other agencies such as the Arts Council, Foras na Gaeilge, Cityjet, Pobal and Dublin City Council all contributed to the centre, and continue to do so. What is particularly interesting about *axis* is that while all of the funders have been absolutely essential in enabling it to become an established centre for the arts and the community, the initial funding for the centre was secured by the community itself through EU funds, with the other agencies attaching themselves to the project at a later stage: 'To give the community again their due, the *axis* was the first building to be built in the regeneration and actually had achieved funding. The community had achieved funding through the EU Urban Programme prior to Ballymun Regeneration being here' (BRL Representative, 2008: RC). According to the Comptroller and Auditor General Special Report *Ballymun Regeneration, November 2007,* the development of the *axis* Centre cost 6million euro, with the funding provided by the following agencies,

-3million euro from the EU Urban Programme

-1.3million euro from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

-1.1million euro from the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism
-600,000 euro from Dublin City Council.

The combined contribution of local funders almost fully matches the funds secured by local people for their own locally-generated proposal. This would be significant wherever in Europe it happened, but it is particularly important to this study to acknowledge it.

This study is chiefly concerned with the role of the arts centre in relation to the provision of the arts, but it is worth noting that many local people when referring to the *axis* Centre not only saw it as an arts centre but just as much a resource centre, 'The *axis,* yeah I haven't been into the theatre but my friend uses the crèche, she's

The provision of the arts within the Ballymun regeneration programme has been centred on the building of the community arts centre *axis*,

> The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre was the flagship building of the regeneration. *axis*' key stakeholders are the residents of Ballymun, artists resident in the community, the professional Arts sector, the community and Voluntary sector and the local authority. In its dual role as an Arts and Community Resource Centre, *axis* has gained national recognition for its unique programming that places local people and their stories and creativity at the centre of works of the highest standard.
>
> (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2006: 65)

While such a statement pays tribute to the purpose and unique status of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre within the regeneration of Ballymun, what it perhaps tellingly fails to acknowledge is that what is really unique about the *axis* centre is that it was not the brainchild of BRL and the Masterplan but was the realisation of the hard work of a united community who recognised the importance of the provision of arts within their community,

> It is interesting because *axis* was a kind of, not pre-regeneration but it was the first flagship building on the main street, it was the first one built. But it was community led, like they raised the money themselves, the regeneration got involved with architectural support, but it really is very interesting the kind of growth of how it happened and there was a lot of vested interest, very political as well but I do think that because of that there is a reality to working here. Like we have 11 tenants in the building from the local drugs task force to welfare rights to the restaurant, not like in some other art centres where they are empty unless there is a show on. This place is kind of alive the whole day, and it is not all of it necessarily to do with art but to do with other things. (O'Brien, 2008: RC)

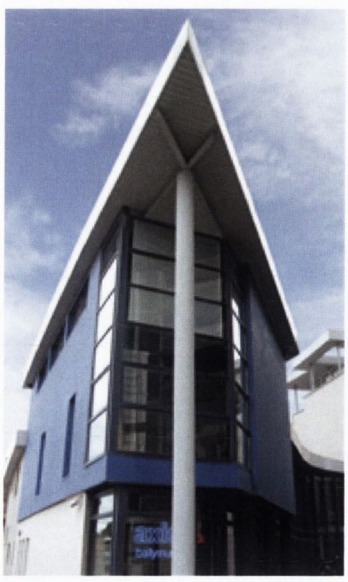
O'Brien's (2008) statement highlights a number of issues, all of which are worth considering. While the *axis* was the creation of the community at large, its realisation was dependent on a number of contributing factors. The fact that regeneration, as discussed in detail earlier, is no longer just about the regeneration of the physical environment but also the social and economic fabric of an area, and with Dublin City Council 'placing a huge emphasis on sport, arts and culture as mechanisms for

> I do think [the arts] are important as it gives Ballymun people a way in which to express their views, opinions, themselves and tell their stories. I also think it's a good way to allow people a glimpse into the real Ballymun rather than what they might have seen portrayed on the telly or stories they might have heard about the area.

Similar sentiments are expressed by Hanaphy (2010: RC), 'Yes, the arts are important for creating a positive image. I think the true story of Ballymun, not what people expect it to be, needs to be told. It's not all drugs and robbery and stuff. There is nice people here you know – that's the image the arts can get out'.
Such views were supported generally, and data collected via questionnaires show 62% of 45 participants stating that the arts were an important factor in creating a positive image of the area (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.D)

The provision of the arts in the regeneration of Ballymun is centred on two distinct projects. The principal project is the establishment of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, and this is complemented by an innovative public art programme, *Breaking Ground.*

7.9 The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre



axis:ballymun

Figure 7.7 The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre and Logo

via the regeneration project, recognised the existing culture in Ballymun prior to 1997, and built upon it by providing a support network through improving facilities and opportunities for arts participation. Two years on and the Completion Report (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 45) demonstrates the strengthening position of the arts within the regeneration: 'The Arts have been to the forefront in changing perceptions of Ballymun across all media and in assisting and in the embedding of economic development. The already proven potential for the arts in affirming Ballymun as an artistic district within the city and country as a whole is considerable'. According to Prichard (2008) (who led the multi-disciplinary team who created the Masterplan) the integration of arts into the planning stages of the regeneration of Ballymun was essential, as the arts were seen as a vital component in enabling the successful regeneration of the area. This view is a clear development from that which originally informed the Masterplan, which went no further that allocating a site, albeit a central one, for the building of arts and community centres. Surprisingly, and perhaps only in hindsight, Prichard (2008) stresses the arts' social weighting, pointing out that UK regeneration projects in the early 90s were very active in the integration of publicly accessible arts and exploiting the arts' multifaceted role in offering a community an outlet for celebration, involvement, entertainment, and education. He comments on how the arts were always regarded as central to the regeneration of Ballymun,

> All too often, art has been applied retrospectively to public spaces; that was not the Main Street framework's attitude to public art, however. We saw it as an embedded, parallel process; adding an unexpected dimension to regeneration, and enhancing community pride. (Prichard, 2008: 17)

Despite this endorsement, the fact that there was no direct reference to the role of the arts within the Masterplan (1998), other than the community's wish to have a dedicated arts and exhibition space, supports data collated by this researcher which suggests that it was in fact the community which was the driving force behind recognising the arts' potential in changing the public image of this area, 'I feel the arts, theatre in particular, gives people the chance to see what Ballymun, old and new, has been through and is currently going through. From the people to the place, told through the minds of Ballymunners themselves' (O'Sullivan, 2011: RC). Other local residents, such as Kelly (2011: RC) are of a similar view,

While the renewal of the physical landscape was the foundation on which the regeneration project was based, the role of culture and its purpose in the overall programme is central to this enquiry. To what extent has the Ballymun regeneration project mirrored, albeit on a much smaller scale, the global city response of regeneration, where culture has been turned into a commodity and a means of boosting the local economy (see Taylor, 2007)?

The opening quote of this section suggests that culture has indeed been viewed as a means of successfully promoting Ballymun as a 'destination'. This 'exploitation' of culture for means beyond its artistic importance, has, according to Bianchini and Parkinson (1993: 2), become standard practice. They find that culture has become an instrument for the construction of a positive urban image, encouraging tourism, attracting inward investment and strengthening the competitiveness of an area.

7.8 The Purpose of Arts Provision in Ballymun

A look at the balance between the social and economic weighting of the arts within the Ballymun regeneration project will help to reveal the ultimate purpose behind the recruitment of the arts. The whole idea of using the arts as a means of 'image' promotion has been to the forefront of large scale city regeneration projects across the globe, for example in Bilbao (Spain) and Glasgow (Scotland). The recognition of the potential of the arts to alter the image and perception of Ballymun was a significant factor in the provision of the arts in the regeneration programme. While in the blueprint of the Masterplan (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 1998: 11) it was noted that one of the principal problems to overcome was the 'poor image' associated with Ballymun, there was no direct reference to the potential of the arts in particular to address such an issue. However, the community's initial recognition of the potentially important role the arts had to play, led to their initiating the establishment of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, which will be discussed further in the following section (7.9). Interestingly, successive reports since the implementation of the Masterplan (1998) specifically recognise the important role the arts have to play in the promotion of a positive image of Ballymun. The Progress Report (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2006: 61) identifies the arts as aiding 'the change in the perception of Ballymun from the outside through positive media coverage related to art and culture programmes'. This report goes on to suggest that recent provision for the arts

Contemporary western cities as noted in Chapter 3, have been busy 'reinventing' themselves to remain, or become, competitive in the global market. Abrahamson (2004) suggests that, due to the decline in 'heavy' industries at the latter end of the 20th century, cities have had to look for alternative ways to sustain economic buoyancy. He identifies the idea of the 'globalization response' as the 'quick fit' solution. Such a response, as discussed in detail earlier, happily exploits the cultural particulars of an area for economic benefit. The transformation of cities from places of productivity into places of cultural and entertainment consumption, gives way to what Smith (2007) refers to as the 'cultural revival' of regenerated areas. As argued previously such a 'revival' can have the effect of reducing the status of the city to a mere commercial logo. It drives the practice of exploiting culture for economic means as opposed to supporting it for its own sake.

With regard to the Ballymun regeneration project (1998 - 2010), a resilience of sorts was demonstrated by the community in the face of new global pressures which have a tendency to surface in regeneration projects across the western world, when the community rejected attempts to shed the Ballymun name in order to 're-brand' the area and launch a new and desirable place on the Irish market, as suggested by Prichard (2008),

> What is now called 'branding' is significant, and for Ballymun the rebuilding started with the early idea of emphasising the constituent communities' names. These were the existing five neighbourhoods of Coultry, Shangan, Silloge, Balcurris and Poppintree – represented by the five fingers in the brand logo of Ballymun Regneration Ltd. Ballymun residents were proud of the name, it was the rest of the country that needed to change its opinion. (Prichard, 2008: 3)

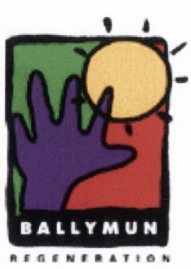


Figure 7.6 Logo of Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL)

agencies was readily available and gave the community a platform for their voices to be heard (if not always acted upon, see figure 7.3). 'During the consultation stage we were surprised to learn that over one hundred and fifty groups met regularly, sometimes in empty flats. They were the optimistic sign of an active, self-supporting survivor community' (Prichard, 2008: 11). This recognition of the role and value of the community within the decision and developmental stages of urban regeneration programmes is a feature that has been acknowledged the world over (see Hall, 2002; Rennie Short, 2004; Pieterse, 2009). In the case of Ballymun, an important testament to the success of the regeneration is, according to Power (2008: 37), the fact that the 'overwhelming majority of the community has opted to stay and win their prize of a new home – the majority with gardens. This speaks volumes for the community spirit that was engendered by the condemned flats'.

Tomlinson (2003) observes that the constant penetration of global products and cultural forces has a powerful impact that encourages communities to redefine who they are, and the data collected here indicates that this is one aspect of how the community of Ballymun is responding to globalisation. A small majority of the people surveyed stated that the bombardment of global products (media, clothes and food) made them consider their own cultural particulars all the more (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.Q). The data from this research also suggests that the people of Ballymun see their culture first and foremost to be a mix of local, Dublin, Irish and global, demonstrating an earlier observation in Chapter 2 that one of the lasting effects of globalisation is cultural hybridisation (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.P), 'Well I see myself to be Dublin first, well Ballymun first, then Dublin, but sure we're all Irish. I suppose that means we're all global then, yeah we're all of them I suppose. That's a very strange question, I'd never really think about it' (Local Resident, 2008).

7.7 Ballymun Urban Regeneration Project – A Microcosm of the 'Global City' Approach

> An awareness of the importance of creating destinations of a cultural or commercial nature can be hugely significant in the creation of a sustainable or successful place.
>
> (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 38)

Despite the negative image that attached itself to Ballymun during its troublesome decades of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, local respondents testify again and again to a very strong sense of community. 71% of 70 participants positively acknowledge a continuing sense of community (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.H), and the following comments illustrate important aspects of the attitudes that lie beneath those figures: 'Ballymun does have a reputation for crime, drugs and antisocial behaviour but we are a tight knit community with good family values and as a resident I have always felt safe here' (Kelly, 2011: RC), and 'I'd say the community is still strong enough. Ah yeah, we all stand together if there is meetings or anything now, you know. Now personally I mightn't go to the meetings but anything that had to be signed, petitions or anything you know, I'd do that' (Keegan, 2008: RC).

This summary of data shows that findings from interviews and questionnaires support each other, and are even more compelling when considered within the larger frame of globalisation and the frequently-reported negative effects this phenomenon has on contemporary communities, as documented in Chapter 2. The regeneration of Ballymun may indeed respond in many ways to an urge to position Dublin as a 'global city', and data collected for this research concludes that while the community of Ballymun are very much aware of the impact of globalisation on their local community. In interviews and questionnaire responses, on-site, 73% of 70 people surveyed stated that they were concerned about the impact locally of the current global crisis (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.T), but it seems that the community maintains the strength to deflect some of the more corrosive effects of globalisation, such as the promotion of individuality and isolation over group identity and community (as discussed in Chapter 2), and that the inclusion of Ballymun into Dublin's pursuit of global city status has not been at the cost of community cohesion (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.O).

In this globalised era, Ballymun has drawn its strength as a community – albeit a relatively 'young' community – from the establishment of a network of active community groups, as mentioned earlier. The existence of these groups prior to the regeneration programme ensured that the third strand of the contemporary 'three-way partnership' of regeneration programmes between public, private and community

property prices and migration of people into the area are matters of concern (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.K).

The impact of gentrification in the Ballymun project may have been limited if calculated via the percentage of private home owners in comparison to the national average; it remains, nevertheless, a pressing issue for local people, and with the BRL committed to investing and creating economic stability for Ballymun, the impact on the social health of the community needs to be considered. What is of interest to this particular study is to consider how the strong community cohesion which was the foundation on which the Community Action Programme of the early 1980s was built, has managed to persist or even strengthen to this very day, despite all the developments which have materialised through the regeneration programme. Such consideration has been prompted by research that is referred to by Corcoran,

> Research in suburban communities in and around Dublin has identified the important role played by a core group of pioneers or activists in the community who frequently help to mobilise people in order to improve local conditions and amenities. This raises [...] very pertinent questions. If there is nothing to fight for – because all necessary services and facilities are provided on site according to a planning blue-print – how will a sense of community be inculcated and sustained?
>
> (Corcoran, 2008: 269)

In relation to Ballymun, the current regeneration programme has provided many of the essential services that the people of the area had to fight for over the decades, and it is interesting to note that despite Corcoran's (2008) warning of a community weakening once the fight for rights has been somewhat addressed, Ballymun continues to be vocal about its rights (as noted earlier in relation to the protest against the closing of the Plaza Hotel) with most local people interviewed expressing strong views about the health of Ballymun's current community,

> I do feel that there is a strong sense of community in the area. One great example is the OtherWorld Festival. Every year Ballymun puts on a spectacular Halloween Show, with many different groups from the area participating. Ranging from Drama/Theatre, to Music, to Dancing, and every year more groups want to take part in this fantastic event which at the end is topped off with an amazing fireworks display.
>
> (O'Sullivan, 2011: RC)

> It is estimated that by the end of the physical regeneration project approximately 50% of the residential units will be socially rented from the Dublin city council. It would be hoped however, that over the next 10-20 years, that at least 50% of the Ballymun Regeneration housing will be purchased, at which point approx 75% of the housing stock will be private. Such a figure would represent the normal ratio of public to private housing as seen throughout Dublin. (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2006: 39)

In an interview with the BRL Representative, the idea of gentrification, as defined by Roberts (1998) in Chapter 3 was problematic, with the Representative echoing the findings of the Progress Report statement above, and identifying tenant diversity in the area as a positive and necessary factor for the health of the community at large,

> I would feel that what some people would call gentrification is actually creating a socially integrated and diverse place. [...] Generally places that can achieve some element of social integration are successful and you see Ballymun is again unique in that 5000 units for population, and not one of which was built by the private sector. When we came there was 80% [...] social housing and 20% owner occupation. Which is the antithesis of Ireland as a whole and part of the Masterplan vision is to achieve a redressing of that imbalance. [...] We have kept the population intact and we have brought in and are hoping to bring in more additional people to, in a way, redress that balance.
>
> (BRL Representative, 2008: RC)

Research conducted for this study would suggest that while the impact of gentrification in Ballymun may have been limited, and if, according to the statement by the Progress Report and the BRL Representative above, it is experienced more as social diversification, it continues to be an issue that is affecting the community, 'Yeah, gentrification is a big problem. I was living in the Thomas Clarke Tower in the centre and now I'm living way out' (Hanaphy, 2011: RC). Also, local residents are not only concerned with the impact of their new location, with many living a considerable distance from the Main Street, but also the price of property, should they be in a position to purchase it from the local authority, 'There was no way I could afford to pay 230 000euro for me house. I'm happy renting from the corpo' (Seymour, 2010: RC). Survey data collected on site supports such attitudes with 63% of the local people (70 participants) asserting that direct effects of regeneration, such as a rise in



Figure 7.5 Ballymun's Strategic Position between Dublin City Centre and the Airport

The advantages that come with the physical renewal of an area, coupled with the implementation of a rigorous economic strategy, affect and change its social fabric. The evident advantages that come with economic growth, such as an increase in the standard of living, more disposable income for leisure activities etc, as noted in Chapter 3, come with a warning. City regeneration projects across the globe have been susceptible to gentrification. Similar regeneration projects within the city of Dublin, such as the Docklands and Temple Bar, have not been able to avoid a certain percentage of gentrification which has contributed to inflation of property prices and the erosion of local communities (see Montgomery, 2008). Smith (2007) notes that in extreme cases the debilitating effect of gentrification manifests itself when locals are no longer in a position to purchase or even rent property in the area. Such an issue however has not materialised to such a degree in the Ballymun region. Even though property prices have risen significantly in Ballymun since the implementation of the regeneration project, homes continue to be more affordable by comparison to the property market in the rest of the capital. The Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (No. 61, Nov. 2007, cited in Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 56) notes that 'since the commencement of the regeneration both commercial and residential land values in the Ballymun area have increased at a faster pace than in the wider Dublin area'. Even though tenant diversity is one of the issues that has been addressed in the regeneration project of Ballymun, the rate of public to private ownership of properties continues to be above the national average, resulting in maintaining a reasonable land value, however some might say 'depressing' the overall land value,

ownership standing at 39%, but is still a considerable improvement since the implementation of the regeneration programme. Other factors such as the quality of the urban design have been pivotal in enabling a new image of Ballymun to infiltrate the public domain.



Figure 7.4 Destruction of the Old Towers in Favour of New More Family Friendly Housing

This change in image has been achieved by a variety of approaches. Environmental improvement, marketing, media monitoring, community promotion and development support are the areas which have supported and are enabling a positive public perception of Ballymun to surface (see Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2006: 33). The arts will be discussed later as a key player in the positive promotion of Ballymun's image. The improvement of the transportation system to boost economic activity has also been important. The recognition of Ballymun's strategic importance, with its proximity to Dublin Airport, Dublin Port, the M1 and M50 have all been advantageous in contributing to the development of Ballymun in terms of its economy.

consultation in 1997, where 84% (2500 respondents) of the people surveyed stressed the need for the community to have a dedicated arts and exhibition space. In response to such a high percentage, the Masterplan (1998: 7) allocated a prominent site in the new square for the arts and community centres, situated right at the heart of Ballymun. Data from this research confirms consistent acknowledgement of the need for an arts centre in Ballymun with 87% in total (45 participants) agreeing that the now established *axis* centre is an essential facility for the community (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.F). This pattern of support is repeated in the official *Social Strategy Survey, Nov. 2010,* carried out independently on behalf of BRL, in which the research dedicated to 'recreation' revealed that *axis* is the second most used recreation facility by the local people (496 participants). A more detailed discussion of the role and development of arts provision in the area will be explored in section 7.8.

Improvement in employment opportunities for the people of Ballymun was one of the objectives set out in the Masterplan 1998, and employment levels have risen significantly in the Ballymun area since 1997. According to the Completion Report (2008), approximately 1, 363 new jobs have been created in Ballymun since 1979: 'These new jobs have helped to stimulate the local economy and to fuel further economic growth. It is estimated that there will be approximately 3,700 new jobs post-regeneration in Ballymun' (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 39). Opinion on the ground is mixed about job creation as a result of regeneration, according to Roe (2011: RC) 'we now have a working theatre and a sound studio, and the children have plenty of after school clubs to join. It has also provided numerous jobs for plenty of the people from Ballymun'. One local resident wasn't so enthusiastic, 'There might be a few more jobs alright, but we need more. Maybe when the shopping centre and that comes on, then that should give us more jobs' (Local Resident, 2008).

Another necessary component enabling economic growth and sustainability, as mentioned above, is promoting 'tenure diversity'. While BRL have an obligation to re-house the existing population, they have been actively promoting alternative tenure options, through a variety of approaches including private, co-operative, voluntary and affordable housing in the area (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2010). Despite such actions, the level of social housing remains high at 61% in comparison to private

DoEHLG had been secured to see the final phase of the replacement housing scheme completed.

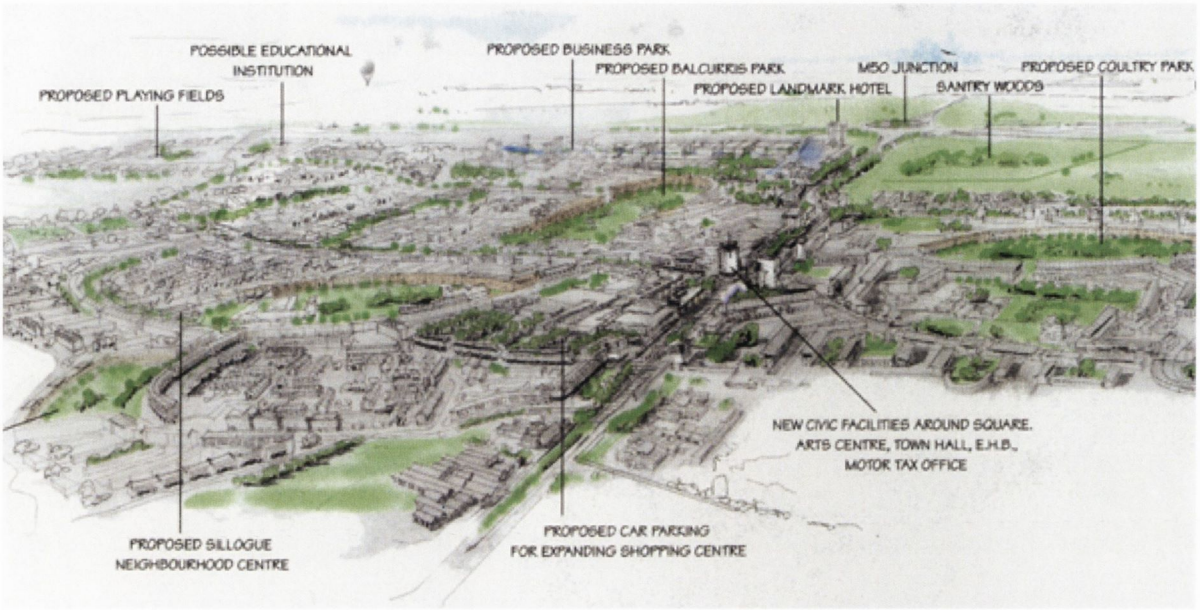


Figure 7.3 The Proposed Masterplan for Ballymun (1998).

The improvement in the physical environment was seen to be essential if a vibrant local economy was to be achieved. Under the heading of 'Objectives for Economic Development' the Progress Report (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2006: 33) states,

> The most important overriding objective of the Masterplan was the creation of a sustainable urban area. The Masterplan is an integrated strategy the aim of which is to create a synergy whereby objectives that are not primarily 'economic' still have a significant impact on economic viability and development. For example, the promotion of tenure diversity and quality urban design as well as the provision of quality transport infrastructure for the sustenance of economic activity is highlighted.

The Masterplan (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 1998: 7) details extensive improvements in the social infrastructure of the community. Provision is made for three main areas: (1) training and education, (2) leisure, sport and recreation, (3) advice, support and community development. Within these categories the role of arts is addressed, with the Masterplan (1998: 6) presenting findings from the first round of

> forced to evacuate tenement buildings throughout Dublin city and uproot to the brave new world of modern living.
>
> (Murray, 2008: ix)

The Masterplan of 1998 was implemented alongside the Integrated Area Plan 1998 (IAP) with the intention that all areas – physical, social and economic – would be appropriately addressed. While the survey data collected in this study (presented in Appendix 1, Figures A1. E, A1. F and A1.G) reveals a range of responses to the perceived success of particular elements of the regeneration, it is interesting to note that when responding to a more general question about the overall success of the regeneration programme (see Appendix 3, Figure A3. A), respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the regeneration to date has been a success (last round of questionnaires were collected in April 2010). This fact was one which people on the ground were quick to acknowledge, 'Ah yeah, it's better alright, there is no doubt about that' (Local Resident, 2008) and,

> I think the regeneration has a lot of very good points for living a very balanced life. Some people had issues that were once caught within the walls of the flats. They felt it was harder to cope with, and that brought a lot of hardship on many, many families. Unfortunately, due to the stigma of the flats that grew over the years from people outside of our community it got harder for people to relate anything other than living in an area that had a so called reputation, because we lived in flats. I do believe we now live in a very well balanced area and the housing has brought a lot off happiness to our community.
>
> (Seymour, 2010: RC)

The physical environment of Ballymun continues to be addressed through the regeneration programme (see figure 7.3). According to the Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (2010) over half of the new housing has been built and two thirds of the flats have been demolished. A range of community buildings and recreation facilities have been successfully completed and now service the five neighbourhoods of Ballymun. The Main Street has seen the addition of the new Garda station and Divisional headquarters, Social Welfare and MABS offices, in addition to the *axis* Centre and other civic buildings. While many of these areas of improvement occurred during the latter end of the Celtic Tiger era, the current national financial crisis has not jettisoned completion of the Ballymun regeneration programme. According to the *Ballymun Regeneration News* (Dec. 2009) it was confidently reported that funding from the

the regeneration of life in an area' (Waters, 2008: 272). The survey conducted as part of this study suggests that the change in the physical environment is instantly recognisable and the first piece of the regeneration puzzle to be put in place. It would be interesting, however, if Ballymun should become the self-contained town that the regeneration envisages, to explore whether a survey of a similar nature conducted in 2020 would record a similar percentage of the public seeing a big difference, not only the in physical environment of Ballymun, but also in the economic and social health of its community. However, research for this study would suggest that even though the regeneration project has yet to be completed, local people continue to feel that Ballymun has a significant distance to go to become a self contained community, 'Well we're still waiting for the shopping centre that they promised and there's lots of other things we need to make sure that Ballymun can exist as a self-contained community. If we get the metro that will be great' (Hickey, 2009: RC) and 'I wouldn't say a self contained community now, but you never know, if they [BRL] do what they say they are, well then maybe' (Local Resident, 2008). A survey conducted on the ground (70 participants) supports such views (see Appendix 1, Figure A1. I).

The objectives set out in the Masterplan of 1998 (see www.brl.ie) were clearly concerned with the regeneration, not only of the physical environment, but also the social and economic conditions of the neighbourhood. This approach was in stark contrast to the initial build of the Ballymun estate in the 1960s, which concentrated all its resources into the physical environment while neglecting to invest in the social and economic welfare of the area. The Masterplan of 1998 was the government's attempt to rectify those mistakes: 'I do think there was a thing of righting a wrong' (BRL Representative, 2008: RC). In refocusing their efforts to create a 'self-contained' community in Ballymun, the need to redevelop the physical environment fully was a necessary step to support the development of economic investment, which in turn enhances the social fabric of the community,

> The 1998 Masterplan adopted a brave approach to redevelopment, retaining all the existing residents while rebuilding the town and putting in place all the social and economic infrastructure necessary to sustain the community. It remains to this day unique throughout Europe for the integrity of that process, and is in stark contrast to what happened in the 1960s, when families were

physical, economic and social aspects of change since the beginning of the regeneration, a majority of people surveyed (95% of 70 participants) acknowledged a significant change in the physical environment (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.E), against 60% stating that they see little difference in economic opportunities (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.F). The socio-demographic statistics available in 2008, support local views that while there has been a significant improvement in the physical environment, Ballymun continues to underperform relative to national socio-economic statistics. The following information is taken from the most recent *Census of Population 2006,* (cited www.ballymun_nc.ie). The census states that the population of Ballymun stands at 15, 493, with Ballymun having one of the youngest populations in Ireland. The census indicates that 27.3% of the Ballymun population is aged between 0-14 years, compared to the national average of 20.4% and Dublin's average of 15%. The area is characterised by high unemployment (14.5%) and a high percentage of lone parent families, with 59% of families falling into this category, in comparison to the rest of the country where only 25% of families are recognised to be one parent families, with a higher percentage in the capital city Dublin with 38%. Ballymun continues to have a higher proportion of social housing with over 60% of all households renting from the local authority. BRL however anticipates that after the current regeneration is completed such a ratio should change considerably and eventually be more in line with the national profile. They hope that the tenure mix will ultimately reach 44% public and 56% private.

What has been recognised by many (see Murray 2008; King 2008), is that it is absolutely essential that the physical element of the regeneration be successful, as this leads, in turn, to more economic opportunities for the area, alongside the development of the social fabric of the community, with the ultimate intention of aligning some of the statistics listed above more closely with national norms. Waters (2008), while in general agreement with Murray (2008) and King (2008), develops this idea, acknowledging that the success of Ballymun regeneration is dependent on 'the regeneration of a community, but this could only come about as a result of the successful physical interventions'. He lays greater emphasis on the need to address the social aspects of a community undergoing regeneration, 'although the project includes elements of construction, demolition, design and renovation, the regeneration is only in the flimsiest sense a construction project. Much more it is a project aimed at

audience present were encouraged to go out and join a public demonstration organised by local people in protest at the closing of the relatively new Plaza Hotel in the Plaza Square directly outside *axis*. Local hotel workers had received no notification of losing their jobs as a result of the closure, and a large number of protestors gathered in the Main Street, shouting slogans such as 'Ballymun deserves better' and 'We will no longer be ignored'. Such action recalls the community spirit that fuelled the public protects in the early 1980s (bank closure) and late 1980s/early 1990s (parents against drugs). It is a concrete example of Roe's (2011:RC) point that the community of Ballymun continues to be active in protecting their interests and collectively voicing their concerns.

As noted earlier, the variety and sheer number of community groups that continue to be active in the area, many of which have been set up by local people to help tackle the social and economic problems (www.cap.ie) is a real sign of a strong community. 40% of the sample of 70 participants interviewed as part of this study stated that they were members of between 1 and 5 voluntary groups (see Appendix 1, Figure A1. D).

According to Prichard (2008) the presence of a firmly established community added significantly to the consultation process,

> despite their anonymous concrete world, Ballymun residents had created the communities of Coultry, Shangan, Sillogue, Balcurris and Poppintree. They ran community forums that proved to be the key conduits for consultation during the Masterplanning period and subsequently. (Prichard, 2008: 11)

The Ballymun Regeneration Project, which is now in its thirteenth year, is perceived by respondents to this research as having been successful in bringing about positive changes for the community. The alteration of, and vast improvement to, the physical environment can be clearly seen, and this is accompanied by development in both economic and social realms, 'I'm quite happy now. I've only seen half of it; if I live long enough I'll see the rest of it. At the moment I'm quite happy. When I am coming in on the bus it is really lovely looking at it and it's going to be lovely when it is finished, (Keegan, 2008: RC) and 'Ah, yeah there's no denying it, the place looks grand now so it does' (Local Resident, 2008). When conducting research into the

to a better standard of living. This persistence is all the more remarkable as, by the time of the urban renewal Masterplan of 1998, the community was under severe pressure. According to the Completion Report (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008), by 1997 a variety of social and economic factors were testing its strength. It had developed into an area that was

> Characterised by low levels of economic activity due to a limited economic infrastructure, the bleak physical environment and the low skills base. There was a lack of financial incentives and an absence of institutional back-up to encourage private sector investors. The population of Ballymun had been declining since the 1980s and residents did not have enough disposable income to attract private sector investors. [...] Unemployment was running at 44% due to early school leaving and a lack of skills.
>
> (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 3)

The Completion Report (2008) goes on to note that in fact Ballymun as a destination, a place where people from other parts of the city would visit, was non-existent, and that 90% of local traffic travelled through Ballymun, destined for somewhere else. For these reasons, it is no wonder that some analysts see the ability of people, with so many daily challenges to meet, to find strength to protest for their rights as what is most remarkable about the community of Ballymun (see Norris, 2001; Connelly, 2006).

The strength that characterised Ballymun's community activism in the early 1980s remains part of the contemporary community profile (see above: Roe, 2011: RC). This was noted by this researcher at a recent conference, '*Changing the Story*' (*axis* Centre, Ballymun, 2008), where a collection of local people took to the stage to reflect on the Ballymun of old and contemplate the new Ballymun. The contributors to the event stemmed from a variety of backgrounds, and all had some interaction with the community at large, such as Ollie McGlinchey (Ballymun Communications Manager), Stewart Dowie (Neighbourhood Arts Worker), Dean Scurry (Comedian/youth worker/artist), Aideen McBride (storyteller). They were joined by poet and playwright Dermot Bolger, Professor Alan Read (Kings College, London), writer Evelyn Conlon and composer John Nee. What was particularly interesting about this event, apart from the array of personal stories both tragic and comic about Ballymun, was that when the conference came to a close, all the participants and the

economy' (Local Resident, *Hotel Ballymun,* 2007). In this phrase, he summarises sentiments which are repeated throughout research done on the ground using questionnaires. This memorable phrase enriches the data presented in Appendix 1, Figure A1.H, which indicates that a large majority of people surveyed (70% of 70 participants) feel that there is a strong sense of community in Ballymun.

This strength in community may be due to the number of active community groups (past and present) within the area. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General's Special Report *'Ballymun Regeneration'* (November, 2007), there are 128 community and voluntary groups operating in the Ballymun area, categorised under the following headings: Animal Welfare (3 groups), Arts (6), Childcare (19), Community (12), Drugs (4), Education (3), Employment (2), Family (8), Financial (2), Intercultural (1), Legal (1), Mediation (1), Men (1), Mental Health (3), Religion (2), Residential (10), Special Needs (2), Sport (21), Training (6), Travellers (1), Women (3), Youth (14). Many of the groups were established on an ideological premise such as the *Ballymun Community Coalition* which was a direct response to the community's acknowledgement that they deserved better support and resources from the Irish government,

> Ballymun's reputation as a 'bad and failed place' had spread far and wide. Yet in spite of so much bad news, there were at least ninety known community groups in the estate, and their struggle to make Ballymun better was nothing short of remarkable. The groups were organised and manned by committed tenants and community activists, some of whom had moved to the estate specifically because they wanted to help, but most of whom emerged as leaders from the houses and flats of the estate itself.
>
> (Power, 2008: 32)

The (re)birth of the Ballymun community in response to the injustices that were associated with the lack of investment by the government in the area, coupled with the negative image that the national media was portraying to the nation throughout the 1980s and 90s, is an indication of the stamina that the community possessed, 'There is nothing like needing to fight for something to bring a group together' (Ní Chonchubhair, 2008: RC). By the late 1990s, their continuous, active protesting ultimately secured recognition from the Irish government of their community's rights

Ballymun as a community clearly cannot be defined within the limitations of what is considered to constitute a community of locality, and in fact fits just as comfortably into Delanty's (2003) second category of community, that of ideology. Norris (2001: 8) suggests that in fact Ballymun is one of the most 'developed' communities in the country, thus locating the community more fittingly in the category of a 'community of ideology'. Delanty (2003) sees communities of ideology as communities based on a collection of people who hold common views on matters as diverse as political, social or cultural ideals which are brought together on the strength of emphatic identification. In relation to Ballymun, it was noted earlier in the chapter that the closing of the Bank of Ireland Branch in the early 1980s was in fact the catalyst that brought the community together. However Keegan (2008: RC) acknowledges also the sense of community which was quickly established in the initial phase of the Ballymun estate (1966-69),

> When we were in the tower and we used to go into your neighbour to have a look at the flats you know and your door would be left open, well not open, you could just knock to come in, you know all that sort of thing. And then of course as the years went on we didn't do that anymore you know. The elements had changed.

As 'the elements ... changed' (Keegan, 2008: RC), people experienced steep social, physical and economic decline during the late 70s and early 80s, followed by first attempts at regeneration in the early 90s, and the current phase of regeneration. According to those interviewed, living through such a series of reversals, upheavals and gains actually strengthened the sense of community within the area, 'There is a huge sense of community that exists in Ballymun today' (Murphy, 2011: RC), and 'Ballymun used to be a small community, very tight, and as it grows the community grows too; it is still very tight' (Roe, 2011: RC). These views are brought together in a memorable comment by a local participant in a seminar at *Hotel Ballymun* (2007), attended by this researcher. *Hotel Ballymun* was funded under the percent for arts programme, and will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. The seminar was hosted on the top floor of the then derelict Thomas Clarke Tower, and was attended by artists, local professionals – including teachers – and local residents. Reflecting on perceptions and experiences of Ballymun, one long-term resident interjected, 'the rest of the country has an economy but no community, we have a community but no

inverted the idea of the community protectively conceptualising itself as 'us', a body superior in nature to the other – 'them' – but rather as an 'us' that was perhaps seen as inferior to the established Irish community of 'other'. The role of the national media in Ireland, along side that of other agencies, is perhaps partly responsible for shaping the discriminating categorisation of the Ballymun 'us' in contrast to the national other of 'them'. 'The media's portrayal of the area as merely a problematic local authority housing estate was also reflected in Dublin Corporation's view of Ballymun as an area which was a drain on resources' (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2006: 38). Connolly (2006) emphases the role the media played in demonising Ballymun as a community, thus contributing to the potent stigma that would become attached to the area and reflected in the national consciousness. 'The media never let go of Ballymun for a minute, and it was a rare day when a good story was printed about the estate. The *Evening Press* and the *Evening Herald* constantly reported crimes that happened in Ballymun' (Connolly, 2006: 117). Kelly (2011: RC) refers to the media's central role in cementing Ballymun's national image as that of a ghetto, 'people [need] a glimpse into the real Ballymun rather than what they might have seen portrayed on the TV'. O'Sullivan (2011: RC) also acknowledges the destructive role the media has played in stereotyping Ballymun, 'The media love to portray Ballymun in a negative way and class it as a lower class town'. The perceived harmfulness of the media portrayal of Ballymun is a pressing issue and is strongly articulated by the current residents of the area, where a remarkable 100% (45 participants) of the people surveyed in this study said that the pre-1997 Ballymun was usually portrayed in a negative fashion (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.B).

It is interesting to note however, that since the current regeneration programme there has been a significant shift in opinion with 60% (45 participants) of the same group of respondents stating that there is a more positive image of Ballymun in the public realm (see Appendix 3, Figure A3.C). This factor will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, especially in relation to the role of the arts in image promotion, 'I do think Ballymun should be portrayed as much in the arts, theatre especially. In the past Ballymun was known for all the wrong reasons and now it's becoming one of the top towns. The future of Ballymun needs to be portrayed' (Roe, 2011: RC).

such categorisation come to light when dealing with communities of locality that fall outside the 'usual' traditional associations of ancestral connection to place. The homogenous lineage connected with communities of locality, often seen in the statutory seal, is something that Ballymun cannot claim. Even though Ballymun is clearly a community that is primarily defined by its locality, the fact that it is devoid of the aforementioned ancestral link between its inhabitants and the land, is a factor that warrants consideration.

As noted earlier, prior to the Ballymun Housing Scheme of 1966-69, the townland of Ballymun was essentially a greenfield site with a very sparse population. The Ballymun community would be formed around common occupation of the new location. In one way the creation of such a community could be seen as somewhat artificial. However, as the section on identity (Chapter 5) has noted, there are many layers to a sense of identity, and the sense of identity that was formed initially in the Ballymun of the 1960s was strongly influenced by the fact that most of the new tenants were directly from the inner city of Dublin which meant that a strong sense of being a Dubliner was already present. 'Though the suburb was built on the periphery of the 1960s city, its population belonged to its centre' (Tierney, 2008: 79). That and the prestige of being selected as a suitable tenant for Ireland's most modern housing estate, were factors that should have eased the task of forging an initial sense of community within a new location – 'the first families to be given flats in Ballymun were allocated not by need but by status' (Connolly, 2006: 55). Despite the original aspirations of the government to create an integrated community in Ballymun, benefiting from all the facilities associated with a newly constructed, self-contained town, Hackett (2000: 4) notes that 'unfortunately, little planning or thought went into *how* this "integrated community" would be developed or paid for. In the event, most facilities envisaged [...] never materialised' [emphasis in original].

Delanty (2003), Cohen (1987) and Young (1990) state that the boundaries of the community of locality are not only defined through the physical landscape but extend also into the psyche of its people, seen in how people distinguish between collective concepts of 'us' and 'them'. Ironically this has perhaps, happened in the reverse in Ballymun. The negative connotations that had attached themselves to Ballymun, positioning it as a place of social insolvency by the mid-1970s (see www.cap.ie),

These sentiments (Keegan 2008) are very much in line with Pahl's (1970: 221 [emphasis in original]) warning 'The controllers...all *impose* their goals and values on the lower participants in the urban system'. Overall however, the lack of trust as suggested by Muir (2003), and highlighted by the interview data and the data presented in Appendix 1, Figure A1.J, was not so deeply rooted as to prevent the ultimate development of a viable working relationship between all of the agencies concerned. The performance indicators used in the *Ballymun Regeneration Progress Report* 2005-2006 suggest that whatever underlying difficulties there may have been, or continue to be, between the interested parties, they have not been so grave as to stop, or indefinitely hinder, the realisation of the regeneration programme. The Monitoring Committee for Ballymun, responsible for the publication of the aforementioned Progress Report, was established by BRL as required by the Department of the Environment and Local Government to oversee and evaluate the regeneration project. The committee represents a cross-section of interested parties and consists of nine members. There are three representatives of the local authority, one each from the Chamber of Commerce, Trade Council, architectural, historical and conservational interests, and three community group representatives (see Hackett, 2000: 16). The formation of the Monitoring Committee alongside BRL is an indication of how the government has actively sought to establish firmly the 'three-way partnership' as the preferred model for contemporary regeneration projects, with Ballymun as its flagship. Such a sociological turn within state-sponsored planning and development was according to Corcoran (2008) well overdue, with the new approach to urban regeneration and development being chiefly concerned with 'place making, provision of integrated planning and the development of sustainable communities, all of which have long been identified as sociologically desirable' (Corcoran, 2008: 261).

7.6 Ballymun – The Community

> It was an alien environment and people were being plucked out of established communities into isolated, separate and dislocated boxes with few social networks.
>
> (Power, 2008: 28)

Delanty (2003) refers to communities such as Ballymun as spatially bound 'communities of locality'. This reading positions Ballymun as a community which is ultimately definable in relation to its geographical coordinates. The restrictions of

There was the core company staff, which was about twenty at the time, who all came from Irish local authorities' (BRL Representative, 2008: RC). She justified the decision to employ the British based consultation firm to devise and deliver the consultation programme due to their experience: 'They had experience of the big regeneration projects in London, and they introduced loads of techniques' (BRL Representative, 2008: RC). Given the fact that Ballymun regeneration was the biggest national regeneration project ever to be undertaken in the Republic of Ireland, the need to seek outside expertise from companies who were experienced in such endeavours does not seem unreasonable. However, it quickly became evident from speaking with people on the ground, that many Ballymun residents remain sceptical about the consultation process, 'They did those questionnaires and that, like what you're doing now, and the meetings and that, but they already knew what they wanted to do, whatever they tell ya' (Local Resident, 2008) and 'they were really just playing the game. They knew exactly what they wanted to do from the very beginning. We were just the window dressing.' (Hickey, 2009: RC). These sentiments are supported by attitudes revealed through the use of questionnaires (70 participants), which convey a view that despite the evident success of the regeneration, the majority of respondents (60%) felt that the consultation process which was employed during the early stages of the Masterplan failed to listen to the community's voice (see Appendix 1, Figure A1.J).

Other residents, while acknowledging the benefits of the consultation process, continue to seem somewhat sceptical about its delivery, and felt that as the regeneration proceeded, it had become more a matter of going through the motions. As one respondent put it,

> I wasn't going for a house, but for anyone who was, the towers were coming down, so the people all had their meetings and it was great the way they were told where they could live and who they could live beside and what they wanted in their gardens, if they wanted an apple tree or a pear tree sort of thing. It was great. But then you see that was in the beginning, and when we come to the end, most people weren't consulted. [...] I think they ran out of money. They did it all in the beginning.
>
> (Keegan, 2008: RC)

involvement diffuses the emergence of an oppositional view. Carley (2000) is similarly concerned with the 'short-termism' that is attributed to many recent programmes. Muir cites Edwards (1997) who suggests that the three-way partnership is now often constructed to ensure or enhance funding opportunities, and Taylor (2000), who acknowledges that communities by their very nature are diverse and do not always have a singular view on any one issue. Taylor (1998) and Kintrea (1996) conclude that regeneration programmes need to be resourced properly and are overly dependent on volunteer community representatives. Even though the democratic approach of the Ballymun regeneration programme, as implemented through the three-way partnership, was somewhat revolutionary in established Irish practice, it seems that it was not flawless.

Norris (2001: 25) notes that while there has been sufficient opportunity for the community partnership groups, such as the Ballymun Housing Task Force and the Area Fora, to participate actively in the planning and implementation of the regeneration programme, they have found that 'participating in the plethora of committees which are required in the development of a complex renewal programme, has stretched the residents who represent the different areas of the estate'. Muir (2003) develops the notion further by suggesting that,

> There was an underlying distrust within the regeneration process. Community groups were particularly distrustful of BRL, less so of the other two organisations most involved in the regeneration, DCC and the BHFT. There was the resentment that BRL had not taken the time to gain the support of existing community groups during the Masterplan consultation in 1997 and that instead had commissioned English consultants to carry out the consultation.
>
> (Muir, 2003: 10)

Mr David Prichard, who led the multi-disciplinary team that created the Masterplan for the regeneration of Ballymun, acknowledged that their outside status required the practice to 'lead and employ the consultant team in a country we did not know, to be based on site much of the time, and to work along side the newly established BRL team' (Prichard, 2008: 4). In an interview with this researcher (November 2008), a public servant working for BRL acknowledged the fact that the consultation team were British, but also stressed that 'there was a consortium to draw up the Masterplan.

feature of the 21st century, the seeds for such a 'u-turn' in practice can be seen to have been planted in the last two decades of the 20th century,

> Government promotion of tenant participation dated from 1987 (Power, 1993). Commitments to tenant participation were included in the two housing policy documents of the 1990s (DoE, 1991; DoE, 1995). The moves towards professionalisation of housing management in the Republic have included an emphasis on promoting participation as part of good practice (e.g. NESF, 2000; Housing Unit 2001)
>
> (Muir, 2003: 2)

Hackett (2000: 14-16) refers to the guidelines for the new urban scheme of November 1997, published by the then Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, that emphasised the new approaches that were to be implemented in all new and current urban renewal programmes: 'While physical renewal will, of course, continue to be a central objective, it won't be the only one. The Government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy requires that future policy on urban renewal must take full account of the social needs in and effects on areas targeted for regeneration' (Hackett, 2000: 15). What is interesting about this particular approach on the part of the government, is the recognition that urban regeneration practices have developed and are concerned with much more than just bricks and mortar, with their long-term success just as dependent on strengthening the social fabric of the area as well as the physical environment. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy in combination with the government's new Urban Scheme ensured 'that disadvantaged local communities and representative organisations and groups should participate fully in the planning and realisation of urban renewal programmes' (Hackett, 2000: 15). In these ways, Hall's (2002) 'Three-way partnership' became common practice in Ireland.

The creation of BRL by Dublin Corporation suggests the government's active approach in embracing the new, democratic model of practice, recognising the role of the local civilians. The ultimate contribution and influence of the community's voice however, has been contested by many. Muir (2003: 5) surveys a range of recent studies that assess the actual impact of community participation on regeneration programmes in a number of European cities. She refers to Raco (2000) who questions the legitimacy of public contribution as to whether it is tokenistic (reflecting Amstein's steps 3 to 5 referred to in Chapter 3); she suggests that their very

community organisations, while also following a global shift in urban regeneration policies. This change saw a movement from the 'two-way' public/private partnership of Dublin Corporation and the NBA that was characteristic of the first build, to Hall's (2002) 'three-way partnership' with the establishment of Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL) as the primary link between the government, the community and the constructors. The Ballymun Housing Task Force (BHTF) became the official liaison group between the Ballymun Regeneration Company and the local residents (see Norris, 2001).

From the very outset, BRL recognised the need to establish firm links with the community. Securing the community's involvement in the decision making process was crucial to the success of the project. The key objectives of BRL were 'involving people in agreeing priorities, considering options and identifying solutions. The development of ideas and proposals in this way sought to build a strong local consensus in support of the masterplan' (www.brl.ie/pdf/page05.pdf). This was achieved by employing a variety of consultation fora, including public meetings, area fora, design groups, surgeries/drop-ins, newsletters, public events, focus groups and working groups (see LUDA Project, 2007). According to Norris (2001: 25) 'There is no doubt that the comprehensive and multi-dimensional procedures for involving residents in the development of the regeneration plan developed by BRL constitutes a good model of practice in the Irish context'.

The progressive approach of adopting an active consultation process with the residents of an area that has been marked for redevelopment is something that according to Haidar (2005: 17) was quite foreign to conventional Irish practice during the 20th century: 'The urban planning culture of the time [the end of the 20th century], however, focused on physical renewal and city marketing, and was marked by a weak strategic vision'. The government, having responded initially to the Ballymun scenario by deploying BRL, was soon to adopt a similar approach for the city of Dublin at large, by establishing the Dublin City Development Board with the primary objective of developing a 'social, cultural and economic strategy for Dublin' (Haidar, 2005: 17). The principal concerns of this new board related to ideas of neighbourhood, community and civic space. It is worth noting however, that despite Haidar's (2005) claim that Ireland's new direction in its urban policy-making is a

> Gardner report was concern over excessive costs of refurbishment of the blocks in comparison to the option of demolition and new build.
> (Hackett, 2000: 6)

Initially the report proposed the demolition of 560 units in six tower blocks. However, this demolition programme would be expanded upon in succeeding years, encompassing all 26 blocks – the 15-storey and 8-storey blocks (see Wassenburg 2006; Progress Report, 2005-2006).

The first attempt at refurbishment may not have been a complete success, however, it was significant in generating belief and enthusiasm both within the community and the agencies involved: Ballymun was ready for change. The complete regeneration of the estate was well overdue and the time now seemed right. This came about for a number of reasons, but most fortunately for the community of Ballymun it was a time which

> [C]oincided with a national surge in economic growth. Ballymun's location near the airport and the housing pressures in the Dublin area led to vastly more radical proposals to demolish the whole estate, literally changing the face of Ballymun forever. Ireland's growing fame as the 'Celtic Tiger' of Europe called for a dramatic reshaping of Dublin's 'eyesores'. Ballymun was emblematic of the poverty, mismanagement and mistakes that the country wanted to leave behind.
> (Power, 2008: 35).

7.5 The Realisation of Hall's (2002) 'Three-Way Partnership' in the Ballymun Regeneration Programme

Ballymun Regeneration Ltd was set up as a company by Dublin Corporation in 1997, specifically to,

> Plan and implement a regeneration programme which will result in a new town with new and improved facilities for the 30,000 people who will live there. BRL is working with the community to develop and implement the Masterplan for the physical, economic and social regeneration of Ballymun.
> (www.brl.ie)

Acknowledging the active role of the community within the planning process is a policy development that builds on previous advances made by the Ballymun

which responded to the crisis by setting up a local credit union and a job centre. The group went on to establish the Ballymun Housing Task Force (in recent years, it is also referred to as the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council), which consisted of a committee of residents, elected representatives and representatives of statutory agencies (see Norris 2001; Hackett 2000). Between the years 1991 and 1993, the Task Force oversaw the implementation of the first phase of the 'refurbishment programme' which involved some 10% of the estate (see www.ballymun-nc.ie). The active role that the Ballymun Housing Task Force occupied in the consultation process in this initial regeneration attempt was somewhat revolutionary in terms of usual Irish practice: 'Significantly, the Ballymun Housing Task Force was a very early example of a "Partnership" between the local community and the state' (Hackett, 2000: 6). The implementation of the 'refurbishment programme' produced a model structure which accommodated and encouraged tenant participation in the consultation, development and delivery stages of the programme, with its progression reinforcing the idea that a better Ballymun was in fact possible, with the residents part of the solution rather than the cause of the problems (Power, 2008: 35).

The Ballymun 'refurbishment programme' of 1991-1993 engaged with the community by creating tenant participation structures which were centred on the establishment of five Area Forums. Each Forum comprised two representatives from each block of flats and one person from each road or courtyard of houses (Hackett, 2000: 6). These structures would be maintained, if slightly modified, for the ultimate regeneration project of 1998-2012. Even though the initial phase of the refurbishment programme had been recognised as a success in terms of enhancing security, the programme had only a limited impact in addressing the structural and design deficiencies of the estate. In response to an evaluation carried out by Craig Gardner Ltd (1993) on the recent refurbishment programme, Dublin Corporation concluded that a new tactic would have to be employed to successfully regenerate the Ballymun estate,

> The evaluation established that the first phase of the refurbishment was successful in tackling issues of security in Balbutcher Lane, but overall it did not tackle the basic structural defects or safety aspects of the blocks. In essence, the principal factor influencing the recommendations of the Craig



Figure 7.2 The Evident Decline of the Physical Landscape.

7.4 First Attempts at Addressing Ballymun's Problems

The first evidence of recognition by Dublin Corporation of a need to address the pressing crisis of Ballymun was the change in their managerial approach. In 1984 the structure of the management of Ballymun was altered significantly. The most immediate and revolutionary change to the method of practice was an active involvement with the local community. The managerial committee began to work directly with the tenants, setting up a local office which enabled the collaborative involvement of both the Corporation and the locals in the screening of potential new tenants to the estate. This progressive move was followed by the announcement of an extensive 'refurbishment programme' which was aimed at selected blocks, and that would concentrate on restoring and updating technical facilities (lifts, building defects, etc), security issues and upgrading the aesthetics of the buildings (see Wassenburg, 2006). The effort to save Ballymun from physical decline and social and economic bankruptcy was a result not only of the reorganisation of the Corporation's structures but also of the enthusiasm and activism of the local community.

Norris (2001: 8) notes that 'Ballymun has a long history of community activism, and could be characterised as one of the most "developed" communities in the country'. She goes on to suggest that the birth of such a strong active community can be traced back to the closing of the Bank of Ireland Ballymun branch in 1984, when banking facilities were no longer available to the local residents. It was this action that prompted the people of Ballymun to form the 'Ballymun Community Coalition'

and pick-pocketing wove a web of crime around Ballymun until eventually nobody felt safe' (Connolly, 2006: 154).

Should such social and economic insolvency have been anticipated by the government? It is a fact that by the time the plans for the Ballymun housing scheme had been conceived, similar high-rise building projects were being abandoned across Europe and the United Kingdom (see Cuffe, 2008). This was due to the considerable amount of 'ground-level' evidence that had accumulated across the European continent, earning such housing projects the tag of 'vertical slums'. The 'lack of upkeep of common areas, poor workmanship, and the lack of communal facilities could lead to the physical degradation of the buildings and social isolation for those who lived there' (Somerville–Woodward, 2002: 38). With such evidence available at the time to Minister Neil Blaney, the question arises: why were the warning lights not responded to? Whatever the ultimate reason, whether it seemed to be the only financially realistic option enabling a swift response to the acute housing crisis, or a combination of supplying houses while also embracing modernity and 'catching up' with Ireland's progressive European neighbours, the ultimate result was that 'like many other high rise estates across the continent, the years since the construction of Ballymun have seen the estate transformed from a symbol of progress in the Irish public housing system to one of the potent symbols of its failures' (Norris, 2001: 3). It had only taken 10 years for the prestigious new estate of Ballymun to plummet into the depths of despair with many local people holding Dublin Corporation responsible for such a dramatic reversal of status. According to Connolly (2006: 148) the Corporation had 'gone from being really choosy, only allocating flats on their model estate to families with an income, to putting any low-life into the flats that they had neglected'. Such strongly worded testaments illustrate the anger, resentment and despair that local people felt, and the absolute necessity for Dublin Corporation to amend the consequences of earlier decisions. They had to stop seeing Ballymun as a convenient dumping ground for society's most vulnerable.

attitude, which was expressed during interviews for this study, emerged in response to the new accommodation that Ballymun had to offer, which was far superior to previous social housing (see Montague, 2008). Dwellings were larger, brighter and serviced by modern heating systems and lifts, 'we just had to move in, everything was done. Beautiful lino, wallpaper, everything. You just had to move your furniture in. It was like luxury flats' (Keegan, 2008: Recorded Communication [RC]). The initial enthusiasm was soon to turn sour however as basic factors such as the alienating design of the buildings, coupled with the regular breakdown of services such as the lifts and the universally regulated heat ing system, contributed to the start of Ballymun's downfall.

The management of the housing estate was problematic from the outset: 'I blame the management. They did not maintain it, there was no security' (Keegan, 2008: RC). By 1985 the turnover rate of tenants had reached a startling 40%, with most of the new tenants entering the estate being poor, unemployed or unmarried (see Wassenburg, 2006). This mass exodus was supported, perhaps inadvertently, by the government through its locally infamous 'surrender grant' scheme, which encouraged local authority tenants to purchase home property in the private sector by granting intending buyers a £5,000 endowment; 'this seemingly benevolent scheme meant that, for the most part, the best-off and most well-established residents were being encouraged to move out of these estates' (Montague, 2008: 49). The 'surrender grant' scheme came to an end in 1987; however, by that time '10% of the total population of Ballymun had taken advantage of the scheme and the resultant exodus of employed people, coupled with the influx of often vulnerable new tenants, undermined both community and the economy of the estate' (Norris, 2001: 7). It was, according to Power (2008), the result of a combination of such government-led policies and Dublin Corporation's approach of using what were quickly becoming undesirable vacant flats to accommodate the more vulnerable people in society, 'the single parents, single homeless people, discharged mental patients and other difficult-to-house and vulnerable groups' (Power, 2008: 29). Such actions ensured that Ballymun spiralled into a community that was both economically and socially isolated. Anti-social behaviour became the signature of Ballymun in the 80s, fuelled by widespread drug abuse, 'communities within communities sustained by shop-lifting, burglary, mugging

7.3 The Implementation of the Ballymun Housing Scheme, 1965-1969

Between 1966 and 1969 the Ballymun housing scheme grew to 2,820 high- and medium-rise flats in seven 15-storey towers, nineteen 8-storey spine or deck access blocks, ten 4-storey walk-ups and 417 houses, with an additional 1,587 houses built over the following twenty years, either within the Ballymun estate or in the adjoining area (see Montague, 2008). The single houses were initially rented properties with the option to purchase. There was no system in place for the purchase of flats within the tower blocks, prompting a negative association with the inhabitants of the blocks as being inferior tenants who were not in a position to ever become 'home owners' (Wassenberg, 2006: 9). This factor was only one of a number which contributed to the rapid decline of the Ballymun area. The typical 'two-way partnership' of the time (see Hall, 2002, Chapter 3), between the state and the private sector, with no real infrastructure to encourage local participation, was employed in Ballymun. Despite the aspirations of the joint partnership of Dublin Corporation (DC) and the National Building Association (NBA), and their unfulfilled emphases in the planning stage for the establishment of a self-sufficient and sustainable community, 'the development was to be treated as a self-contained community with shopping facilities being provided within the same period as the residential accommodation' (Power, 2000: 204). It seemed plausible from the initial plans as drawn up by the NBA that creating a self-contained community would become a reality. However, as Power (2000: 209) notes 'the flexible nature of the contract meant that the consortium was able to make operational changes that ultimately were not to the benefit of the scheme. This allowed them to jettison a number of the more progressive elements of the proposed planning concept'. Other factors which contributed significantly to the decline of the area included the quality of the construction, its design – with its layout being 'inefficient from a practical perspective and alienating from an aesthetic point of view' (Norris, 2001: 5), coupled with 'the spatial isolation caused by poor transport links and by local facilities used only by estate residents; economic exclusion including high unemployment and a low skills base' (Muir, 2003: 9). The cumulative effect produced widespread poverty and alienation in the area. This outcome was in stark contrast to the positive and favourable attitude that was characteristic of the initial inhabitants, who secured tenancy following a selection process (based on an interview and their past rented history) with only those families that met strict criteria deemed suitable to live in Ireland's progressive flagship housing estate. Their positive

site that was no longer suited to agricultural practices. The pressing issue of the housing shortage which faced Minister Blaney at the time prompted the quick sale of the land to the government. Dublin Corporation secured 359 acres of land from the sale. 'This land was divided into two separate areas, bisected in a north-south direction by Ballymun Avenue. It was on the more northerly 212 acre (86 ha) site that the Ballymun housing scheme was to be constructed' (Power, 2000: 202). Even though the site had previously been used primarily for agricultural/educational purposes, the area had a rich social and cultural history, which is described in detail in Dr Robert Somerville-Woodward's *Ballymun, a History: volumes 1&2 c.1600-1997* (2002). Volume 1 of the publication documents the history of the place and its people since the beginning of the seventeenth century. The second volume concerns the recent history of Ballymun, tracking the action from the beginning of the 1960s, the era of intervention by the Corporation and the acquisition of land, to the present day implementation of the regeneration programme.

Somerville-Woodward (2002: 4-18) notes that Ballymun was the most northerly part of the Santry parish, which overall consisted of twenty 'townlands'. From the early 17th century to the middle of the 20th century the majority of the Santry parish was the sole property of the Barry family (1620-1751), with the Domville Family (1751-1960) later inheriting the Santry Estate, which included the Ballymun area. Throughout the three centuries the land yielded wealth principally from agricultural and tenant rents. The Albert Agriculture College was founded in 1837. Despite this establishment, the Ballymun area continued to be used primarily for agricultural purposes, housing a very sparse population: 'at the beginning of the 1900s there were only six dwellings at Ballymun' (Somerville-Woodward, 2002: 6). Given the absence of a dense population, coupled with the fact that UCD generously refrained from putting the land on the open market – 'It was stated that in view of the urgent demand for local authority housing in Dublin it would have been wrong for the college to sell the land on the open market' (Power, 2000: 202), Ballymun seemed the perfect location for the largest urban housing programme to be undertaken by the Irish government since the formation of the State.

> Ballymun project remained unfulfilled. Failure to back up the project with adequate facilities and services meant they became a symbol of acute social and economic depression and enduring controversy.
> (Ferriter, 2004: 564)

Ballymun is located five miles north of Dublin city centre. The decision to build Ballymun housing estate was not taken only to mark the 1916 Rising, which perhaps was an unintentional coincidence, or to embrace modernity, but was a social necessity in response to the acute housing crisis that was most sharply felt in the inner cities of Ireland. The tragic deaths of four people in the streets of Dublin caused by the collapse of tenement buildings outraged the public, resulting in crowds marching in protest through the capital's streets wielding banners 'exhorting Dublin Corporation to "clear the slums" and proclaiming "don't wait for the houses to fall"' (Power, 2000: 200).

This chapter presents the results of the case study research. Drawing from the available literature in the field and supplemented with interviews and evidence from relevant reports and documents, this chapter offers an edited history of Ballymun as a place, a community and a social housing experiment. It tracks the original build of Ballymun (1966-69), the rapid decline of the area in the 80s, through to the current regeneration programme (1998-2010). It explores whether the Ballymun regeneration project can be understood as a microcosm of 'the global city' approach to regeneration and reinvention. The purpose and value of arts provision in Ballymun preoccupies the latter half of this chapter, focusing mainly on the role of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre within the area. Research collected on site is drawn upon to inform and support conclusions reached by this researcher. The data is presented in a number of formats including graphs (see appendices) and direct quotations from interviews [recorded communications, RC]. Finally the chapter closes with an analysis of space/place in Ballymun, in light of the discussion in Chapter 5.

7.2 Ballymun – An Historical Account

The Ballymun area was essentially a greenfield site when the then Dublin Corporation (since 2002, Dublin City Council [DCC]) acquired the land in 1962. It was situated on what was previously the property of University College Dublin, known as the Albert Agricultural College site in Glasnevin, which had been deemed by the University a

Chapter 7

Case Study Results

Ballymun Estate, North Dublin

Ballymun was a through route but never a destination.

(Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008: 3)

'People like you see Ballymun like a zoo, you come in take a look and then f*** off'

(Local Resident: 2008)



Figure 7.1 The Old and New Ballymun

7.1 Introduction

In 1966, as the Irish state commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter rebellion,

> The Minister for Local Government, Neil Blaney, oversaw the creation of a supposedly innovative and far-sighted legacy of 1916: the building of the Ballymun block of modern high-rise flats, with the blocks named after the 1916 signatories. No more than the 1916 proclamation, the hopes of the

increasing our awareness and degree of consciousness', which is one of the aims of this body of research.

In the following chapter the results of the interviews and questionnaires are presented as part of the analysis of the case study of Ballymun, with observation records of Bolger's plays presented in Chapter 8.

evaluate the role, perceived value, and success of arts provision and participation in the lives of local people within an urban area undergoing regeneration.

I informed everyone who participated in any area of the research that the information they provided would be used only for the purpose of this study. Interviews were arranged in advance, with indications of areas to be discussed provided in writing prior to the interviewee accepting the invitation. I gave clear accounts as to my immediate and ultimate intentions and why their contribution was seen as valuable. The participants were informed that they could opt out at any stage in the process. It was agreed that each of the interviewees would receive a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy and confirm their approval. Cohen et al. (2000: 49) remind researchers that in the interest of balance, they are obliged to pursue the facts while at the same time remembering the 'inherent rights of the participants'. As a researcher in pursuit of such a balance, I am constantly reminded of my duties and responsibilities as a student in the field of research and my duty to the people who make that contribution possible.

6.15 Research Value

O'Toole (2006) suggests that 'drama in education and applied theatre are both very young research fields'. My area of research is relatively new, with the approach to urban regeneration programmes and the provision and participation in the arts (community theatre) changing considerably in the last three decades. Even at the most basic research level, when the phrase 'theatre and urban regeneration' is entered into any of the large internet search engines, very few results emerge. The area of community theatre has received considerable attention from the research community from the 1960s onwards, as has the field of urban regeneration, but it is the combination of these two elements that makes this research particularly valuable. The role of the arts in urban regeneration is often central to such projects, most evidently in the regeneration of cultural quarters. The recent fashion for arts provision in regeneration projects is often synonymous with economic development; however, it is the social impact of the arts and their perceived value in urban regeneration programmes that concerns this study. Very little critical analysis has been conducted to date in this area, hence the value of this particular research. Cohen et al. (2000: 18) suggest that 'the justification for any intellectual activity lies in the effect it has on

particular emphasis on certain words. In her turn, she was pro-active in ensuring that the respondents would answer the questions in a truthful and reflective manner. However, despite our best efforts, many questionnaires were deemed invalid owing to respondent apathy and willingness to appease the interviewer. Also there were a number of respondents who, because they recognised the researcher as a local person, took up a lot of time asking her lengthy questions about her involvement in the research process, with the result of their tiring and losing interest in completing the questionnaires thoughtfully. The length of the questionnaires and some of the wording, despite the efforts that were made to achieve clarity, may have been a contributing factor also. While these were very pressing concerns for me, I decided that on balance and after a critical review of the options, using a local person as a research assistant was the most effective and reliable way to gain access to local opinion for this component of the project. One of the main advantages she offered as an insider was her ability to select suitable locations where we could get a random sample of the local population to participate in the research. Areas that we frequented when on site, were on the Main Street outside the local Supervalu store, and selected estates from the five different neighbourhood districts within Ballymun (Shangan, Poppintree, Sillogue, Coultry, Balcurris). One method which was particularly effective when using the dual combination of insider/outsider on site, was where the insider was successful at stopping potential local participants and getting them to agree to participate in the questionnaire. Once they had committed she then actively passed them over to this researcher and sought to get another potential participant. Where I wasn't so reliant on the research assistant was in civic buildings such as the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre.

6.14 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative researchers according to Stake (1998: 103) 'are quests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict'. Blaxter et al. (2001) asserts that research ethics is chiefly concerned with the type of contract, the agreement that has been negotiated between the researcher and the research subjects. This is relevant in this study because the idea of the outsider as researcher was something that I was, and continue to be, very conscious of. It was essential that the local people, who were central to the research, were never made to feel exploited for the information they held. The purpose of this research was to

> external researchers need to be keenly sensitive to their research status within the studied community and to work with people indigenous to the community who can provide them with an accurate knowledge of the perspectives, values and beliefs within the community and who can help them acquire insider status.

I sought and secured the help of a young actor/student who was well-known in the community, and was warmly greeted by the local people who were asked to participate in the questionnaire. Choosing a young local woman who had worked as a professional actor in the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre was particularly effective in this research context because she demonstrated a clear understanding of the purpose of the arts within the community, while also appreciating the value of the research.

It was equally important, however, to consider the possible disadvantages of getting a local person to act as proxy for me. Shah (2004: 568) critiques the use of 'insider' from within the community being studied and highlights three issues that may become apparent during the research process,

1. How the chosen respondents may assume that the insider already knows particular knowledge and will therefore fail to articulate it in their responses.
2. That the researcher may fail to ask, what they consider to be too obvious or insignificant points.
3. The respondents may self censor due to the interviewer being from the area and may be viewed to be judgemental of not only the interviewee but also their families due to a shared knowledge of the local value system. Very often people are less guarded with strangers as researchers.

I was particularly cautious about such issues, along with the potential bias that employing a local person as my research assistant may have. As the woman was well-known, and something of a success story in Ballymun, I was aware that her involvement might encourage participants to respond positively to the provision of arts within the community. To counteract this, I spent a lot of time looking at the wording of the questions, assessing whether they enabled the interviewer to distance herself from the content. I also coached her on the delivery of the questions, placing

(2003) there are three core arguments in support of excluding the outsider as a legitimate and effective researcher in field work,

1. The epistemological argument that an outsider cannot understand or represent accurately the kind of experiences that are characteristic of the group under investigation due to the researcher's own 'foreign' analytical lens.
2. The ethical argument which raises questions about issues of exploitation and lack of respect for the subjects of the study which are only seen as a means of accumulating data for ultimate use by the researcher.
3. The ethico-political argument about having somebody else (the outsider) articulate the views of the subjects of research, which can be seen as an action which risks disempowering that community.

These three points should never be far from the researcher's mind on entering a community as an outsider. This sense of the outsider as intruder became immediately apparent for this researcher, not so much when I was quietly observing the community in its everyday locale, but especially when I tried to issue the questionnaires. While the tone of many of the local people was gentle and respectful in declining to participate, their message nonetheless was very clear. On approaching individuals to participate in the research process I was greeted with a variety of comments such as 'Ya know we're sick of all that around here' (Local Resident, 2008) and 'Ah, Jesus, not more bleedin' questionnaires' (Local Resident, 2008) were frequent recorded responses. Such negative responses were not only due to my outsider status, even though that did play a significant part, but it was also due to the fact that from the very initial stages of the regeneration consultation process (1997) through to its current position (2010) questionnaires were a central method used by BRL to collect data on the local community and their perspectives on the regeneration bid and process. Therefore this researcher was going into a community where there was a real sense of fatigue when it came to participating in research via questionnaires.

It became almost immediately obvious that if I was to succeed in communicating with the local people of Ballymun I would need to be accompanied by a local person who would introduce me into the community. Banks (1998: 15) supports such action suggesting that,

completed using a 'face-to-face' approach, the researcher had the flexibility to rephrase and explain in detail any area of ambiguity that became apparent.

Since deciding to use interviews as one of my principal methods of data collection, I became conscious of the following issues: first, interviews are very time consuming. This refers not only to the time that is required to arrange the interview and conduct it, but also the time that is required when transferring the data to a transcript. Secondly, interviews are never completely value free (see Yin, 2003), and I acknowledge the need to adopt an objective lens when analysing the data generated. Again, I am conscious of Charmaz's (2006) recommendation that the interview must be a pleasant experience for the interviewee and that the onus is on the researcher to make sure that is the case.

The most interesting factor to arise from the pilot exercise was how the local people of Ballymun responded to me as the researcher, and the reception I received. While I was very conscious of being an outsider to the community, I naively assumed that the majority of the public would be happy to participate in my research. This, however, was far from the reality of the situation, and during the pilot exercises I found the vast majority of the public surveyed did not display an immediate willingness to participate in the questionnaire, with many being quite suspicious of my outsider status. Paulo Freire (cited in Korieh and Njoku, 2007: 112) writes about the idea of the outsider, the person who enters a community setting, and inspects them through a self-selected critical lens. He makes reference to this role as a kind of cultural missionary, one who imposes alien cultural values on members of the local community. The insider/outsider debate is one which has emerged with the development of field research in the social sciences. Slogans such as 'nothing about us without us' (Bridges, 2003) which emerged from the Disability camp in the late 20th century, reflect the dilemma that confronts any researcher that resides outside their chosen constituency group. While outsider status is particularly challenging, Bridges (2003) stresses that even should you have the advantage of being from within the chosen community, once you acquire the title of researcher, you in turn become something of an outsider by virtue of that very fact. However, despite such drawbacks, the insider researcher has advantages of immediate access, something which is not guaranteed if you are an outsider researcher. According to Bridges

Table 6.6 Structured Interviews (Questionnaires)

Title of Questionnaire	Respondents (Intended)	Type of Questions	Location	Main Topics Explored	Number of Participants
Ballymun: Living, Regeneration and the Arts. (Appendix 1)	Residents of Ballymun	Closed and pre-coded	Ballymun	The regeneration project, identity, community, Global influences.	70
Arts Participation Questionnaire (Appendix 2)	Residents of Ballymun, *axis* personnel, BRL. Personnel.	Closed and pre-coded	Ballymun	The social impact of arts participation	45
Have Your Say on the Arts in Ballymun Questionnaire (Appendix 3)	Residents of Ballymun	Closed and pre-coded	Ballymun	The perceived value of arts provision and Participation	45
Arts Contribution to Building Community Pride Questionnaire (Appendix 4)	*axis* Personnel, BRL. Rep, Playwright (DB) & actor (KH)	Closed and precoded	Ballymun	The place for arts in urban regeneration schemes, community cohesion	7

6.13 The Pilot Study

Cargan (2007: 55) strongly recommends that all field research should commence with a pilot 'to uncover possible pitfalls'. The most important research methods that needed to be piloted were the questionnaires and the interview schedules. This was to ensure that,

1. the language register was appropriate;
2. structurally, the development of questions made sense and progressed in a chronological and/or sequential order, (establish facts first such as age, gender etc, and progress on to more opinionated questions); and
3. the questions were not misleading or ambiguous in any way.

The pilot revealed that the phrasing of some of the questions needed to be addressed, especially in *The Arts Participation Questionnaire* (Appendix 2). This was remedied to a certain extent, where 'key' words were identified, and as the questionnaires were

approaches. However, when all findings from multiple sources are cross-correlated, the concluding data should contribute meaningfully to the quest to answer research question.

Appendix 4 is an example of how combined characteristics of structured and semi-structured interviews can be used simultaneously. Two of the questionnaires, those contained in Appendix 2 and 4, are based on existing instruments in the field and are adapted for this study. As mentioned Appendix 2, *Arts Participation Questionnaire* is based on Matarasso's 1997 report, and Appendix 4 draws upon the DCMS 2008 manifesto for *Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion*, where the five central points of the manifesto were reformulated into a questionnaire. Difficulties similar to those recorded in the case of the *Arts Participation Questionnaire* arose during the distribution of the *Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion Questionnaire*. While the questionnaire was a direct adaptation of a published manifesto for a government department (DCMS UK) the wording again was extremely positive, and therefore, as Merli (2004) warns, tended to invite biased answers. As a result issues arose in relation to the reliability of the data and the number of participants, as only people who were directly related with arts provision within the community of Ballymun were considered suitable to complete it. Thus, in a subsequent phase of the research the instrument found in Appendix 3, *Have Your Say on the Arts in Ballymun,* was devised to counteract the problems experienced initially with the two other questionnaires (Appendix 2 and 4). This questionnaire asks respondents to answer a series of questions on the role of the *axis* centre in the community, the provision of public space and how the regeneration has altered the public image of Ballymun. Even though two of the four questionnaires referred to (Appendix 2 and 4) had limited value in generating reliable data, when combined with other sources their data does support conclusions reached from my observation records on site and the interviews conducted. On reflection however, the questionnaires (Appendix 2 and 4) perhaps needed to be more effectively structured, drawing on more a more neutral and efficient language register.

nationwide survey (UK) *Use or Ornament, Participation in the Arts,* to generate responses to a series of six short statements about participation in the arts and social and community change. The findings of Matarasso's (1997) report have been widely recognised and accepted as the most authoritative survey of arts participation in the UK and therefore have been central in informing arts provision decisions within statutory bodies such as Arts Councils (UK and Ireland) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UK (as mentioned in Chapter 3). As this particular study is concerned with how people in Ballymun perceive the value of arts provision within the area, I felt that Matarasso's (1997) findings offered an interesting structure, which, when adapted and organised as a questionnaire, would enable this researcher to locate the attitudes and perceptions of the relatively small community of Ballymun within a broader reference framework, thus generating an interesting platform for data comparison between the national and the local. The strategy of using a report's stated conclusions as the basis for a further questionnaire did not prove to be as successful as anticipated by this researcher. The real challenge arose in the wording of Matarasso's findings, as their intention was clearly for official reportage, not for communicating with a random sample of local people from within a small community. The pilot immediately revealed that, for this questionnaire to be effective, I needed to identify key words within the questions and to paraphrase the overall statement. This was possible as each questionnaire was completed during face-to-face interviews, therefore enabling the researcher to gauge whether the interviewee understood the content and was fully committed to the process. Despite this, a significant number of completed questionnaires were deemed invalid due to the participant's losing interest half way through and simply agreeing with propositions, in order to complete the process more quickly. This was disappointing; however, such stringent vetting ensured that the people who did participate were fully engaged in the process. Another issue that arose, and is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7, is the positive wording of the questions. This was a consequence of the adaptation process, where the findings of Matarasso's (1997) report were directly translated from the report to the questionnaire. Merli (2004) warns of the danger of the construction of questions based on positive statements and the consequences that has for collecting reliable data. On reflection, the value of this questionnaire as a research tool must be considered in collaboration with all the other methods employed by this researcher. The mixed methods approach allows for the unequal harvest of data from alternative

This particular approach was deemed to be the most appropriate and efficient way of gathering the necessary information from the identified cohort.

Denscombe (2003: 146) suggests that there are two types of data generated from questionnaires: facts and opinions. I have collated both factual data and opinionated data, through the use of questionnaires. Appendix I demonstrates the use of a tightly structured questionnaire, drawing predominantly on closed and pre-coded questions. The questions were formulated to enable the collation of a variety of quantifiable facts concerning the local people. Questions 1 to 3 establish demographic information about the residents/participants, such as gender, age and length of residency in Ballymun. Question 4 establishes the extent to which a participant is active within the community. The questionnaire then develops by monitoring how people feel about the recent regeneration project, issues concerning culture and their identity, the provision of arts within their community, and the impact and penetration of global influences on their community. The sample for this questionnaire was randomly selected, consciously trying to balance gender and access opinions and information from people belonging to a variety of age categories. The only prerequisite was that the participant was currently a resident of Ballymun. When analysing the data generated from the first questionnaire, it became evident after cross tabulating concerning the gender and age of the interviewees and the pattern of answers that there was no correlation between the personal specifics of the random sample and the emerging data prototype. Collecting the data using a face-to-face approach was chosen as an effective strategy, as I was dealing with a range of themes and needed to ensure that the respondents clearly understood terms such as 'globalisation' and 'community'. Piloting was completed prior to the proposed dates for the field research, enabling me to amend the questionnaire, adjusting language, length and content. Appendix 3 *Have Your Say on the Arts in Ballymun* was similar in structure to that in Appendix 1, with closed questions, requiring the participant to select their response from pre-determined answers. This questionnaire, proved to be very straightforward. The samples were randomly selected drawing on the same criteria as that for Appendix 1, while the pilots suggested that there was no need to amend either the content or the wording. Appendix 2 – *Arts Participation Questionnaire,* was an interesting and somewhat more challenging questionnaire to distribute. The rationale behind the design of this questionnaire was to use the findings of Matarasso's (1997) report and

to the regeneration of Ballymun had local, national and global resonance. The literature review concentrated on a number of key areas, all of which are pertinent to a full and informed investigation of the social impact and perceived value of the provision of the arts (community theatre) in the Ballymun regeneration programme (1998-2010). Areas such as community, globalisation, the global city, urban regeneration, community theatre, identity and narrative, were all necessary components of research, if the regeneration of Ballymun was to be analysed not only within a national context but within an international one.

Method 4 (see figure 6.2) refers to the use of questionnaires. My decision to use questionnaires reflects Hall and Hall's (1996: 97) analysis of the questionnaire as an efficient way to 'generate information in a systematic fashion'. I was also conscious that the use of questionnaires would enable me to establish a broad picture of the experiences and views of the people of Ballymun, one of the principal reasons why questionnaires should be employed according to Clough and Nutbrown (2007: 144). As a researcher, I used the questionnaires primarily to establish attitudes and perceptions of local people. As this method is a long standing approach within the social sciences for data collection, for this researcher the main purpose of their deployment was to support findings recorded in my observation records and in depth interviews.

I used four questionnaires in my field research. Three of the questionnaires were aimed at the general public in Ballymun, with the fourth questionnaire designed for the personnel of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre and Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. respectively, (see Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Drawing on the three existing models of questioning that are available to the researcher, questions were either: open-ended, closed or pre-coded (Hall and Hall, 1996: 99). My questionnaires comprised of a mix of both closed and pre-coded questions. Such questions required the informant to choose one (or more) from a set of pre-selected answers. I decided to approach the research in this way so that the results would lend themselves easily to numerical analysis. This, I felt, would challenge or complement any of the subsequent findings generated from other qualitative methods, where narrative and descriptive passages inform the findings.

> types of research in which the data come from documents of one kind or another. [emphasis in the original]

For this study I have actively participated in document research drawing on a number of sources. The document research methods are particularly evident in the literature review and in the data collection and analysis stage, where a wide variety of documents were used to underpin and develop the research tools such as the interview schedules and the questionnaires, and also served as a legitimate part of the research process in their own right during the observation of Bolger's plays. The documents analysed include,

- Official government reports
- Academic texts
- Bolger's play texts
- Newspaper reports and reviews.
- Archive material (*axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre and Ballymun Library).

O'Toole (2006: 84) suggests that once the researcher has critically evaluated the existing documentation in their field of research, they are then in a position to reveal their own stance in relation to the work. It is in confronting and analysing the existing body of literature that equips the researcher with the background knowledge necessary to inform the content of their selected field research methods such as the development of suitable questions for questionnaires and interviews. Yin (2003: 87), supports O'Toole's (2006) observation, and declares that for case studies it is most important that documents are used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.

The literature review provides a theoretical framework for this research. It establishes the broader context in which the research is located. Having established the broader context through the literature review, the case study of Ballymun was selected for its ability to explore and test the findings suggested in the literature review. For the purpose of this research the literature review was recognised as an essential component in enabling an informed analysis of whether the decisions and approaches

Interviewee	Selection Criteria	Type of Questions	Topics Discussed	Duration
	aspect of the regeneration project		importance of the community using the arts to tell their story. Gentrification.	

Table 6.5 Unstructured Interviews

Interviewee	Selection Criteria	Type of Questions	Topics Discussed	Duration
Mrs Keegan – long term resident of Ballymun (1st generation)	To get firsthand information about the changes that have taken place during the period from the original build of Ballymun 1966-69 to the present day. Information regarding the Ballymun community.	Open (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Moving into the newly-built Ballymun (1969), her account of the current regeneration project, the provision of arts in the regeneration, the role of the *axis* Arts Centre.	One hour and thirty minutes approximately.
Mrs Seymour (2nd generation)	To get first hand information about her life in Ballymun. The effect of leaving the flats where she was born, to live in a new semi-detached house, as a result of the current regeneration.	Open (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	The effect of the 'new Ballymun' on her life. Her account of the value and purpose of arts provision via the *axis*. The allocation of public spaces and smaller, family-friendly, play areas.	One hour approximately.
A 10 year old school child (3rd generation)	How she perceives the recent regeneration project and what it means to her.	Open (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	What she thinks about the new regeneration (her new home, etc.). Does she use the *axis* centre, and if so, why?	Thirty minutes approximately.

Method 3 (see figure 6.2) in Denscombe's (2003) methodological triangulation refers to the use of documents in generating data about the selected area of inquiry. According to Denscombe (2003: 212), documents

> can be treated as a source of *data in their own right* – in effect an alternative to questionnaires, interviews and observation. In the social sciences, library-based research, desk research, black letter research and archive research are all

Interviewee	Selection Criteria	Type of Questions	Topics Discussed	Duration
A. Murphy (Name changed on request)	To discuss the impact of the provision and participation in theatre projects via the *axis* Centre as a local amateur actor	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Participation in a particular theatre project (*The Ballymun Trilogy*), working as an amateur, local actor on a professional production. How representative the play was of the community. The responses she received from audience members, etc.	There was correspondence via the phone initially, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.
Nichola Hanaphy	To get an overview of the impact of the regeneration project on her life as a local woman, and if she feels the provision of the arts is an important aspect of the regeneration project.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	The change in Ballymun from her childhood to the current regeneration. Arts provision within the community. The importance of the community using the arts to tell their story. Gentrification.	The interview was conducted face-to-face. It lasted approximately one hour.
Stephanie Kelly	To get an overview of the impact of the regeneration project on her life as a local woman, and if she feels the provision of the arts is an important aspect of the regeneration project.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	The change in Ballymun from her childhood to the current regeneration. Arts provision within the community. The importance of the community using the arts to tell their story. Gentrification.	There was correspondence via face-book initially, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.
Dave O'Sullivan	To get an overview of the impact of the regeneration project on his life as a local man, and if he feels the provision of the arts is an important aspect of the regeneration project.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	The change in Ballymun from his childhood to the current regeneration. Arts provision within the community. The importance of the community using the arts to tell their story. Gentrification.	There was correspondence via face-book initially, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.
Liam Roe	To get an overview of the impact of the regeneration project on his life as a local man, and if he feels the provision of the arts is an important	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	The change in Ballymun from his childhood to the current regeneration. Arts provision within the community. The	There was correspondence via face-book initially, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.

Interviewee	Selection Criteria	Type of Questions	Topics Discussed	Duration
	the *axis* Centre and the Youth theatre and why she has chosen to follow a career in the arts.	for accuracy)	professional actor.	her presence when in Ballymun. I interviewed Kelly face-to-face followed by formal e-mail.
Ruairí Ó Cuív – Chairman of CREATE (The National Development Agency for Collaborative Arts), regular consultant for An Chomhairle Ealaíon/ The Arts Council	To get an overview of public arts and community/ participatory arts in Ireland.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Funding decisions, arts policy and arts provision, the use and status of theatre in regeneration projects.	I met with Ruairí Ó Cuív informally initially to brief him about my research and to request an interview from him. He was interviewed over the phone and it lasted approximately forty minutes.
Denis Darcy Dundalk Town Council Arts Officer. Active participant in community arts – especially theatre – for four decades.	To get an overview of the community arts movement in Ireland.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	The community/ participatory arts network, current status and viability in 21st century Ireland.	There were numerous informal conversations with Denis Darcy, followed by a formal interview over the phone, lasting approximately forty five minutes.
Vinnie McCabe	To get an overview of how he as a professional actor from outside Ballymun worked along side amateur actors in two of Bolger's plays in the *Ballymun Trilogy.* His impression of the community and the importance of theatre as an art form for a local community.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Participation in particular theatre projects (*The Ballymun Trilogy),* working as a professional actor within a community like Ballymun. The reception the work received from the community. The value of such artistic projects.	There was correspondence via the phone initially, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.
Brendan Laird	To get an overview of how he as a professional actor from outside Ballymun worked along side amateur actors in two of Bolger's plays in the *Ballymun Trilogy.* His impression of the community and the importance of theatre as an art form for a local community.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Participation in particular theatre projects (*The Ballymun Trilogy),* working as a professional actor within a community like Ballymun. The reception the work received from the community. The value of such artistic projects.	There was correspondence via face-book initially, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.

Table 6.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewee	Selection Criteria	Type of Questions	Topics Discussed	Duration
Dermot Bolger - Playwright	Writer of *The Ballymun Trilogy* (2002-2008)	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	His status within the community, sourcing material for the plays, responses to the plays, writing process, the significance of theatre in regeneration projects.	There were numerous informal conversations with Dermot Bolger. The formal interview lasted approximately one hour.
Ray Yeates – Artistic Director of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre; Director, *The Ballymun Trilogy*	To access insights into the role of the *axis* Arts Centre within the Ballymun community. Opinions on efficacy of *The Ballymun Trilogy* using Prentki and Selman's (2000) evaluation template.	Open and pre-scheduled. (E-mail responses and annotation by researcher)	The role of theatre practices within the community and within the regeneration project, programming decisions, direction of *The Ballymun Trilogy.*	There were numerous informal conversations with Ray Yeates, followed by a formal interview via e-mail.
Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL) Representative	To balance my inquiry. To understand Dublin Corporation's role and vision for Ballymun.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Evaluation of the regeneration project to date, their visions for the future and the significance of arts provision in regeneration.	The interview was conducted face-to-face. It lasted approximately one hour.
Mark O'Brien – Arts Development Manager for the *axis* Arts Centre	To gain an understanding of the origins, development and future aspirations of the *axis* Arts Centre	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Origins of the centre, completed projects, future plans, the centre's role within the community, the significance of theatre in regeneration projects.	The interview was conducted face-to-face. It lasted approximately one hour.
Niamh Ní Chonchubhair - Programme Manager for the *axis* Arts Centre	To gain an insight into programming decisions, community inclusion strategies, etc.	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded for accuracy)	Completed artistic programmes, future plans, programming decisions that directly impact upon the local community, the role of theatre and the regeneration project.	There was a lot of e-mail correspondence with Niamh Ní Chonchubhair throughout the period of research, with one formal face-to-face interview. It lasted approximately one hour.
Kelly Hickey – young actress and student from Ballymun.	To discuss the impact of the provision and participation in theatre projects via	Open and pre-scheduled. (Digitally recorded	Participation in particular theatre projects (*The Ballymun Trilogy)*, working as a	As Kelly Hickey was my research assistant, I spent a considerable amount of time in

organically. I ensured that all questions were open and encouraged the respondent to take control of the content. I also conducted one unstructured interview and a number of interviews on-line. The people who agreed to be interviewed over the net were either contacted initially by person, or by phone. As the social networking tool, *Facebook*, is widely used by local groups in Ballymun as a means of communication and debate, I set up a *Facebook* link as a further means of contacting persons willing to participate in my research. This proved to be a most efficient way of collecting data as it saved a considerable amount of time on transcribing lengthy interviews and presented the participants with time to really consider and reflect on each question. Some respondents when finished the interview, were grateful for the opportunity to reflect on their relationship to the new Ballymun and the *axis* Centre, 'I appreciate you contacting me and it was a pleasure, I feel good about it' (Murphy, 2011). The opportunity of interviewing one of the original inhabitants of the newly built Ballymun of 1967 presented itself unexpectedly during one of my field visits to the area and required that I promptly employ an unstructured interviewing format. This was an important opportunity to collect firsthand, in-depth information about the old Ballymun and the newly regenerated Ballymun. My task was to 'get the ball rolling' as Denscombe (2003:167) would suggest, and encourage the interviewee to develop and expand on her train of thoughts.

A selection of people associated with arts provision in Ballymun and broader afield, have been interviewed, including local people, personal from *axis* Arts Centre, a representative from Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, Dermot Bolger (playwright), and local and professional actors that were associated with the *Ballymun Trilogy.*. Altogether I have conducted eighteen semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Collating data from such a broad selection of people has enabled an insightful and balanced account of the value of arts provision (theatre) in the regeneration of Ballymun (1998-2010) to emerge. It was an opportunity to gather first-hand information, informed by unique perspectives offered by the people who are living through, and contributing to, the regeneration of Ballymun. The following tables summarise my approach to semi-structured and unstructured interviews. They also give an account of the participants and the rationale for interviewing them.

the event, recognising the need to give them a period of time to reflect more fully on the experience of watching the play in the *axis* centre. This fact notwithstanding, the actual experience for a researcher to witness members of a community as, collectively, they engaged with and responded to a theatrical event which reflected their everyday lived experiences, gave me an invaluable opportunity to assess the power of theatre as a medium of communication which enables a community to have a conversation with itself and with others. Interestingly, Boellstorff (2006: 32) acknowledges how participant observation, unlike other methods such as interviews or surveys in isolation, enables the researcher to identify any gaps between what people say and what they actually do. He suggests that participant observation also implies a form of 'ethical yet critical engagement that blurs the line between researcher and the researched, even when the researcher is clearly not a member of the community being studied' as was the case with this researcher attending the plays of the Trilogy. This issue points to another factor that warrants consideration: that of the status of the researcher as insider/outsider in relation to the studied community. The practicalities of gaining trust and access to the chosen constituency group and available strategies will be dealt with in detail later in the chapter.

Method 2 (see figure 6.2) involves this researcher employing the most popular form of qualitative research methods – the interview. Interviewing as a method of collecting data is particularly well suited to research in the social sciences and is an essential source for generating case study information (Yin, 2003). For the purposes of this research, interviews were seen as an essential method of research, for their flexible nature and their ability to unearth in-depth, personal perspectives on behalf of the interviewee. The act of interviewing for the researcher, according to Taylor (1996), helps clarify the overall objective of the research, while subtly revealing the respondent's perspective.

Denscombe (2003: 166-167) suggests that there are three different types of interviews that the researcher can use, and the principal method of interviewing employed for this research is the semi-structured interview. This approach requires the researcher to have a list of predetermined questions that the interviewee is invited to answer. During the interviews, I encouraged the interviewee to develop their ideas and to speak widely and freely about the issues, allowing the interview to develop

of Ballymun, prompted important questions about current definitions and categories of 'community theatre', and, after the final curtain, I spent time in the *axis* café/bar speaking with local people, some of the actors and the director.

Interestingly, for the second play *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006), the audience reaction was somewhat muted, and more in keeping with mainstream auditorium behavioural patterns. This could have been the result of two considerations. Firstly, it could be assumed that by now the *axis* theatre had been established for five years and that the local theatre-going audience had become somewhat domesticated. Or, was the content of the play (which will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 8) such that the topic being dramatised was not as provocative as what had been explored in the first play of the Trilogy? *The Townlands of Brazil* was a very contemporary reflection on the Ballymun of that time (2006), raising issues of identity and the immigrant population. A satisfactory answer to these questions could only be reached by viewing audience responses to the final play in the trilogy, *The Consequences of Lightning* (2008). This play centred on themes of loss, acknowledging the past, anticipating the future and the rebirth of the community of Ballymun in a new physical environment. The audience, which was again predominantly local, was similar to that of the first observed audience in 2004, where they freely spoke back to the actors on the stage as the action was unfolding. Comments such as 'here he is now Mr Money bags' and 'go on, kiss him, kiss him' (Observation Record: 2008) punctuated the action on stage. While two of the plays from the Trilogy were evaluated for the purpose of this study after the actual events, the third play was very timely and coincided with my field research. During the last play I spoke with approximately 20 local people during the interval, with the intention of doing a random *vox pop* at the end of the performance. However on the night, when the final curtains were drawn, I witnessed an overwhelmingly emotional response from the audience. When I tried to pursue my plan of recording responses, my approaches proved somewhat unsuitable and even intrusive. It was evident that people needed time to reflect and to fully digest the contents of the play. I only succeeded in getting a minimal amount of responses, with the ultimate response being 'yeah, it was brilliant' or 'it was really good'. Comments of this nature failed to give me an insight either as to how people actually felt the community was being portrayed in the narrative, or as to the effect of watching a play about themselves within their own community. I arranged to interview some local people in-depth after

audience responded and reacted to the action unfolding on the stage. I was also very interested in documenting the artistry of the performance and how the playwright, Dermot Bolger, had portrayed the local people and their stories. It was decided that I would not make written notes during the performance as I was conscious of the need to fit in with the predominantly local audience. I did not want to distract their attention from what was happening on stage. Had I sat in the auditorium equipped with paper and pen, those present might have taken me for a theatre critic, and that might have altered their natural response to the play.

I used O'Toole's (2006: 100) third method of documentation which is available to the researcher, that of the 'reflective memo' to process my observations. This method is extremely flexible, allowing for the unpredictable nature of audience reaction and an organic development of events to unfold. The observation records were collated and set against the data gathered from employing a variety of other research methods, such as interviews with the people who were directly involved in the productions, for example, the playwright, director, actors, and local audience members. The actual play texts had a central role in the act of analysis. Areas of significant interaction between the audience and the action, as noted in the observation records, were revisited in the text, examining the language, content and ultimate dramatic impact, enabling a more informed conclusion to surface. What was particularly interesting for this researcher (see 'The Researcher's Note', Chapter 1), was the fact that the first performance of *From These Green Heights* presented an experience that challenged many accepted norms of behaviour associated with professional theatre going in Ireland, such as passivity and silence in the auditorium. While such conventions are greatly influenced by the genre of the play, for the majority of mainstream theatre presentations the illusory fourth wall is firmly in place (see Lonergan, 2009). Within the auditorium of the *axis* theatre, the audience of predominantly local people were surprisingly vocal throughout the performance commenting on the action as it unfolded. Comments such as 'Yeah, you can say that again', 'ah, God love her' 'would you look at that, that's the way it was' and 'don't talk to me about those bleedin' lifts' (Observation Record: 2004) were just a sample of audible responses recorded by this researcher as the performance was taking place. Such a disruption of usual auditorium decorum, coupled with the fact that there were professional actors working along side local amateur actors, all enacting a story depicting the community

> foreground its social constitution. The description of an individual response to a particular production may not be possible or, indeed, even desirable. But, because of that individual's participation in a given culture and the importance of his/her culturally-constituted horizon of expectations, and selection of a particular *social* event, it is important to reposition the study of drama to reflect this.
>
> Bennett (1990: 184 [emphasis in original])

Bennett (1990: 183) summarises this complex web of interpretation through the following diagram.

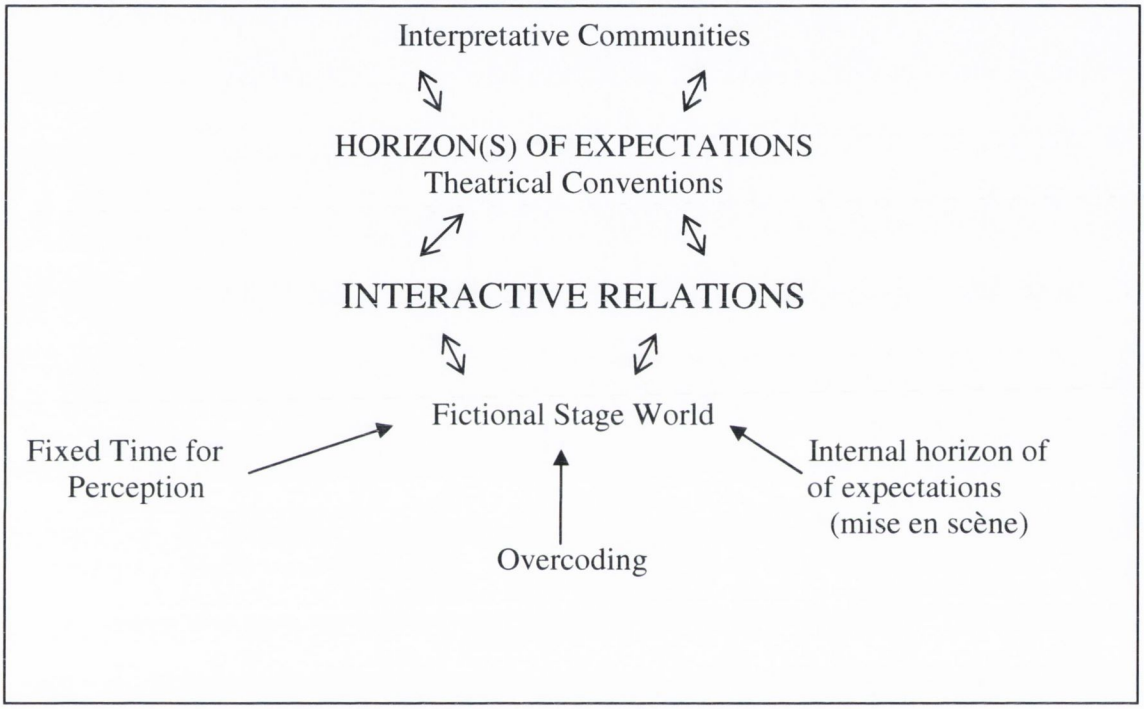


Figure 6.3 Culture and Interactive Relations

Bennett's (1990) model of interpretation had informed my thinking prior to attending the theatre events, and is dealt with in more detail in my overall analysis of the impact of the staging of Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* in The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, Ballymun, Dublin in Chapter 8.

While I had no predetermined checklists or charts before I entered the theatre auditorium and wrote up my formal observations after the event had finished, there were particular areas of interest that I had selected for detailed observation prior to the event opening. While I acknowledged the cultural importance of the plays, my ultimate objective was to observe the actor/audience relationship and how the

opportunities' where during many visits to the community of Ballymun, observing the community in a number of settings, opportunities arose to speak with a range of local people and identify possible interviewees. I used the visits to immerse myself in the community, and spent time in local cafes, shops, public areas and especially the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. The time spent *in situ* was invaluable to me as a researcher, as it enabled me to gain a firsthand understanding of the pace of life in Ballymun, observing local people interacting with one another, and noting their patterns of use and interaction with local facilities. I used this opportunity initially to speak off-the-record to a number of local people to gain a broad understanding of the area, its history and how local people perceived themselves in relation to other communities within Ireland. From such meetings, listening to people's stories, observing their everyday interactions, recurring themes began to emerge which ultimately influenced the kinds of questions that would form the content of the questionnaires and interviews. From the time spent on site, I was also enabled to identify those 'key informants' (O'Cuiv, 2008) that would be suitable for formal interviewing as part of the mixed methods approach. My observational approach was not only refined to the somewhat 'unstructured' time spent within the community, but I also employed a participatory approach. Goodwin (2009: 458) suggests that it is necessary for the participant observer to avoid potential bias by eschewing any 'preconceived ideas about what will be observed and having those ideas color one's observations'. My participatory observations took place in the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre in Ballymun, as a member of the audience (which was primarily made up of local people) for the three plays in the Ballymun Trilogy, *From These Green Heights* (2004), *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006) and *The Consequences of Lightning* (2008). I had completed my background research prior to the first event and felt that I had a comprehensive understanding of the historical, social, political and economic environment of the area. Susan Bennett (1990) echoes Nesbitt's observation about the importance of understanding the social environment in which the play is set. However, Bennett (1990) develops this theory by suggesting that the layers of interpretation are more complex for the observer, as there is a need to acknowledge the cultural lens through which the audience reads the play,

> What has emerged [...]of the audience is the necessity to view the theatrical event beyond its immediate conditions and to

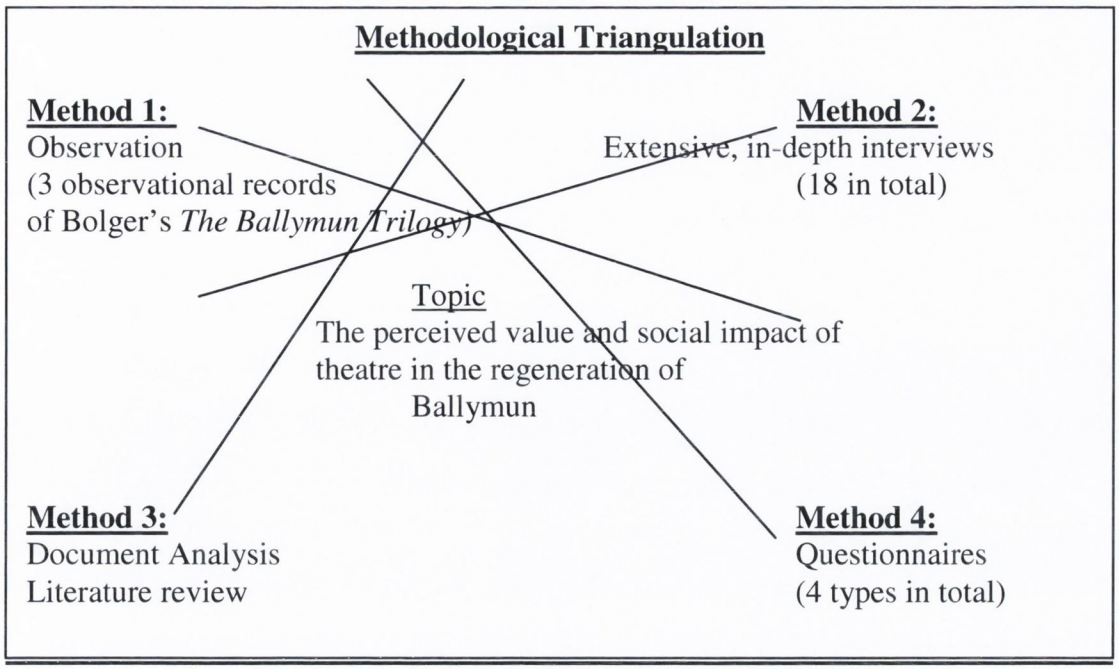


Figure 6.2 Methodological Triangulation of Research Design

While acknowledging that each method is distinct in its own right, and will yield results independent of each other, it is the act of combining these results that should enable me to reach reliable, informed, richly layered and insightful conclusions. It is anticipated that this research design should enable me to contribute new knowledge and fresh insights to the field of research.

Method 1 (as referred to in figure 6.2 above) is concerned with the employment of observational methods. Observational research is a very direct method of analysis as it places the researcher in situ (Cohen et al. 2000) with the opportunity to document the action as it is unfolding. The act of observation has, according to Yin (2003), many layers, as when on site the researcher has the valuable opportunity to document a variety of incidences/behaviour during a certain timeframe within the chosen location for the research. He emphasises the importance of field visits and how such visits can very often provide unexpected additional information and therefore can ultimately contribute to the researcher reaching a deeper and more accurate understanding of the area of enquiry. Once a researcher has familiarised themselves with their surroundings, opportunities very often arise whereby they find themselves in a position to identify suitable candidates to participate in further research such as focus groups or interviews. This researcher was the beneficiary of such 'chance

5. The Criteria for Interpreting the Findings: Setting the criteria for interpreting the study's analysis was in this case achieved through the employment of the triangulation method.

While being conscious of Yin's (2003) approach to case study research, this researcher initially reviewed the literature in the field of research methodologies, and applied the available methods systematically to the aims of the study, my main methods of data collection include both quantitative and qualitative tools, with a greater emphasis on the latter. Approaches range from interviews (structured, semi-structured and unstructured) to questionnaires, observations, analysis and use of existing documentation and an extensive literature review, all of which contribute to produce a body of valid and critical research. Denscombe (1998: 84) recognises that 'employing more than one method is useful because various methods contain their own set of assumptions about the nature of the social world and the kind of data that can be produced to increase knowledge about the world'. Employing such an approach is particularly compatible with arts-based research, ensuring that the data collated from the numerous sources of research is valid and issues of reliability underpin my research design. The fact that a number of research methods are being employed will facilitate the process of triangulation. The triangular coordinates for this particular body of research include interviews, questionnaires, observation records and secondary research documentation. The application of Denscombe's (2003) triangulation table to my research design is presented in figure 6.2 below.

through the exploration and 'exploitation' of culture will be undertaken in relation to the Ballymun Regeneration Project (1998-2010). Whether that regeneration approach is a microcosm of a global trend will be explored and discussed.

6.12 Research Design

Basing the research on a chosen case study in the field of social science requires the researcher to engage with a variety of research methods. This study aims to explore the complexities associated with states of 'being' and the impact of arts experiences (theatre) on individuals and on the community as a collective, and requires a variety of methods to be used. Yin (2003: 21) suggests that for case studies, there are five components that need to be considered,

1. A Study's Question: The form of the question in a case study is usually concerned with the how and why, as is the case with the chosen case study for this research, which explores how and why there has been provision for the arts (theatre in particular) in the regeneration of Ballymun, Dublin.
2. Its Propositions: The need to offer a rationale as to why this particular case study warrants attention. As referred to earlier, there are a number of reasons why the Ballymun case study is unique in the Irish context.
3. Its Units of Analysis: This point refers to whether the analysis is concerned with institutions, groups or individuals. For the chosen case study all units are referred to, with BRL and the *axis* Centre being core institutions, the community of Ballymun a group, and the 'key informants' for the research analysis, local individuals.
4. The Logic Linking the Data to the Propositions: There is no set practice to exemplify this point; however Yin (2003: 26) refers to the work of Campbell whereby several pieces of information from the same case study maybe related to theoretical propositions. In the case of this body of research, it could be argued that the extensive literature review anticipates and supports the exploration of particular factors of the Ballymun experience as explored in the case study. Also Prentki and Preston's (2009) equation for the 'poetics of community theatre' is returned to in Chapter 8, focusing on its applicability to the Ballymun case study.

unusual step of involving the local community with the management of the estate (Wassenburg, 2006). The efforts to save Ballymun from self-destruction were not only initiated by the Corporation but also by the Ballymun community. Norris (2001: 8) notes how active and strong the Ballymun community was at that time. Ultimately it was the activism and rallying of the local community that secured government support and funding for the area. The first attempt by the government to regenerate Ballymun took place between the years 1991-1993 with the implementation of the 'refurbishment programme'. This involved some 10% of the estate. While this programme was recognised as a success, it only had a limited impact in addressing the overall deficiencies of the area. A bigger and more ambitious regeneration programme would have to be employed if Ballymun as an area was to be regenerated both socially and economically. This was to materialise with the proposed, and now nearly completed, regeneration project of 1998-2010 (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 2008).

The central role of community activism within Ballymun in securing funding from the government for the first attempt at regeneration in the early '90s was something that has continued through to the current regeneration. It was the community that recognised the need for Ballymun to have its own community arts and resource centre. The community initially secured funding independently from the EU for the building of the *axis* Community Arts and Resource Centre, which was soon followed by supplementary funding from the Irish government (O' Brien, 2008: Recorded Communication [RC]). The role of the arts, with particular emphasis on theatre, in the Ballymun community, is central to this case study. While recognising the economic benefits that can be gained from a producing arts centre, this study aims to evaluate the perception of the value of the arts among key stakeholders, while also assessing the social impact of participating in, and the production of community theatre. Particular attention is paid to the role of theatre in the formation, development and sustaining of a community's identity. Questions as to whether the staging of local narratives gives affirmation to the stories of the people and their struggles, will be considered through an analysis of the work of Dermot Bolger's *Ballymun Trilogy*.

The case study will be placed in a broader research context. Issues concerning what constitutes a community in the 21st century with the impact of globalisation will frame the discussion. An examination of the global trend of cities reinventing themselves

> of instances – a survey approach. The aim is to illuminate the general by looking at the particular.

Within the scope of this doctoral study, I have found it necessary to identify and concentrate my efforts on one suitable case study: Ballymun, the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, and Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy*. The decision to focus the research around one case study was the result of considerable reflection. The fact that the regeneration of Ballymun is Ireland's largest regeneration project ever, with no other comparable study (of similar scale or social particulars) available in Ireland, suggested that focusing on this unique set of circumstances warranted a study in itself, along the lines recommended by Denscombe (2003).

Although the provision of the arts and their role within the regeneration project of Ballymun might be seen, from an Irish perspective, as progressive and quite unusual, the centring of culture and the arts has become common practice in other regeneration programmes internationally. Such considerations therefore, echo Denscombe's (2003) validation of the decision to focus on one unique case study.

6.11 Identification of the Case Study: The Regeneration of Ballymun

My selected case study investigates the regeneration of the north Dublin city suburb of Ballymun, and the social impact of the provision of and participation in, community theatre projects. Ballymun was Ireland's first attempt at building a modern, large-scale, high-rise estate in response to Dublin's inner city housing crisis, that faced the then Minister for Local Government Neil Blaney in the mid 1960s (Power, 2000). The Ballymun estate was essentially a green field site when the land was acquired by the government in 1962. Between the years 1966 and 1969 the estate mushroomed, with over 3,000 housing units (both high-rise flats and houses) provided, with an additional 1,587 built over the following twenty years (Norris, 2001). With little opportunity for the residents of Ballymun to purchase their homes, coupled with a serious lack of outside investment, social amenities, high unemployment and bad estate management and design, Ballymun spiralled into a state of serious social and economic decline by the late 1970s (Muir, 2003).

Recognition on behalf of Dublin Corporation of the need to address the acute problems in the Ballymun estate started in 1984 when the corporation took the highly

applications of quantitative research findings and the particularity of qualitative research findings. Yin (2003) suggests that there are three kinds of case studies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory; however, no one categorisation is clear cut and there is an element of overlap in each case. For a researcher to identify the appropriate type they must consider three conditions which will ultimately dictate their choice: 1 – the type of research question, 2-the extent of control the investigator has over actual behavioural events, 3- the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. If the research question focuses on 'what' then the overall approach may be exploratory, however should the research question be more concerned with 'how and why' the research will be more explanatory in design. If the work is intending on studying the 'who' it may be more descriptive. With regards to the extent of control the researcher has over behavioural events and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events, Yin (2003: 8) suggests that case studies and histories can overlap, with the unique feature of the case study being its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews and observations, beyond what might be available in historical studies. It is possible however to identify research situations where all of the above strategies (exploratory, descriptive and explanatory) may be employed, such as the use of surveys within a case study and in turn the use of a case study within any given study. Such approaches ensure that data is derived from a number of sources and combined to inform a study's overall finding. Combining the sources gives a three-dimensional quality to the research where the layering of findings provides richer insights into the area.

Struwig and Stead (2001) explore the issue of reliability and suggest that very often reliability is associated with a test approach, which, on repetition under constand conditions, it will produce similar results. This is something that is not possible when the researcher is basing the findings of her/his particular area of inquiry around one case study, and questions of reliability may be raised. Denscombe (2003: 30) on the other hand supports the decision of a 'one case study' approach for validated research practice,

> The logic behind concentrating efforts on one case study rather than many is that there may be insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and, importantly, that would not have come to light through the use of a research strategy that tried to cover a large number

concerned with identifying a suitable practice that will demonstrate or refute the proposed research hypothesis. According to O'Toole (2006: 44) the case study is where 'we examine some phenomenon by identifying, then observing and documenting a "typical" or an "untypical" or "deviant" example, and then analysing the data, looking for its special characteristics'. The research is concentrated on one example, identifying the particularities and complexities that are evident in that one setting, while placing the conclusions in a broader theoretical framework. Alexander and Bennett (2004: 19) argue that the case study approach allows the researcher 'high levels of conceptual validity' enabling them to 'identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the researcher intends to measure' and thus ultimately giving the reader a three-dimensional picture of the proposed hypothesis. To achieve such a 'three-dimensional picture' a selection of particulars exist, all of which are recognised as common characteristics of the case study research approach. Denscombe's (2003: 32) table illustrates how case study research differs from that of other methods.

Table 6.3 Characteristic Features of Case Study Research

Case Study		**Other Methods**
Depth of study	rather than	Breadth of study
The particular	rather than	The general
Relationships/processes	rather than	Outcomes and end-products
Holistic view	rather than	Isolated factors
Natural settings	rather than	Artificial situations
Multiple sources	rather than	One research method

Cohen et al. (2000) assert that using a case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, where findings ground abstract theories or principles. Such unique findings however, are based on the analysis of one case study, which according to O'Toole (2006: 46) is in itself limiting: 'case study has one limitation – that you really cannot generalise from it, not from single or even multiple cases – which [...] is sometimes one of the basic purposes of making research useful and transferable.' Again, this reflects the friction that exists between the general

direction, and may be best understood as commercial commodities, a means of strengthening social cohesion, or as self-justifying, critical, cultural practices, are central to my inquiry. While acknowledging the economic benefits of the arts, this study concentrates on evaluating the social impact of the arts, and their value (actual and perceived) and purpose within the community setting. The impact of globalisation on contemporary living, and on changing concepts of 'community', both rhetorical and experiential, frames the research. Questions as to how, and in what ways, value is assigned to arts projects are also explored.

This project specifically aims to,

- examine the extent to which the Ballymun regeneration may be seen as a microcosm of the 'global city' regeneration approach;
- investigate the perception of the value of arts provision, while also assessing the social impact of theatre on the community of Ballymun with particular reference to Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* (2004-2008);
- explore relationships between narrative and identity, to establish the extent to which dramatisation of local stories may act as a form of affirmation for the people of the area in their particular struggles;
- make recommendations in relation to the efficacy of arts provision within an area zoned for regeneration.

6.10 The Project: Selecting a Case Study

According to Yin (2003) the case study as a research method has been stereotyped as an inferior practice among other social science methods, lacking precision, objectivity and rigour. He warns scholars that should they integrate a case study into their research project, their findings may be subject to challenge and scrutiny over issues of validity. Despite such pressures, the case study method has become a widespread practice, particularly for researchers in the social sciences, with some people equating qualitative research and case study research as the same practice (see Bryman, 2005: 87). Case studies have been recognised as a means of enabling in-depth and intensive interrogation of the selected area of research, with the intention to enable understanding of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2003: 2). Case studies are

is in a position to 'reveal your own stance in relation to them' (O'Toole, 2006: 84), giving the research authority and standing in the academic community.

The approach to the literature review varies depending on what methods of research have been selected for use. Whether the researcher is engaged with qualitative, quantitative or a mixed methods approach, the literature review will serve alternative purposes,

> In qualitative research, the literature helps substantiate the research problem, but it does not constrain the views of participants. A popular approach is to include more literature at the end of a qualitative study than at the beginning. In quantitative research, the literature not only helps to substantiate the problem but also suggests possible questions or hypotheses that need to be addressed. A separate "literature review" section typically is found in quantitative studies. In mixed methods research, the use of literature will depend on the type of strategy of inquiry and the weight given to qualitative or quantitative research in the study.
>
> (Creswell, 2003: 46)

Whatever the approach, the literature review is an essential component of any credible, successful, and informative body of scholarly work.

6.9 Aims of the Research

The central objective of this body of research is to investigate the relationship between arts provision (theatre) and the regeneration of Ballymun, which Norris (2001) describes as a failed social housing experiment two miles from Dublin airport. In Ballymun, the wide-ranging work of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre is a key site in which the objectives of Ballymun Regeneration Ltd.[1] and the diverse aspirations of well-established community organisations are negotiated. The research examines the status, purpose, perceived value and deployment of the arts in urban regeneration projects, with specific reference to the Ballymun project. Questions as to whether the arts (community theatre) are developing in a new

[1] Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL) was set up as a company by Dublin Corporation in 1997. The main object of the company was to 'plan and implement a regeneration programme which will result in a new town with new and improved facilities for the 30,000 people who live there. BRL is working with the community to develop and implement the Masterplan for the physical, economic and social regeneration of Ballymun' (see www.brl.ie).

5. Also present *negative* or *discrepant information* that runs counter to the themes.
6. Spend *prolonged time* in the field.
7. Use *peer debriefing* to enhance the accuracy of the account.
8. Use an *external auditor*. [Creswell's original emphasis in italics].

Should a researcher employ a mixed methods approach, they will choose from the range of validity procedures listed in the two sections above. Approaches vary depending on the nature of the research.

6.8 The Literature Review

The literature review enables the researcher to locate their topic of inquiry in a broad theoretical framework, where references to international and national scholarly work position their chosen approach. According to Hart (2000: 1) 'A review of the literature is important because without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic, of what has already been done on it, how it has been researched, and what the key issues are'. It is also a means of limiting the scope of the inquiry on behalf of the researcher, by identifying the area(s) of most significance. Creswell (2003: 29) conveys the importance of the literature review and the multiple purposes it serves,

1. It shares findings from other studies with the reader that are similar or relevant to his/her own approach.
2. It relates to the ongoing existing dialogue in literature about the topic. It can extend the study that has gone before and fill in any gaps in the base of knowledge.
3. It is a framework for establishing the purpose of this particular approach, while also acting as a benchmark of comparison for other research findings.

The literature review is not only about collating material that deals with the same or a similar topic of inquiry, but meets the need to 'analyse the content of that material in more depth' (David and Sutton, 2004: 7). This enables the researcher to formulate an informed and critical analysis of the body of literature that exists in relation to their chosen topic. Having critically evaluated all of the relevant arguments, the researcher

Validity is perhaps more difficult to prove in the evaluation of social science subjects, where results rarely lend themselves to quantification. It is perhaps this very fact that has influenced the development of postpositivist thought. As mentioned earlier, postpositivism refutes postivists' claim of the absolute truth of knowledge, 'recognizing that we cannot be "positive" about our claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans' (Creswell, 2003: 7). Careful observation, leading to the measurement of an objective reality, is what makes the postpositivists' approach particularly well suited to establishing sound and viable evaluative results in the social science subjects.

Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that reliability ultimately means consistency, where replication using the same instruments and type of subjects is possible. Creswell (2003: 157) distinguishes between methods of validation depending on what instruments/methods of measurement a researcher decides to use. For the researcher engaged with quantitative methods, there are three traditional forms of validity that need to be adhered to,

1. Content validity (do the items measure the content they were intended to?)
2. Predictive or concurrent validity (do scores predict a criterion of validity? Do results correlate with other results?)
3. Construct validity (do items measure hypothetical constructs or concepts?)

(Creswell, 2003)

For researchers who are actively engaged with qualitative research methods, Creswell (2003: 196-197) suggests that there are eight strategies available to check the validity of their findings,

1. *Triangulate* different data sources of information.
2. Use *number-checking* to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings.
3. Use *rich, thick description* to convey the findings.
4. Clarify the *bias* a researcher brings to the study.

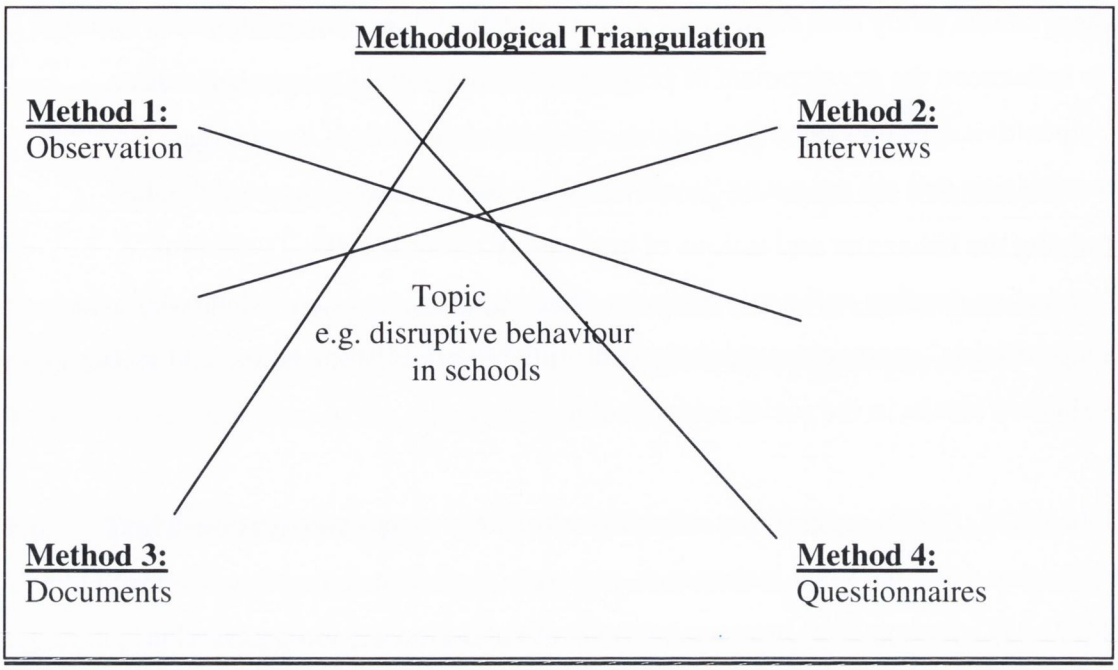


Figure 6.1 Methodological Triangulation (Denscombe, 2003: 133)

While each method is distinct in its own right and will yield results independent of each other, the findings of each method combine to reinforce the overall research conclusion. The application of diverse methods of data collection provides a richer and more holistic comprehension of the subject under analysis. Robson (1993) advocates the triangulation approach, where its application reduces the pressure on the researcher to establish the 'right answer', while at the same time demanding in-depth analytical interpretation on behalf of the researcher. The clash between quantitative statistics and qualitative narrative, which was once the cause of irreconcilable differences, is reversed where their combination is seen to add validity to the results.

Whether the researcher decides to pursue their research drawing on a mixed methods approach or solely using qualitative or quantitative methods, issues concerning validity will ultimately drive the method selection.

6.7 Validity

Validity is concerned with the establishment of research findings which are credible and reliable. 'Validity refers to the issue of how we can be sure that a measure really does reflect the concept to which it is supposed to be referring' (Bryman, 2005: 28).

While qualitative methods traditionally have been associated with research in the social sciences, where human behaviour and forms of communication are under scrutiny, quantitative research has been looked upon principally as a method reserved for scientists, and the generation of 'hard' facts. Loxley (2006) however, cautions against such a rigid divide of qualitative and quantitative research, suggesting that there is no clear categorisation as to what fits and doesn't fit into each method. The mixed methods approach according to Loxley (2006) can ultimately lead to superior findings. Cohen et al. (2000) share a similar attitude where they support the use of mixed methods, with the employment of both qualitative and quantitative methods complementing each other.

The recognition that all methods of data collection were susceptible to bias, and that each method had its own limitations, had to be considered by researchers. The mixed methods model would have to encapsulate an approach that could neutralise or cancel any such concerns; thus triangulation was born (Creswell, 2003: 15).

6.6 Triangulation

Triangulation is an approach to research which is particularly well suited to social science subjects, where statistical data falls short of representing the complexity of human agency. Webb et al. (cited in Bryman, 2005: 131) suggest that social scientists draw from a selection of methodological devices to give them greater confidence in their research findings. Techniques from both quantitative and qualitative methods are combined, enabling the social scientist to draw on both numerical and descriptive evidence to inform the overall analysis. Denzin (cited in Bryman, 2005: 131) refers to triangulation as an approach in which 'multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and methodologies' are combined.

According to Denscombe (2003: 133) 'Triangulation involves locating a true position by referring to two or more other coordinates'. The coordinates for triangulation are numerous and can be drawn from multiple research methods. Such a wide-ranging approach ensures that the area of research is analysed from multiple perspectives, ultimately enabling a more complete and objective overview to emerge. Denscombe's (2003) figure illustrates how multiple approaches combine to inform the central topic of inquiry.

according to Coleman (2009), a means of enabling the voiceless to be heard, and very often communicates to them that they are much more than just an object of research.

Sampling enables the researcher to gauge the effectiveness of his/her proposed interview. It usually involves interviewing a small number of people from the identified constituency group. Issues concerning suitability of language, content, structure and the overall value of the exercise can be monitored. Sampling is an essential component of a researcher's approach and one that ensures the ultimate employment of the interview as a research instrument will be worthwhile.

6.5 Mixed Methods

Until relatively recently, research convention required the researcher to state clearly their style of approach, clarifying whether they belonged to the quantitative or qualitative school. There was a clear divide between the uses of quantitative or qualitative research, each approach being associated with specific fields of study (see Yin, 2003). The rigid divide that existed between the two approaches was challenged and ultimately broken in the mid-20th century. According to Creswell (2003: 15) 'the concept of mixing methods probably originated in 1959, when Campbell and Fiske used multiple methods to study validity of psychological traits'. Soon after the establishment of such an approach, many people began to 'pick 'n' mix' their approaches to suit the particulars of their field of research, 'this prompted others to mix methods, and soon approaches associated with field methods such as observations and interviews (qualitative data) were combined with traditional surveys (quantitative data)' (Sieber, cited in Creswell 2003: 15).

In the social sciences the mixed methods approach very often enables the researcher to collate a statistically supported in-depth analysis of the field,

> One of the contexts in which quantitative and qualitative research are most frequently united is where an ethnographer carries out a survey in order to fill some gaps in his or her knowledge of a community, group, organisation, or whatever, because the gaps cannot be readily filled by a reliance on participant observation or unstructured interviewing alone. (Bryman, 2005: 137)

semi-structured and unstructured interviews is the degree of control exercised by the researcher over the nature of the responses and the length of the answers allowed by the respondent' (Denscombe, 2003: 167).

Silverman (2010) adheres to the view that interviews need to have an element of flexibility whereby the interviewer responds to the nature of the proceedings by being able to adapt the listed questions to cater for the sometimes unpredictable nature of the interview. The in-depth responses generated by such an approach give a sense of authority and weight to the conclusions arrived at.

If a researcher decides to use interviews, it is important to be conscious of how time-consuming they can be, and to be aware that interviews, in particular, can be difficult to assess through an objective lens of analysis, and are very often prone to bias and a subjective reading. According to Bell (1987: 73) bias can be disguised in multiple ways, such as the interviewee being eager to please the interviewer and answer questions accordingly. Also, the questions can be worded or delivered in such a way as to probe the interviewee to give answers that support the researcher's preconceived notions. There is also the issue of status between the interviewer and the interviewee, and how each are perceived in relation to the other may lead to bias and contribute to a subjective analysis. Collating data from this method of research is complex and needs much consideration. Shah (2004: 552) suggests that in an interview a two-way learning process is established where the subjectivities of participants influence the data generated and the making of meaning. Therefore, the meaning arrived at can never be completely value free, but an ability on behalf of the researcher to recognise this is essential if the interviewing method is to be used successfully.

Charmaz (2006) suggests that the responsibility lies with the researcher to ensure that the interview is a positive experience for the participant. To achieve this, the interviewer must be prepared, knowledgeable, interested and gracious to their interviewee. Whatever the value of the interview is for the researcher and the contribution it will make to their field of research, the very fact that the interviewer has researched, selected and taken the time to interview people, is very often affirmation for the people that their story/opinions are valued and needed. It is,

> The goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer to interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. (Oakley, cited in Hall and Hall, 1996: 13)

According to Denscombe (2003: 166/167) there are three main types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are used to ensure that the core topics of research have been discussed. They involve tight control on behalf of the interviewer over the type of questions and development of answers. The questions have been pre-determined and the interviewee is invited to give concise responses. The fact that the wording of the questions has been carefully selected, means the range of answers that the interviewees have to offer tend to be quite standard and therefore this approach lends itself easily to standardisation and the generation of easily collated data. This form of interviewing has more in common with the use of questionnaires than semi-structured or unstructured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews adopt a similar approach to that of structured interviews, where there is a predetermined list of questions to which the interviewee must respond. The major difference is in the amount of flexibility that the interviewer invests in the process (Silverman, 2010). This approach encourages the interviewee to develop ideas and to speak more widely about selected and non-selected issues. The questions used are open and encourage the interviewee to take control of the content.

Unstructured interviews go a step further, where the role of the interviewer is to 'start the ball rolling by introducing a theme or topic and then letting the interviewee develop his or her ideas and pursue his or her train of thought' (Denscombe, 2003: 167).

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews share a similar terrain, with many interviews moving almost imperceptibly between the two. The importance of flexibility in the structure of the interview is what makes semi-structured and unstructured interviews so appealing to research in the social sciences, where the investigation of personal narratives and human behaviour are recognised as significant contributors to the generation of research data. 'What distinguishes structured from

As with all methods of research, it is important for the researcher to be aware of any forms of bias that they may hold in relation to the subjects or topic of inquiry. Should a researcher decide to use observational records to inform their research, they need to be objective in their analysis. However this can be extremely difficult and is something that needs to be addressed by all researchers. According to O'Toole (2006: 100) 'to document and comment objectively are out of the question [...], but your biases of philosophical and methodological positioning can be counterbalanced by effective triangulation or crystallisation'. The effectiveness of aligning your research with the method of triangulation will be discussed in more detail in section 6.5 on Mixed Methods.

6.4.3 Interviews

The other most popular form of qualitative research methods is the interview. The interview is a flexible, in-depth way of obtaining information by questioning or discussing issues with people (Dunne, 1995). Interviews can be conducted either face-to-face, over the phone or via the internet. They enable the researcher to access information that very often cannot be obtained via other research methods such as observation records or questionnaires. In face-to-face and web-cam interviews, the interviewer has the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the topic of inquiry, not only through the spoken word but also through the communication of body language and vocal expression. Should a point need to be developed or warrant extended commentary, the interviewer has the opportunity to investigate underlying motives or personal reasons that cannot be identified using methods such as questionnaires (see Robson, 2002 and Silverman, 2010). The interviewer has the power to clarify or develop responses as s/he sees fit.

Taylor (1996) suggests that the method of interviewing has significant advantages for the researcher. It subtly reveals the respondent's particular perspective or 'angle of repose' (Taylor, 1996: 45) which acts as a clear indication as to how the researcher is approaching and interpreting the work. The process of interviewing also asks how the researcher should conduct themselves professionally and what status relationship exists between the interviewee and the interviewer,

social impact of the arts, mirroring the problems associated with qualitative research viability, a method which doesn't lend itself easily to quantifiable results (see Chapter 3 for an extended discussion on this point).

Whatever dissenting comments observational methods may be subjected to, the real value of engaging with observational research is that it places the researcher in situ (see Cohen et al., 2000). The predictability factor that is characteristic of quantitative research is often diminished in observational research scenarios, where the unfolding events very often reveal unexpected and research-enriching incidents. The researcher gets to gather first-hand information, documenting the process as it develops.

A difficulty that researchers need to be conscious of, according to Robson (2002), is that the presence of the researcher observing may change the dynamic of the group. This can be addressed in two ways; firstly, the observer can observe the group activity for an extended period of time, where their presence becomes part of the norm, and they are no longer seen as an intrusion. Secondly, the researcher can observe from a concealed position, where the subjects of inquiry are unaware of their presence. This approach, however raises ethical questions, and is an option that a researcher would have to be able to justify (O'Toole, 2006: 104).

There are formal and informal methods of documentation available to the researcher. O'Toole (2006: 100) suggests that the researcher's personal document can basically take three forms, all of which are informal methods of data collection,

1. Journal(s) or commentaries
2. Field notes and/or case notes
3. Reflective memos or essays.

These methods of documentation are flexible and responsive to whatever events are unfolding at the time of observation, often informing the research hypothesis. Formal methods of observational documentation however, respond to a list of structured areas of inquiry, with information fitting into pre-designated categories. This approach is seen to test the research hypothesis, confirming or disregarding it (Cohen et al., 2000).

Nesbitt (cited in Bell, 1999: 156) states that 'observation is not a "natural" gift but a highly skilled activity for which an extensive background knowledge and understanding is required, and also a capacity for original thinking and the ability to spot significant events'.

Two types of observational approaches are available to the researcher: participant observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation 'entails the sustained immersion of the researcher among those whom he or she seeks to study with a view to generating a rounded, in-depth account of the group, organization, or whatever' (Bryman, 2005: 45). Unlike participant observation, where the researcher is very often a member of the group/organisation under scrutiny, non-participant observation does not require the researcher to participate in the group activity, but interpret the action from an 'outside' position (see Robson, 1993). With the participant observer, according to Bell (1993: 109/110), the process of observation begins without a preconceived set of assumptions: 'they have no checklists or charts. They observe events, situations, behaviour and then write up their observations afterwards.' This method is extremely flexible, allowing for an organic development of events to unfold. Non-participatory observation however, may, according to McNiff et al. (2003: 119-121), employ a number of long-established strategies such as head counting, interaction charting, procedural analysis and interaction process analysis.

Irrespective of whether a researcher engages with participatory or non-participatory observation methods, it is important that s/he is conscious of the subjective nature of observational analysis, and how and why certain areas of interest have preference over others. It is essential that the evaluation is not coloured by any bias (see Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009).

Taylor (1996: 39) highlights the difficulty around validation issues which accompany the use of observation records as a means of scholarly research: 'numbers, it seems, are more credible than descriptions of people and their work'. It is this very argument that has fuelled the debate between the superiority of value that has been assigned to the scientific nature of quantitative research methods at the expense of qualitative research techniques (Bryman, 2005). A similar issue arises when trying to assess the

from the subject of investigation by acknowledging any areas of identification and subjectivity. It is perhaps this very act, whereby the qualitative researcher adopts a somewhat objective lens through which s/he will interpret the material, which demonstrates the close link between the nature of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Denscombe (2003: 268) suggests, however, that despite the researcher's greatest efforts it is inevitable that elements of the researcher's self will inform the analysis,

> Qualitative research can be part of an information gathering exercise and useful in its own right. Or, qualitative research can be used as the basis for generating theories. In neither case, however, are its descriptions ever 'pure' – they are always the outcome of an interpretation by the researchers.

It is therefore essential that the researcher can clearly identify any forms of bias, or potential bias that may exist before the research project is undertaken. The issue of bias is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter with particular emphasis on the dilemma that faced this researcher as an 'outsider' researcher to the community under study and the need to employ a research assistant of 'insider' status to gain access to the chosen constituency group.

The two principal methods of qualitative research according to Bryman (2005: 45/46) are participant observation and interviews.

6.4.2 Observation

> If you systematically watch what happens, you will be using an observation technique.
>
> (McNiff et al., 2003: 93)

Observation is a very direct method of analysis. It grants the researcher an opportunity to document action, interaction, communication, behaviour etc, as it is unfolding. It affords the researcher immediate access into the world of inquiry. The researcher is then in a position to offer first hand information regarding the case study via observational records (O'Toole, 2006). To actively engage with observational methods of inquiry, the researcher is required to become, or be very familiar with the selected research environment. The researcher needs to be informed about the social, cultural, economic and political particulars of the place/topic under investigation.

research

5. Research strategy	Structured	Unstructured
6. Scope of findings	Nomothetic	Ideographic
7. Image of social reality	Static and external to actor	Processual and socially constructed by actor
8. Nature of data	Hard, reliable	Rich, deep

While Bryman's table clearly identifies the differences that exist between the two methods of research, in practice, there may be a degree of overlap between such distinctions. This may become apparent, especially when the researcher (engaging in either qualitative or quantitative techniques) is trying to distance themselves from the topic to enable a more objective analysis to emerge.

In particular, the researcher who employs qualitative research methods, according to Vidich and Lyman (2003: 55/56), needs to be conscious of a number of issues in order to increase reliability and validity,

1. The ability to perceive and contextualise the world of his or her own experience as well as the capacity to project a metaempirical conceptualisation onto those contexts of life and social institutions with which he or she has not had direct experience.

2. The inability to detach him- or herself from the particular values and special interests of organised groups in order that he or she may gain a level of understanding that does not rest in priori commitments.

3. A sufficient degree of social and personal distances from prevailing norms and values to be able to analyse them objectively.

Vidich and Lyman (2003) adhere to the importance of the researcher being able to distance themselves from the topic of inquiry, enabling an objective mode of analysis to surface. This is achieved when the researcher has consciously distanced him/herself

the collation of rich and personal data. While quantitative research is characterised very often by the projection of presupposed outcomes, qualitative analysis encourages an organic development, with much more flexibility offered to the overall process (see Taylor, 1996). A disadvantage that is often associated with qualitative research is that conclusions reached can be very selective and may not be suitable to a broader application, unlike quantitative research which is typically based on statistical data that transfers easily from one method of analysis to another. It is necessary to acknowledge the possible limitations associated with the employment of qualitative research methods; however in combination with other methods, a qualitative approach can be extremely successful, enabling a detailed analysis of the subject to surface. The collection and analysis of detailed personal narratives, artefacts and images very often enables the researcher to reach an informed and accurate reading of the subject of research. Where the research is centred on the evaluation of the social impact of the arts within a community, qualitative research methods are necessary as evaluation is based on social relations and human interactions. Bryman (2005: 94) efficiently documents the differences between the two methods of research, qualitative and quantitative, in the following table.

Table 6.2 The Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods (Bryman, 2005)

	Quantitative	**Qualitative**
1. Role of qualitative research	Preparatory	Means to exploration of actors' interpretations
2. Relationship between researcher and subject	Distant	Close
3. Researcher's stance in relation to subject	Outsider	Insider
4. Relationship between theory/concepts and	Confirmation	Emergent

6.4.1 Qualitative Research

According to Denscombe (2003: 268) qualitative research is 'an umbrella term that covers a variety of styles of social research, drawing on a variety of disciplines such as sociology, social anthropology and social psychology'. What Denscombe's statement illustrates is the suitability of qualitative research methods to the social science subjects. According to Tesch (cited in Denscombe, 2003: 267) this is because of two major factors: firstly 'a concern with meanings and the way people understand things', and secondly 'a concern with patterns of behaviour'.

Qualitative research involves,

> [the] studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.
>
> (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 5)

In contrast to quantitative research, process is paramount to the qualitative researcher, assessing how people make sense of their lives, and the structures of the natural world. Meanings are derived very often from descriptive means such as self-narratives, words and pictures, and are not centred on numerical codifications. To derive meaning from such diverse modes of communication, qualitative research is, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 9), a 'set of interpretive activities' that 'privileges no single methodology practice over another'.

Qualitative research is always contextually bound and localised. It does not lend itself easily to mass generalisation, unlike quantitative techniques. The results offered by quantitative research are usually hard, numerical and scientific and are, therefore, often deemed reliable or even superior; whereas with qualitative research, the conclusions are usually derived from intensive, small-scale communications drawing on a rich and deep data set (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The researcher in this tradition engages less with statistical analysis in favour of in-depth analytical accounts of human behaviour. Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that qualitative research caters for issues concerning moral responsibility, individuality, freedom and choice, resulting in

1. Be designed to collect information which can be used subsequently as data for analysis. The main purpose is to discover things, not to change people's lives.
2. Consist of a written list of questions. Identical questions are presented to each of the participants, ensuring consistency and ease of analysis.
3. Gather information by asking people directly about the points concerned with the research. It is a means of seeking information from the primary source.

The structure of the questions is generally formulated drawing on three available models: open-ended questions, closed questions, or pre-coded questions. Hall and Hall (1996: 99) suggest that,

> *Open-ended* questions leave informants with a space to write in their answers just as they like, or for the interviewer to record the exact response given. *Closed or Pre-coded* questions are those which ask the informant to choose one (or more) from a set of pre-selected answers. These can range from the simplest Yes/No through 5-point rating or ranking scales to a choice from a checklist of alternatives. [emphasis in original]

For questions to be effective and workable, the wording must be considered. It is essential that each question is phrased appropriately, and that it is not leading or biased in any way. There must be no ambiguity, with the language register deemed appropriate for the selected group of inquiry (see Robson, 2002).

According to Denscombe (2003: 146), the type of data collated through questionnaires falls into two broad categories: facts and opinions. Factual information is collected through asking direct non-opinionated questions, such as gender, age, etc. For the researcher to accumulate information regarding opinions, the respondent must reveal information about their feelings, attitudes, judgements etc. Despite Denscombe's (2003) broad categorisation, the data that is ultimately collected in both categories employs similar methods of measurement, such as box counting, gauge assessment or simple written analysis (Oppenheim, 1992).

Depending on what the researcher is trying to establish, the content and structure of the questions is paramount if data which is reliable and informative is to be secured.

al., 2000). According to Loxley (2006) the suitability of one approach over another is a question that each researcher has to tackle. For the purpose of this research, quantitative research methods will be used sparingly, with qualitative techniques deemed more suitable. This researcher considers the questionnaire to be the most appropriate method to use from the selection of techniques offered in the quantitative research category.

6.3.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a tried and tested method of collating research data (see Yin, 2003). 'Its purpose is to generate information in a systematic fashion by presenting all informants with questions in a similar manner, and recording their response in a methodical way' (Hall and Hall, 1996: 97). Such a mechanical method of data collection meets criteria around reliability, by using uniform questions, very often with universal resonance, thus enabling the application of the arrived at results to a broad selection of supplementary research; 'questionnaires allow researchers to survey a population of subjects, with little or no personal interaction, and with the aim of establishing a broad picture of their experiences or views' (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007: 144). It is the transferable nature of questionnaire results that fuels generalised conclusions, and according to some, the questionnaires should only be employed in straight forward research: 'the questionnaire should be used only for relatively simple and factual inquires, although it may form a necessary part of more complex studies' (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1970: 44). The questionnaire is suitable to large, general, wide-scale research but will not unearth any in-depth views or experiences. It is this lack of depth in analysis that marks the essential distinction between qualitative and quantitative research methods (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007: 144-155).

The questionnaire, according to Loxley (2006), acts as a form of proxy for the researcher. It is a method which extends flexibility to the researcher, who can directly approach the selected participants themselves, or have questionnaires administered without the researcher being present. To be successful in extracting the desired information from the participants, whether present or not, demands attention to issues around structure and content of the questionnaire. There are various types of questionnaire available to the researcher, however, according to Denscombe (2003: 144-145), for a questionnaire to be accepted as academically viable, it needs to,

2. Ordinal data: similar to nominal data, where the researcher is engaged in counting and categorising things, however the categories are organised in a clear and ranked system, where the respondent is asked to gauge their response, very often from a point-scale (for example, 1-5, with 1 representing 'strongly agree' and 5 representing 'strongly disagree').
3. Interval data: develops the ordinal data collection approach with the categories ranked on a scale, where the distance between the categories can be measured. Categorising according to calendar years is an example of interval data collection.
4. Ratio data: similar to interval data, where a scale of categories exists. In this case, the scale has 'a true zero' – an absolute reference point. Ratio data tends to be concerned with things like 'incomes, distances and weights', and the method enables the researcher to compare and contrast the information from each category in terms of ratios.
5. Discrete data: this data is applied to the measurement of phenomena that naturally come in whole units, for example the population of a country. Discrete data comes in chunks such as 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.
6. Continuous data: this approach measures things to the nearest unit for practical reasons. Measurements take into account the variable nature of the item of measurement, such as a person's age, height and weight.

These six statistical techniques do not have to be used in isolation. The researcher may use more than one of them at any given stage in a project. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will draw mainly on ordinal data collection and, to a lesser extent, on some of the other listed approaches, as relevant.

The scientific nature of quantitative research and its deployment within the social sciences, with its insistence on objectivity, very often converts aspects of people's lives into cold numerical equations, and is seen by many as an approach which ultimately dehumanises its subjects (see Cohen et al., 2000). The argument that human behaviour can be assessed and understood via a range of numerical equations, fuels the debate about the suitability of the employment of quantitative research methods in the social sciences. This debate centres around whether complex life experience can be measured and weighed, reducing agency to a mere graph (Cohen et

6.3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is a method of intellectual investigation that insists upon the researcher adopting an objective stance in relation to the topic under investigation. Cohen et al. (2000: 7) suggest that quantitative research perceives the social realm in a similar light to that of the natural world, with an accountable, hard and objective reality. It is a method of research that is compatible with science, as it is systematic in nature, with its objective to yield exact, accountable results. According to Struwig and Stead (2001: 4) quantitative researchers test a proposed hypothesis which examines the relationship between one or more variables. A hypothesis or theory is presented, and using a set of repeatable procedures findings are arrived at, which prove or refute the initial hypothesis. Credibility is based on replication, using the original formula to duplicate the experiment (Taylor, 1996). With such an approach, there is a tendency to over-generalisation at the expense of particularity.

Researchers who employ quantitative methods are inclined to focus on 'distinguishing, elemental properties and empirical boundaries and tend to measure how much and how often' (Horna, 1994: 121). Results arrived at suggest authority and are made applicable to the larger population once valid sampling and the use of recognised methods of data collection are employed. This enables direct comparisons to happen, where variables are identified and relationships measured. In the social sciences the use of quantitative data has its advantages, and very often is regarded as superior to other methods of research because of its 'scientific respectability' (see Denscombe, 2003: 237). The fact that much of the evidence in quantitative research is presented in numerical forms such as mathematical models, graphs and statistical tables, suggests the results are solid, reliable and objective (see Cohen et al., 2000). There are numerous types of quantitative data collection, with each method being suited to particular approaches. Denscombe (2003: 237-8) states that there are six statistical techniques available to the researcher in social science,

1. Nominal data: the most primitive means of data collection, which is characterised by 'counting things and placing them into a category'. This method leaves very little room for manipulation of the statistical evidence in comparison to other available methods.

- quantitative methods (questionnaires)
- qualitative methods (including interviews – structured, semi-structured and unstructured, observation records and document data).

With regard to Creswell's (2003) second point about 'strategies of enquiries' this researcher will employ a range of methods that are deemed most suitable for the research project. Strategies derived from quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods traditions will be used. Having selected the most suitable methods of inquiry, issues of data collation and analysis must be considered. Creswell (2003: 17) offers a summary of the range of methods available, and the specific means of data collection and analysis for each of the listed methods. Each of the methods, referred to in the table below, is commonly used in the social sciences.

Table 6.1 Creswell's (2003) Summary of Research Methods

Quantitative Research Methods	**Qualitative Research Methods**	**Mixed Methods Research Methods**
Predetermined instrument based questions, performance data, attitude data, observational data, and census data, statistical analysis	Emerging methods, open-ended questions, interview data, observation data, document data, and audiovisual data, text and image analysis	Both predetermined and emerging methods, both open-and-closed ended questions, multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities, statistical and text analysis

The two most frequently employed approaches to research within the social sciences are the quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The particulars of each tradition are diverse, with issues concerning objectivity and subjectivity central to the comparison between the two approaches.

In response to Creswell's first point, this researcher is conscious that her knowledge claims are informed by an understanding of postpositivist ideology, where traditional notions of absolute truth of knowledge are challenged and researchers recognise that 'we cannot be 'positive' about our claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans' (Creswell, 2003: 7). This anti-positivist response is recognised by Hammersley (1993: viii) as ultimately being a conscious rejection of the 'principle of the unity of scientific method and of phenomenalism' which seeks to discard any knowledge which is generated beyond the spectrum of hard science. Hammersley (1993) sees postpositivist approaches as a response to broader influences including Marxism in general, other social and intellectual movements such as feminism, and the ideas and methods of the Frankfurt School. Hammersley (1993) adopts something of a philosophical stance when reflecting on the debate between positivism and postpositivism, acknowledging the limitations associated with positivist research with its priority on quantitative measurement, experimentation and the statistical manipulation of variables within research procedures. In contrast, a postpositivist approach gives preference to qualitative methods, while never disregarding quantitative research methods, and often combining the two. Social constructivism also informs this study, where the researcher is aware that,

> Individuals seek understanding in the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things.[...] The role of the research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participant's view of the situation being studied.
> (Creswell, 2003: 8)

For the researcher, the problem or the area of inquiry takes precedence over the methodological approach being employed. The methods of research are selected, drawing on a pluralistic approach, and are always employed to derive knowledge about the problem posed (see Creswell, 2003: 12). Very often the researcher will draw freely from all available sources of methodology, and will not be confined to any one method. This researcher will adopt a similar approach, whereby the methods of research that are selected are mixed, and are always chosen to serve the overall research question. This study makes use of a mixed methods approach, and includes,

- an extensive literature review

discovery of truth, particularly as far as the natural sciences are concerned'. It is how such a discovery of 'truth' is made possible, first by identifying the appropriate area of research and secondly by selecting suitable methods of enquiry that preoccupies this chapter.

Nutbrown (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007: x) asserts that successful research is dependent on the identification of two necessary components: a good research question, and the means by which that question is investigated. She stresses the importance of selecting an appropriate methodology, which acts as 'the construction and justification of the enquiry which ultimately gives credence to, or calls into question, the findings'. As theatre is a social art form, research within this area borrows extensively from the range of research methods established in the social sciences. Many social science research instruments are directly applicable to the proposed project. As with all such research, the researcher is 'faced with a variety of options and alternatives and has to make strategic decisions about which to choose' (Denscombe, 2003: 3).

Blaikie (cited in Hall and Hall, 1996: 10) suggests that social research is concerned with 'exploring, describing, understanding, explaining, predicting, changing or evaluating some aspect of the social world'. Hall and Hall (1996: 11) propose that the ultimate purpose of social research is to answer questions such as: What is happening? Why is that happening? How does that affect people? To answer such questions, the researcher is required to conceptualise the overall research design of their proposed project and may draw on existing models such as Creswell's (2003: 5) adaptation of Crotty's (1998) research framework. Creswell (2003) suggests that there are three central questions for any researcher to consider when approaching a research venture,

1. What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher (including a theoretical perspective)?

2. What strategies of inquiry will inform the procedures?

3. What methods of data collection and analysis will be used?

(Creswell, 2003: 5)

Chapter 6

Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This research explores the efficacy of the arts (theatre) in urban regeneration projects, with particular reference to the North Dublin suburb Ballymun and the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. The objective of the research is to investigate the potential role of community theatre, and people's perception of its value, within a community that is undergoing regeneration. As has been claimed earlier, theatre can explore issues of representation, identity and community cohesion, which the research will examine. For this research to be successful, methods of data collection have to be considered. This chapter explores the variety of methods available to a researcher in the social sciences, and gives a detailed account of each of the methods employed, describing the characteristics of each instrument and the rationale for its use. The chapter consists of two parts; the first section examines methodological issues in general, with the second section focusing on the choice and application of the methods selected for this research project.

6.2 The Nature of Research

> Our drama research needs to acknowledge that many of the 'facts' we discover and the conclusions we draw are not objective, nor exactly verifiable. [...] our art exists as a dialogue between abstract ideas and their bodily and linguistic manifestations! Drama often works indirectly and obliquely, through metaphor, through irony, through allusion and analogy. (O'Toole, 2006: 2)

O'Toole (2006) summarises the challenge that confronts researchers in the field of drama/theatre: that of attaining verifiable conclusions to the posed research hypothesis. Research is a process of intellectual investigation, which evaluates existing knowledge while contributing to the production of new knowledge. Borg (cited in Cohen et al., 2000: 5) states that 'research is a combination of both experience and reasoning and must be regarded as the most successful approach to the

position from which you can perceive the world, your position within it and your relationship to others, introduces the idea of establishing cultural co-ordinates by means of which a sense of belonging can be anchored. Kearney's 'gap' (2002) describes an aesthetic space offering a distance at which articulation or contemplation of being can take place. Performance locations confirm the importance of 'space' both for acts of living and as a platform for storytelling – for playing out and making sense of those acts. The relationship between narrative, identity and place is reflected in the combination of the physical space of the theatre, the metaphorical space of the dramatic world, and the individual and group process of interpretation, which characterise acts of community theatre. These complex relationships will be explored further in the presentation and discussion of the case study data in Chapters 7 and 8.

much of city life and public space is the all-pervasive pressure of consumerism, advertising and the hustle and bustle of fast life. There are few places within cities where an individual is not defined as a consumer' (Hassan, 2007: 31). The regeneration of the Liverpool One shopping area the UK is testament to the privatisation of what was once land belonging to the people of Liverpool and is now the sole property of the Duke of Westminster. Local independent shops and spaces have been replaced by multinational chains and a private security firm patrols and controls what was once public space. Any sense of identity that was distinctly Liverpudlian no longer exists, with Liverpool One having become ironically a 'placeless' district (Ford, 2008).

Because culture is one of the prime realms through which globalisation is taking place (see Abrahamson, 2004, Bryman 2004, Pieterse, 2009), and culture is so intimately linked with identity, the severity of the impact of globalisation has yet to be fully documented, but the initial trends are already visible despite the phenomenon being at such an early stage. One of the more unique features of the case study on *The Ballymun Trilogy* (Chapter 8) is that it appears to be moving in a different direction; led by a community theatre project, an urban regeneration programme is accompanied by the strengthening of local community identity, with narrative and place (geographical and performative) interacting to articulate the local.

5.8 Conclusion

The analysis offered in this chapter of the complex relationship between narrative, identity and place attests to the pivotal and influential role community theatre as a means of communication can have within a community, especially in this globalised era. This was developed further by exploring suggestive similarities between self and character, life and stage. Life is constructed by narrative (Abbott, 2008; Bruner 1996, 2002), so that a series of events is organised and understood within a particular timeframe, thus making identity formation possible. Storytelling, like life itself, gives substance to a particular time and place.

The personalisation of space as place is how, according to Benson (2001, 1988), we acquire meaning. Smyth's (2001) idea of cognitive maps, and the need to secure a

> Concern about identity is, in large part perhaps, a reflection of the uncertainty produced by rapid change and cultural contact: our social maps no longer fit our social landscapes.
> (Jenkins, 1996: 9)

Thus far, identity has been discussed in terms of association with place, whether geographical or ideological, and individual and collective awareness of and ability to articulate one's cultural co-ordinates, using varied forms of communication, but with particular reference to community theatre. The ongoing penetration of the global into all aspects of local everyday living must be considered in evaluating identity formation. The analysis of the current phase of globalisation offered in Chapter 2, establishes a clear link between the impact of globalisation on culture and the subsequent effects this has on identity formation. For Held (2004), the real danger of the recent globalised era is the spread of a homogeneous culture, which has a corrosive affect on the particulars of individual cultures, diluting the scope for local difference. The fact that globalisation is predominantly driven by the interests of the west, with the domination of western cultural forms at the expense of other non-western culture is, according to some, grotesque (see Ray, 2007; Pieterse 2009, Moss 2009). The re-assessment of the place/person/time relationship has a direct impact on how we understand the formation of identity, and this chapter has focused more closely on the clear and necessary link between culture and identity. Scarbrough (2008: 59) refers to Urry's assertion that the globalised society of the West has reconceptualised its time/place relationship, characterised by 'the disembedding of time and space from social activities, the development of an "empty" dimension of time, the separation of space from place, and the emergence of disembedding mechanisms, of symbolic tokens out of local involvement'. This idea of empty time/space as offered by Scarbrough (2008) is contrary to Benson's (1988) idea of place/time, where space becomes place through psychological attachment and collective interpretation. The transition suggested by Benson (1988) from space to place has become ever more fragile in the current globalised era. Space as a communal amenity, even a collective right, is eroded by the capitalist insistence on commercial opportunism and space colonisation. The new attachment to place is much more concerned with establishing an individual relationship, very often cemented through commercial activity, particularly in urban centres, 'The reality of

and identity, suggesting that inherited meaning is incapable of enabling a true understanding of one's existence to surface. Such movements run contrary to the applied theatre movement and community theatre in particular, whereby as recognised earlier (Chapter 4), much community theatre focuses on identifying and dramatising specific historical narratives, drawing attention to or revealing a community's hidden stories (Prentki and Preston, 2009), strengthening the individual and collective consciousness through identification of one's place in relation to a specific set of historical actions.

5.7 Identity, Place and Globalisation

> Place attachment is the collection of meanings, beliefs, symbols, values and feelings that individuals or groups associate with a particular locality. Place attachment is formed through interactions within place and is composed of memories associated or anticipated to be possible within place.
>
> (Benson, 2008: 117)

Benson's (2008) statement suggests that place attachment is dependent on two levels. Firstly, there is the concrete fact of a space; a space as mentioned earlier by Benson (1988), is transformed into place through associated meaning. Secondly, there are the shared tools of interpretation which articulate shared experiences within a location, contributing to the establishment of a collective identity. Therefore, it could be said that place and identity formation are intrinsically linked where 'Identity with place and the awareness it brings of tradition, folklore, culture, change and inheritance, also brings with it a sense of community which is vital' (Canavan, 1993: 99). This analysis reinstates the importance of the link between attachment to place and community building and involvement. Place, it seems, is a vital component in group and individual identity; however it is important to note that place, like identity, is also constructed. 'Although place has geographical location and physicality it is also constructed, interpreted, imagined and contested' (Benson, 2008: 119). This statement reiterates the inevitable merging of both types of community, that of locality and ideology, and subsequent identity attachment which was addressed earlier, and in Chapter 2. It was noted that boundaries not only defined the physical landscape but also extended into the psyche of the people, especially in the more traditional communities of locality, under pressure from contemporary globalisation,

Earlier discussion of Kearney's (2002) work referred to his idea of narrative memory, where the action or need to retell stories that are based on historical fact is central to an individual's or a community's ability to remember, acknowledge and learn from the wrongs of the past. While identification with the past is important for the formation of an individual identity, it is absolutely essential for the collective identity,

> The past is an important resource upon which to draw in interpreting the here-and-now and in forecasting the future. Individually, 'the past' is memory; collectively, it is history. Neither, however, are 'real': both are fundamentally constructs and both are important facets of identity.
>
> (Jenkins, 1996: 28)

Further to this, Conway (2008: 141) uses the term 'memory–identity nexus' to expose the central role played by collective memory of historical events in the formation of collective identity. In a suggestive parallel to Nicholson's (2005) idea of space as a socially constructed reality, Conway (2008: 141) argues that memories of the past are also constructed and shared through particular cultural spheres, with such spheres working in both real and virtual space. Memories can be associated with location, action or both; however, as in the case of identity there is an element of consciousness which locates the individual in relation to memory, which is very often filtered deliberately through an array of social channels. Maurice Halbwachs insists that memories are social both in terms of content and process, and are created within social frameworks such as groups,

> Everyone has a capacity for memory that is unlike that of anyone else … but individual memory is nevertheless a part of group memory … to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu (family, church, community organisations, political parties, neighbourhoods, ethnic groups etc.). (Halbwachs, cited in Conway, 2008: 142)

Identity formation therefore is absolutely dependent on the socio-cultural environment one is born into. As MacIntyre (2007: 221) makes clear, identity is not something that can be created in isolation from external factors but is dependent on the engagement of individual and collective consciousness. It is through stories that a comprehension of sorts can be established in relation to one's place and identity within the broader structure of existence. Some artistic movements in the 20th century, such as nihilism and futurism (see Rainey, 2005), challenged the interdependence of narrative, place

essential to group cohesion, and is primarily enabled by symbolic forms, including community theatre.

5.6 Identity and Narrative

MacIntyre (2007) advises that a symbiotic relationship exists between one's own narrative and the narratives of others. There is an interlocking web of narratives which can only be understood through the recognition of the other in relation to the concept of selfhood. He emphasises the role of consciousness in individual narrative formation. He summarises his view in the following two points,

1. I am what I may justifiably be taken for by others to be in the course of living out a story that runs from my birth to my death.
2. To be subject of a narrative that runs from one's birth to one's death is (...) to be accountable for the actions and experiences which compose a narratable life. (MacIntyre, 2007: 217)

MacIntyre (2007) develops this idea further by suggesting that to establish a personal narrative, is to possess a historical identity, which in turn demands the possession of a social identity. It is only then can a personal narrative be robust enough to inform our complete sense of identity.

Conway (2008) shares a similar view to that of MacIntyre (2007) and comments on the structural similarities of narrative and identity, where both acknowledge the importance of past happenings to inform the present,

> Notions of identity and belonging continue to be informed by the past. Indeed, the past seems to embody the quality of plasticity in that it can be moulded in ways that allow it to be incorporated in the present. [...] The remembrance of the past brings concerns about the present to the surface of social life.
> (Conway, 2008: 10)

The individual ability, through consciousness, to locate oneself within cultural co-ordinates, and develop a sense of identity, demonstrates the interdependent relationship between present understanding and the necessity of reference to the past. This is arguably a key characteristic and effect of the dramatic worlds of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

colliding forces of social environment and our need to communicate (drawing on the established structures and methods available) that inform our existence, and give us a sense of who we are. The formation of individual identity is arrived at, or moulded by, the variable connections/communications a person has with their fellow beings and their social environment, 'Identity necessarily involves an interrelationship between the personal and the social which can also be expressed as a tension between structure and agency' (Woodward, 2004: 1).

While individual agency is of great importance, the ability to consciously relate to oneself and the surrounding environment implies further levels of engagement and understanding, where people position themselves and are positioned by others within a larger social order. Relationships between the personal, the collective and the social are destabilised by the onset of globalisation and the subsequent recognised fragilities of communities (Chapter 2). This places particular urgency on reassessing available options for communities in this increasingly fragmented era (Ray, 2007). Kearney (2002) is in no doubt that narrative is crucial to individuals and communities; 'narrative gives us a shareable world'. This researcher suggests that it is in forums such as theatre and other forms of artistic expression that communities establish a firm collective identity, as they provide the critical distance (Benjamin, 1936; Kearney, 2002) to analyse and locate their collective selves in relation to others,

> Identity is created and performed in dialogue with others. A deeper sense of belonging to a community, however, derives from shared interpretations of experience.
>
> (Nicholson, 2005: 94)

For Nicholson (2005), the collective identity of a community is forged by sharing similar experiences and behavioural attitudes, specific to a particular location. The blurring of distinctions between communities of locality and communities of ideology (Chapter 2) complicates this, as has been documented earlier, and it is important not to lose sight of the view that a 'sense of fixity is no longer of the essence in fomenting identity and a sense of belonging need no longer be rooted to a particular place' (Corcoran and Share, 2008: 7). This suggests that identity is abstract, fluid, even transient, but it fails to take account of the need for social co-ordinates in order for a sense of identity to be achieved. A connection between identity and the need to identify with others, sharing interpretations of experience (Nicholson, 2005) is

acts of community theatre, and encourages a richer analysis of self and place. The artist/audience is positioned in relation to the unfolding narrative, and the actual performance space and their community within a larger social, political and geographical framework. Benjamin's (1936/1968) idea of necessary 'distance' foregrounds observation of the significance of real life space relations, exposure to art, and our ability to make sense of ourselves in relation to larger and more powerful life co-ordinates. Such positioning on behalf of the artist and audience potentially equips individuals to recognise/question their place within this globalised era, very often stimulating the emergence of a critical discourse [see Prentki and Preston (2009) for a range of case studies exemplifying such an analysis].

Acts of community theatre constitute and articulate shared narratives which literally put in place personal and collective identities. Before proceeding, it is necessary to consider the construction and importance of those identities.

5.5 What is Identity?

According to Woodward (2004: 13) identity is associated with, and constructed around the following points,

1. In constructing identity we imagine ourselves.
2. We do this by visualizing ourselves, thinking in symbols.
3. Who I am is dependent on how I am seen by others as well as how I see myself.

Identity and the human need to explain ourselves to ourselves and to others, have long been subjects of philosophical debate. Identity may be understood as something that is reached ultimately on an individual level through the mechanism of consciousness, coinciding with Woodward's (2004) point 1. Her second point prompts questions about how we articulate and come to understand conclusions reached through the engagement of consciousness. Point 3 is a combination of the previous two points, suggesting that our identity is the product of much larger social structures in which we participate on a daily basis, 'People act the way they do because they belong to a particular culture and/or because they have certain resources to draw upon' (Therborn, cited in Corcoran and Share, 2008: 2). Such a statement suggests that it is the

granted. Benson (1988: intro.) refers to the physicist Einstein and his theory of the non-separable nature of space and time. Einstein's theory looks at the intimate connection between what he referred to as 'space-time', which is a 'four-dimensional space whose points are *events*' [emphasis in original]. Such a theory situates the person (being) in relation to the space which they occupy, within a given time frame. This equation enables a clinical meaning to be extracted about the facts of the situation. Benson (1988) advises that the equation must have an additional ingredient, that of a psychological analysis, if the quality of the experience of that person in that location at that particular time is to be fully understood. In other words, he (1988) insists on a psychological dimension of narrative to enable the abstract equation of space-time to be personalised as 'place-time'. Benson sees a particular, specialised role for artists,

> The history of art and artists is the history of the development of that culturally unique ability to transform and transmute the general, abstract, space-time of physics into the particular, personally meaningful place-time of human beings. Art is a central, humanising instrument for transforming the experience of nothingness into the oriented experience of something; in turning the threatening impersonality of space-time into the personality of place-time.
>
> (Benson, 1988: intro.)

Benson's (1988) insight into the role of the artist in the time-space equation is supported by Harvey (2004: 206) who offers what he refers to as the 'aesthetic theory' which acknowledges attempts by artists, including architects, to communicate 'certain values through the construction of spatial form'. He also recognises artists such as 'Painters, sculptors, poets, and writers of all sorts do no less. Even the written word abstracts properties from the flux of experience and fixes them in spatial form'. Both Benson's (1988) observation and Harvey's (2004) suggestion recognise the role and need for artists to humanise space, transforming it into place, which is particularly timely in this globalised era. One of the dominant features of globalisation is the spread of a dominant homogeneous cultural form (as discussed in Chapter 2), which erases cultural particulars embodied in specific places. Benson's (1988) insight argues the necessity for artists to work within communities, particularly communities experiencing regeneration, as recognised by this researcher. In such environments, the dramatisation of local stories offers both local engagement and aesthetic distance in

planners, but the viewers and users of the city who decode the many layers of meaning within the presented spatial relations, using their own cultural lens.

As will be seen in the discussion of the case study (Chapter 8), what humanises space and converts it into place is the connection between people, narrative and location,

> The very humanity of people, and indeed of the places they inhabit, resides in the fact that they are carriers of stories. Cities [...] are revealed as 'meeting places of stories' [...] The city itself absorbs all of the narratives, past and present, into itself, like paper absorbing ink. And the citizens themselves cannot but write their lives onto this paper, even though their testimonies are for the most part 'involuntary'.
>
> (Kearney, 2002: 28)

Kearney's (2002) observation suggests that even though people may be oblivious to the fact that their existence within a certain space and spectrum of human activity supports the establishment of an over-arching narrative, they are nevertheless contributing to a collective meaning and sense of identity. Similarly Massey (1999: 171) recognises that cities are the cradles of narrative formation and that each city has its own individual tale to tell. She develops this idea further by suggesting that humans have the ability to think spatially which in turn enables groups of people (communities) to see different narratives as 'genuinely co-existing'. Therefore stories, which are always generated by a people's interactions within a given space, humanise the abstract category of space and produce place. Once this transformation has been completed between space and place, such place will always be contextually tied, and a two way system, in which place informs identity, and identity informs place will exist,

> The Greek theatre would have been something else if it had not been the terrain and climate in which it occurred, and yet poetry which makes constant allusion to these conditions of production is removed from its specific geographical context to be universalised through criticism which diminishes the significance of place. (Read, 1995: 158)

Harvey (2004) suggests that while both space and time inform the basic constitution of human existence, their meanings are rarely disputed and are usually taken for

story of self, which according to Sartre is ultimately unattainable. Benson (2001: xi) comments further on the quest to understand one's self in relation to one's surroundings by suggesting that 'self is primarily a psychological system of location designed by evolution and culture for negotiating our ways through human worlds.[...] Having a sense of self requires the idea of being "in place".' It could be said that the very act of being in a particular place enables us to locate and connect ourselves in relation to other places and ways of being.

Massey (1999), like Nicholson (2005) observes that space is never empty but always socially produced. She recognises how the spaces through which lives are lived, organised spaces such as cities, are ultimately social products created through the relations which exist between people, institutions, agencies, etc. Such spatial products/settings are according to Massey (1999), a negotiation of space-time which coexists in a dancelike configuration. Lefebvre (1984: 8) proposes that there are an 'indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within the next: geographical, economic, demographic, national, continental global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on'. Such configurations between space (in its many disguises as recognised by Lefebrve), time and human interactions, require co-ordinates for the self to be firmly established. Gerry Smyth (2001) suggests that people produce 'cognitive maps' by means of which they can locate themselves in relation to their own environment, other places and global networks of power, 'To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular' (Relph cited in Smyth, 2001: 128). It has been suggested that to secure a sense of self, a firmly established connection to place, coupled with the ability to document one's existence in the form of narrative, is essential. The relationship between narrative and place is complex and multilayered, especially in the hyperactive environment of the global city (Chapter 3). To make sense of such a relationship between the individual and in this case the 'global city', Lefebvre (1984) suggests that a space can in fact be actively read or decoded through a system of signification. This idea is developed in the work of Hall (2006), who suggests that the city is in fact a 'text' with its authors being those not only who shape the built environment such as architects and urban

even in collective groupings is produced by individuals, it is important to consider the relationship between narrative and the self.

5.4 Narrative, Self and Place

> All the world's a stage
> And all the men and women merely players
> They have their exits and their entrances
> And one man plays many parts
> His acts being seven ages.
> (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*)

The similarities between self and character, life and stage were immortalised in these words of Jaques. Shakespeare's metaphorical use of the stage as a platform for living reinforces the link between narrative and life. MacIntyre (2007) develops Shakespeare's metaphorical link between life and the stage, and draws on the insights of Aristotle and Engels who argue that the narratives of one's life are written in relation to the material surroundings in which one finds oneself, 'we enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not our making' (MacIntyre, 2007: 213). However, while MacIntryre's (2007) observation acknowledges that a person, to a certain extent, receives a role on life's stage which is partly pre-written by the conditions of those surroundings, Bruner (2002) suggests that we are in fact the authors of our own stories, and likens the role of the individual to that of the artist, 'A self is probably the most impressive work of art we ever produce, surely the most intricate. For we create not just one self-making story, but many of them' (Bruner, 2002: 14). This suggests that self and narrative are inextricably linked; you can't have one without the other, 'it is only through narrative we know ourselves as active entities that operate through time' (Abbott, 2008: 130). As does Kearney (2002), MacIntyre (2007) argues that the concept of self and the unity of self can only be realised through the unity of narrative, which by its accepted and predictable structure of beginning, middle and end mirrors the cycle of birth, life and death. MacIntyre (2007) poses the question as to how natural it is to consider oneself through narrative mode. He refers to the work of Sartre who propose that narrative is in fact very different from human life, however for people to understand their existence, which according to Sartre is made up a of a series of discrete actions with no order, they are compelled to impose order on such events retrospectively through the medium of narrative. This action is always in pursuit of generating a true

field of enquiry that has taken place in the interim between his own and Benjamin's time. Influential postmodernists such as Barthes (1964) and Lyotard (1979) challenge and broaden our understanding of narrative, its purposes, and the significance of the social act of storytelling.

Roland Barthes produced a theoretical insight known as the 'death of the author', where the absolute authority of authorial intentionality was challenged, and the idea of multiple possible readings of any given narrative was asserted (Allen, 2003). Such an analysis destabilised the canon of traditional and classical narrative relationships between teller, material and receiver (Rabaté, 1997). Barthes' contemporary Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) articulated a postmodernist perspective (1979) in which the act of interpretation was seen to be inextricably linked with the idea of loss of meaning. The authority of grand narratives (or meta-narratives) on which all means of interpretation were based, could not be sustained once the historical and social perspectives of all possible readers were to be taken into account. His call for the acknowledgement of micro-narratives acknowledges a multiplicity of meanings and systems in which meanings are produced, as well as a range of conventions ordering their circulation and comprehension,

> For Lyotard it is necessary to adopt a regional, rather than a universal approach to issues in history, politics, language, art, society. Lyotard speaks in *The Differend,* of 'regimes of phrases' and genres of discourse. Like language games, regimes of phrases have their rules of formation, and each phrase presents a universe. There is thus no single universe, but a plurality of universes.
>
> (Lechte, 1994: 248)

It could be argued that community theatre is an example of the working out of Lechte's (1994) account of Lyotard's postmodernism (1979), as it is a method of artistic expression in which grand narratives are often replaced with specifically local micro-narratives, produced for a selected 'target' audience. Again the idea of narratives being local, live and public, reiterates Nicholson's (2009) insistence on the power of community theatre to disrupt the homogenising impact of globalisation on individual cultures (as previously referred to in Chapter 2 and 3). The extent to which that power is released depends on strategies of interpretation, and as interpretation,

each audience member, even though part of the collective, will understand the performance on their own terms, depending on their 'capacity or 'competence' to understand or 'decode' the individual signs and sign structures, as well as his or her readiness to devote sufficient attention to it to take it all in' (Esslin, 1987: 128). Such an approach sustains a somewhat hierarchical system of information transmission, emphasising the proactive role of the provider and the somewhat passive role of the receiver. Adherence to classical dramatic narrative structures supports such a relationship. It is worth noting however that such a hierarchical affiliation has been successfully challenged by a number of movements in the twentieth-century in fields of both literature and drama. Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) the German literary critic who was associated with the Frankfurt school of literary theory, questions the principles of reproduction by interrogating the relationship between originality and reproduction of stories. He suggests that 'what allows the story told by the storyteller to be reproduced is not the content of what is told – nor the information, [...] for it would not survive the moment of its initial telling, rather it is the story in the memory which is important' (Lechte, 1994: 205). For Benjamin, it is the communal act of storytelling which turns the listener into a storyteller, 'for storytelling is always the art of repeating stories' (Benjamin, 1936: 5) There is an element of reversibility, whereby the listener becomes the storyteller.

Benjamin's (1936) essay *The Storyteller* is preoccupied with a range of narrative considerations, two of which echo throughout Kearney's (2002) work: firstly the idea of narrative memory, and secondly, the relationship between teller, material and receiver. Kearney's (2002) idea of narrative memory confirms the need to remember, the need to acknowledge the wrongs of the past, to ensure that we learn from them, and avoid repetition. He suggests that narrative memory can never be approached in a simplistic manner, for factual stories are haunted by the realities of history. Both Kearney (2002) and Benjamin (1936) recognise power relations between the teller and the receiver and concur that regardless of what type or genre to which the story being told belongs, a circular relationship between memory, imagination and reality is engaged. Benjamin's (1936) modernist theory of the power relations between teller and receiver acknowledges the equal status of the receiver (and the potential reteller) and the teller. Kearney (2002) upholds a similar theory; however, his conclusion has been reached by reference to or acknowledgement of the development of an extensive

> a socially responsible reading, is based on the idea of testimony, in which readers recognise the historical specificity of the narrative rather than its universality, and in which readership is a collective process which requires 'self-reflective participation' rather than individualised empathetic consumption.

Boler's point is a pertinent one with regard to the efficacy of community theatre in general, and as will be seen in Chapter 8, applies specifically to the case study. In the case of *The Ballymun Trilogy*, the 'historical specificity' of the narrative is the foundation on which the artistic project is based, 'that the issues and stories grow out of the community involved, and that the community is a vital part of identifying, examining and taking action on matters which that community believes need change' (Prentki and Selman, 2000: 9). Dramatising historical narratives specific to a community has been recognised as an effective means of engaging people (Thornton, 2010). According to Kershaw (1992) and McGrath (1981), the impact of such dramatisations can result in the empowerment of that community. (This is discussed in detail in Chapter 8.)

The dramatisation of narrative, whether in a conventional performance space or an alternative arena, poses important questions as to how we read narrative, and theatre. If a narrative has been derived from within a particular community, it seems reasonable to assume that there would be a high level of accessibility to audiences drawn from that community, since the content of the narrative reflects their lived experiences. Both story (an event or sequence of events) and narrative discourse (the means by which story is conveyed) (Abbott, 2008: 15) are of concern here, as the art of storytelling through the medium of theatre brings together both elements. The ability of a reader (audience member) to engage with a complex dramatic narrative suggests that there must be an agreed mode of communication in which multiple layers of meaning can co-exist, and from which they can be decoded.

Abbott (2008) summarises a process by which the performed or presented narrative is comprehended and interpreted by means of spectator construction: 'We put it together from what we read or see, often by inference' (Abbott, 2008: 20). The quantity and types of signs and meanings in any given performance are potentially endless and defy quantification; however it is interesting to note Esslin's (1987) observation that

5.3 The Dramatisation of Narrative

There are obvious differences between life lived and life narrated, as MacIntyre (2007: 212) points out, 'stories are lived before they are told – except in the case of fiction'. While they are distinct, however, they are also intimately related (Seale et al., 2004). The bridge between the two, which crosses Kearney's (2002) gap, is made up of the conventions of narrative. And these conventions, which differ from oral narrative to theatre, to cinema, enable the human mind to make sense of experience and to develop richer and more engaging narratives, as it moves over and back between experience and the stories of that experience (Wilson, 2006). As Bruner (2002: 13) puts it, 'While fiction may begin on familiar ground, it aims to go beyond it into the realm of the possible, the might-be, could have been, perhaps will be. We are all too ready to suspend disbelief, to embrace the subjunctive'. This particular aspect of narrative form echoes the claims made on behalf of community theatre in Chapter 4, and suggests the appropriateness of narrative analysis of acts of community theatre,

> Theatre as the most public of art forms, has a particular part to play in the collective exploration of ideas, values and feelings – as a space and place in which society might be reshaped through the imagination. (Nicholson, 2005: 19)

In most forms of theatre, 'the audience and the stage are there in contiguous space, but in the fiction of the play the stage also indicates a fictional space' (Esslin, 1987: 39). Theatre at its most basic is a form of embodied storytelling, and in the created world of the stage, the actors can literally act on the problems of that world. In the 'real' space of the auditorium, audiences occupy a range of possible positions, from passive observation to active participation. Conventions of telling and listening enable a story to be told, conventions of showing and viewing make theatre possible. Whether the dramatisation of narrative is intended to provoke the audience into a state of critical reflection, provoking action and thus social change on behalf of the audience member (see Prentki and Preston, 2009; Boal, 1979), or whether the Aristotelian *cathartic* (McLeish [trans.], 1999) effect is the ultimate objective, issues regarding the act of interpretation and models of dramatic representation employed in a given performance need to be considered. Boler (cited in Nicholson, 2005: 78) suggests that

Story creation mainly draws on happenings of the past, combining them with actions in the present to generate possibilities for the future. We are constantly re-interpreting our existence through stories, 'we know that narrative in all its forms is a dialectic between what was expected and what came to pass' (Bruner, 2002: 15). We in turn live in a world constructed according to the conventions of narrative. There is an established narrative expectancy, which gives coherence and clarity both to stories and to life itself. Storytelling played a pivotal, multifunctional role in primitive societies, where stories worked as an information network. They informed, educated, created and supported ethical consciousness,

> Mythical stories in the ancient world [...] were intended as models for virtues and vices. To tell a story was to issue an invitation not to be as the story is but to see the world as embodied in the story. In time, the sharing of common stories creates an interpretive community, a matter of great moment not only for promoting cultural cohesion but for developing a body of law, the *corpus juris.*
>
> (Bruner, 2002: 25 [emphasis in original])

Regardless of the reason for telling any particular story, narrative processes are broadly similar in requiring active participation from tellers and receivers (Crawford et al., 2004). We are transported into another realm of existence, where both time and place are altered. Kearney (2002) refers to the distance between the narrated world and the lived-in world as 'the gap'. He states, 'The gap separating real life from simulated life-likeness is relatively unmistakable' (Kearney, 2002: 134). We are lured into the fictional world by a series of identifiable gateways which, in Kearney's (2002) view, successfully bridge this gap. In acts of theatre, from mainstream to alternative, the division between performance space and audience positions is clearly marked. A range of theatre practices established in the twentieth century, including Brecht's aesthetic strategy of *Verfremdung* (see Jameson, 1998), and Boal's Forum Theatre, site of the praxis of the 'spect-actor' (see Boal, 1979) deliberately address the function of the gap. These strategies do not abolish the gap, but exist in critical relationship to classically established arrangements for performance space, audience positions and perspectives. Even in Forum Theatre, where the gap is challenged by the actions of the Joker and the spect-actors, it is not eliminated, but negotiated.

existence (Bruner, 2002). The Greek philosopher Aristotle defines the art of storytelling in his *Poetics,* as the dramatic imitating and plotting of human action, 'We see imitations of reality and compare them with reality' (McLeish [trans.], 1999: viii). Storytelling is a natural form of expression, and it represents human actions, frequently exaggerated for entertainment purposes. It also succeeds in giving substance to a particular time and place in a world other than our own, regardless of whether the story told depicts a factual or fictionalised sequence of events. Abbott (2008: 3) suggests that 'narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time'. Every human life is composed of a series of isolated moments, which, in order to be acknowledged and comprehended, need to be organised in a structural framework. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (2007) reminds us that modernity challenges our ability to envisage each human life as a whole, both socially and philosophically. He suggests that modernity 'partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behaviour. So work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal' (2007: 204). Ultimately the segmentation of human life means that life is composed of a succession of unconnected episodes. For Kearney (2002: 4) this is exactly why, at this point in history, 'narrative matters'. He claims that the art of storytelling is a process, which is said to 'humanise time, by transforming it from an impersonal passing of fragmented moments into a pattern, a plot, a mythos'.

As fragmented as our lives may possibly be without the structural co-ordination of our actions, it is interesting to note how the broad structure of a story with its usually clearly defined beginning, middle and end, imitates the natural cycle of life consisting of birth, growth and death. This series of natural events inevitably serves as an overall structural frame to human life. For Kearney (2002), the fact that we confer significance on a series of intermediate events enables us to see meaning in our lives. There seems to be a fundamental human necessity to organise meaning by means of narrative structure. In his study of the nine 'universals of narrative realities', Jerome Bruner (1996: 133) reflects that life and narrative are structurally similar, 'A narrative segments time not by clock or metronome, but by the unfolding of crucial events at least into beginnings, middles, and ends'.

self-contained phenomena, independent of each other. The discussion develops to bring them into dialogue within the context of location (place), which unites the two areas, especially so in the specific case of Bolger's work in Ballymun. Lefebvre (1984: 12) suggests that to truly understand space/place we need to adopt what he refers to as a 'unitary theory': the aim is to discover or construct a theoretical unity between fields which are apprehended separately. The fields are,

1. The *physical – nature,* the cosmos.
2. The *Mental,* including logical and formal abstractions.
3. The *social* – the 'logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias'.

This study addresses itself to understandings of the third field, in line with Lefebvre's argument for the need to take account of 'the vast store of non-formal knowledge embedded in poetry, music, dance and theatre' (cited in Smyth, 2001: 16). The focus here on community theatre means that discussion of place includes both actual geographical locations and performance sites. In combination, the physical location of the theatre, the metaphorical space of the dramatic world, and individual and group processes of interpretation, seals the relationship between narrative, identity and place in acts of community theatre. Understanding how these particular relationships play out in the creation, exhibition and impact of the plays of *The Ballymun Trilogy* is the focus of Chapter 8.

5.2 The Impact of Narrative and Storytelling

> Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative.[...] Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.
>
> (Barthes, cited in Abbott, 2008: 2)

Narrative, according to Barthes (cited in Abbott, 2008), is a phenomenon that is as natural to the human condition as breathing. Narrative, commonly referred to as storytelling, is a medium through which people can seek to confer meaning on

Chapter 5

The Role of Narrative in Identity Formation

> Space is never empty but always actively socially produced.
> (Nicholson, 2005: 127)

> The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself. (Benjamin, 1936: 14)

5.1 Introduction

The role of the city, as discussed in Chapter 3, has changed considerably since the 1960s. Popular narratives of the city's transformation and the new wave of theatre practices that surfaced in the late 1960s are remarkably similar (McKinnie, 2007), both aligning themselves to post-positivist ideological stances. The complex and multilayered relationship between place (on a large scale the city, on an immediate scale the community), identity formation and narrative will be investigated in this chapter. The persistence of the ancient act of storytelling within contemporary communities will be discussed, with particular emphases on the purposes and effects of dramatising local stories. Chapter 4 establishes community theatre as a set of practices grounded in performative acts of sharing personal and communal narratives in a given location. This chapter deepens the investigation of the importance of narratives of individual and collective identity to the efficacy of community theatre. Such narratives underpin community cohesion, and so this chapter also considers narrative genre and methods of interpretation as they apply to acts of community theatre, and shape their possible impact on, and value within a community. This is especially necessary in view of the central importance of narrative in Dermot Bolger's dramaturgy (case study). Bolger is a poet and novelist, and his theatre is a theatre of poetic storytelling. To state this is not to suggest that other performative aspects of his dramaturgy do not count or have less audience impact; it is simply to explain the emphasis in this study on theatre as narrative. If narrative is recognised as a communicative form from which meanings are produced (Kearney, 2002) which then in turn inform a sense of identity, the transformation of abstract space into meaningful place must be investigated. Initially, the chapter examines narrative and identity as

4.6 Conclusion

Kershaw (1992), van Erven (2001) and Bolger (2008a) recognise that community theatre has failed to secure appropriate recognition with mainstream theatre critics or historians. They suggest that the catalogue of community theatre work to date has been predominantly analysed in terms of its cultural importance, and as a result, the aesthetic credentials of the form tend to be neglected. Despite the lack of acknowledgement within the broader frame of theatre studies, Nicholson (2005) suggests that the real value of community theatre, together with theatres of the political left and drama and theatre in education, is that it offers 'a powerful legacy which links social and personal change to dramatic practice, and articulate[s] a commitment to using theatre to break down social hierarchies and divisions' (Nicholson, 2005: 7). Thompson (2003) offers a similar analysis to that of Nicholson (2005), emphasising the persistence and development of community theatre alongside that of mainstream practices. This study has selected a community theatre project that, in keeping with Kershaw (1992), van Erven (2001) and Bolger's (2008a) observation, has failed to secure the appropriate recognition within mainstream circles, suggesting that research of this nature is all the more necessary and valuable.

This study will explore Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy,* plays written for and with the community of Ballymun, as part of the *axis* Arts Centre programming. Grounded in lived experiences, *The Ballymun Trilogy* replaces failure with struggle as the dominant story of the people of post-1967 Ballymun (MacRéamoinn, 2008). Staged in the *axis* Centre at the heart of the community, using a combination of local actors and professionals, it foregrounds the role of narrative in the construction of identities. It also questions the limitations of critical categories and proposes that the community theatre genre, as referred to in this chapter, needs to be renegotiated. This will be specifically discussed in the case study section (Chapter 8). The complex relationships between local narratives, construction of identity and the role of community theatre – as a means of enabling a community to have a conversation with itself, will be explored in the following chapter.

the 1960s, had left their legacy to a generation whose political and social ideology stems from a different life experience, is reason enough for this decline. This may be a small consideration, and some might say unfounded, but it is one that perhaps is evident in the provision for, and the status of, the community arts sector in recent years. The term 'community arts' was replaced by the Irish Arts Council with 'participatory arts', which in itself suggests a change in attitude (see http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/areas-of-work/na-ealaíona-rannphairteachais.aspx).

The umbrella organisation CAFE was relaunched as CREATE in 2003. 'The name was changed to CREATE, reflecting that times had moved on both for the organisation in the course of its twenty year history and in the broader arts environment' (www.create-ireland.ie [emphasis in original]). O'Cuiv (2009: Interview) suggests that the change from CAFÉ to CREATE was 'partially to do with an ideological shift, but quite a lot of it was to do with confusion over the name'. This name change coincided with Wes Wilkie's appointment as Director, a move which according to O'Cuiv (2009: Interview), saved the organisation from 'near death'. The ideological shift saw a movement away from community arts programmes that were well meaning but condescending, what O'Cuiv (2009: Interview) refers to as 'arts participation at the lowest common denominator, that if you are poor you can only do samba drumming, if you are poor you can only do mosaic'. A new emphasis was placed on ensuring access for communities to the best artists and the best models of practice. The phrase 'community arts' was abandoned due to its association with arts facilitators as opposed to artists, 'because if you are named as an arts organisation you should be using the best of artists available to you', and not using the arts to service other social purposes (O'Cuiv, 2009: Interview). The new direction in practice, known as 'artist in community', involved using the best and most appropriate artist available at all times. This new approach by CREATE has ensured its survival and development in this globalised era, alongside Nicholson's (2009) observation about the role of theatre to disrupt homogenising tendencies attributed to globalisation. This new shift in practice, using the 'best' artists within communities, will be revisited in the discussion of the case study (Chapter 8), where the established playwright, poet and novelist Dermot Bolger works exclusively with the Ballymun community, through the *axis* theatre, to produce the community theatre project *The Ballymun Trilogy*.

The mid-1980s in Ireland saw the establishment of the umbrella body CAFE [Creative Activity For Everybody] (Darcy, 2010: Interview), to represent the growing number of community arts groups in the country. CAFE accommodated a variety of arts organisations, engaging with a range of art forms. 'The idea of CAFE was to give a focus and co-ordinated approach to community arts in the republic, strengthening and building the movement' (Fitzgerald, 2004: 74). CAFE proved to be a very important anchor in the Irish community arts movement. It gave many small, and geographically isolated, community arts groups a national profile and a link to the greater Irish community arts network. CAFE secured funding from a variety of government community schemes, the Irish Arts Council and numerous European funds, but was always constrained by a lack of adequate resources (O'Cuiv, 2009: Interview).

As the community arts definition accommodates a variety of art forms, from festivals to artists' residencies, community theatre was only one of many areas that was represented by CAFE. Gorman (1995) refers to a meeting in 1995 that brought together community drama practitioners to formalise the growing community drama network in Ireland,

> There are relatively few groups which could be described as self-standing (dedicated) Community Drama Groups. The CAFÉ-convened meeting [...] attracted drama activists involved with community education groups, community youth projects, a parents alone resource centre and a drugs self-help project. Even when groups are devoted solely to drama activities, they will usually be linked into complex community networks locally.
>
> Gorman (1995: 231)

Gorman's (1995) statement highlights the versatile nature of drama as a practice, and how it is often used to service something other than the art form itself. This is an issue that is often debated and seems, to have implications for securing funding (see Matarasso, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2004).

CAFE was a very influential organisation, especially in the 1980s and into the 1990s, but its influence was to decline as the new millennium approached, corresponding to Kershaw's (1992) phase 5 referred to earlier. Perhaps the fact that the counter-culture generation, who were responsible for the building of the community arts movement in

Circumstances similar to those that fuelled the British community arts movement of the 1970s (counter-cultural revolution, emancipatory movements) would ignite Irish communities. Even though cushioned within the broader political and social environment of the west, with counter-cultural revolt becoming widespread (see Kershaw, 1992), smaller communities in Ireland began to use the arts as a means of social commentary: 'As had happened in England, the intersection of small groups of people who had artistic skills with community groups led to the realisation that being creative was also about having a voice and effecting change' (Fitzgerald, 2004: 70). The switch in emphasis for many arts practitioners veered from the traditional, mainstream production approach to forms of art that were created in response to the particulars of any given community. Many projects at that time were driven by a collective ideology, giving the community a voice, listening to their stories and their dreams. Community groups such as 'Waterford Arts for All' and 'Moving Theatre' in Dublin were active and firmly established by the latter end of the 1970s (as is evident from the productions listed in the Irish Playography, see www.irishplayography.com). Fitzgerald (2004: 71) suggests that it was not until 1983 that Ireland could be formally recognised in the international community arts arena, as a country that had an established network of community arts organisations and groups. Many of the organisations were particularly centred on using drama and theatre as their principal form of practice. Groups such as the 'City Workshop' in Dublin offered a drama based programme, supported by The North City Centre Community Action Programme (NCCCAP). The NCCCAP was an organisation that was set up to try and secure government finance for the regeneration of the north inner city, while strengthening communities within deprived areas (Darcy, 2010: Interview). It is interesting to note that as far back as the early 1980s in Ireland, theatre was being recognised as having an important contribution to make to the regeneration process of the north inner city. Jim and Peter Sheridan's TEAM production of *Inner City/Outer Space 1979* is one such example (see www.irishplayography.com). A sense of the centrality of theatre is demonstrated some twenty years later in the establishment of the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre coinciding with the Ballymun regeneration programme (see Chapter 7), but driven by local demand.

Irish evidence of a lack of recognition for community theatre practices will be considered in Chapter 8.

4.5 Community Theatre – The Irish Context

The community theatre movement in Ireland only really began to gain momentum in the late 1970s: 'When community theatre began to develop in England, we were still sleeping in 1960s Ireland, north and south. Similarly, when community theatre was in full swing in England in the 1970s, we were just beginning to stir' (Lynch, 2004: 57).

Ireland in the early 1970s was a relatively isolated country on the periphery of Europe. It was a country that continued to be haunted by its colonial past, poverty, high levels of unemployment and emigration (Brown, 2004). State institutions implemented a conservative and nationalist agenda: 'Artists were tolerated once they promoted a good, wholesome receipt of Irish mythology sanitised by a strict Catholic doctrine' (Fitzgerald, 2004: 68). The fact that Ireland became a member state of the then EEC (European Economic Community, now European Union) in 1973 was a progressive step for the country. It was an indicator of Ireland's attempt at embracing modernity, opening up its economy and expanding its cultural consciousness.

Culture and the arts were recognised by the Irish state from the beginning as having an influential part to play in strengthening the nationalist agenda, and promoting a sense of a homogenous Celtic identity (see Pilkington, 2001). The establishment of An Chomhairle Ealaíon /The Arts Council of Ireland in 1951 was the government's first step in providing financial support for contemporary arts practices. Even though the establishment of the Irish Arts Council could only be a positive reinforcement of the status of the arts within Ireland, by the 1970s it became evident that most financial support was being channelled towards national arts institutions, with very little left for alternative programmes,

> The new Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which was completed in 1966, was fairly well supported by state funds and from 1971 onward a revivified Gate theatre also attracted state support. Theatre like the Focus and the theatre associated with the Dublin Project Arts centre could also depend on public support, as could the annual Dublin Theatre Festival.
>
> (Brown, 2004: 304)

view that theatre is especially sensitive to developments in social and political environments, and has the power to articulate such changes and their consequences for people [see the progression in Boal's work from *Theatre of the Oppressed* in 1979 through to his *Legislative Theatre* in 1998].

Thompson (2003) advises caution when endorsing community theatre as a form of practice that provides a 'safe space' where life can be rehearsed. He reminds us that 'rehearsals of change are not assumed to lead to change ... rehearsal is no guarantor of action' (Thompson, 2003: 166). This indeed is an important point to consider; however it is just as important to note the existence of what were referred to earlier as soft outcomes and hard outcomes (Adrian Jackson, 2007). The hard outcomes of community theatre practice may be easy to identify and may appear in examples of public activism, or local rallying after performances. The soft outcomes, on the other hand, may not be so easily recognised. A 'soft outcome' such as enabling people to define for themselves their role within their own community may be significant, even transformative. Clements (2007) however, warns that should an individual acquire a range of new skills via community theatre programmes and indeed be 'empowered' by the experience, they may then in turn leave their community to put their newly acquired skills to broader use. This however, could be seen to be a small price to pay for the community at large. It is perhaps the multiple layers of communication and diversity of impacts that community theatre offers which has made it such an effective (see Stuttaford et al., 2006; Prendergast and Saxton, 2009) and widespread practice of the 20th and 21st centuries (Prentki and Preston, 2009). In spite of this, van Erven (2001: 2) draws attention to a lack of respect accorded to community theatre within media and academic circles,

> Community theatre performances are seldom reviewed by national media and, because they frequently occur outside 'legitimate' arts milieux, they have consequently tended to escape the attention of cultural theorists and theatre scholars.

This suggests perhaps, that the status of community theatre, always on the periphery of mainstream cultural endeavours, reflects the struggle characteristic of its initiation.

> change. They can be central to different groups' experience of making or remaking their lives.
>
> (Thompson, 2003: 16)

The recognition that community theatre is a cultural practice that has the power to influence societal development through multiple layers of semiotic communication is perhaps the reason why it has carved out such a prominent place in community activism. Augusto Boal, the Brazilian founder of the internationally known 'Theatre of the Oppressed', recognises the intimate relationship between theatre and society: 'The theatre, in particular, is determined by society much more stringently than the other arts, because of its immediate contact with the public and its greater power to convince' (Boal, 1979: 53). Along with the 'power to convince', theatre's creation of a 'safe space' where people can reflect, analyse and be educated about particular issues relevant to their own lives, makes it attractive to community activists (Reid, 2007),

> Observers recognize the character(s) and their dilemmas and identify with the people portrayed. And because they can watch rather than live the experience, they also objectify the problems and in so doing begin to be able to think about possible solutions or alternative actions.
>
> (Prentki and Selman, 2000: 8)

In these descriptions, Thompson (2003) and Prentki and Selman (2000) suggest a relationship between community theatre, narrative and identity which will be more fully explored in later chapters.

The impact of theatrical intervention on subsequent audience behaviour is something that is difficult to quantify. Babbage (2004) documents the difficulties involved in quantifying 'results' from Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* practices, while Reeves (2002) also comments on the difficulty of assessing subsequent audience behaviour across the art forms from a British perspective. Despite this fact, many theatre companies since the end of the twentieth century have refused to be deterred by such a difficulty, and were established on a belief in theatre's ability to enable social change, such as John McGrath's 7:84 theatre company [no longer active] and Cardboard Citizens Theatre Company (www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk). Such advocacy of the inter-relationship between theatre and social change is based on a

practice that, due to the efforts of the pioneering practitioners of the 1960s, has carved out a significant place in theatre history,

> While there exist generic connections with drama and theatre in education, radical people's theatre, theatre of liberation, theatre for development, youth theatre, reminiscence theatre, and adult and informal education, it is generally distinguished from high art, mass culture, and mainstream as well as avant garde theatre.
> (van Erven, 2001: 2)

4.4 The Impact of Community Theatre

Theatre is a social art form, dependent on the interaction of people (Brook, 1968). Unlike other art forms, theatre can only take place when there is a form of communication between at least two people. 'Theatre as the most human of art forms, starting out as it does with the body of the actor, offers a space in which life can be tried out, rehearsed, without the damaging consequences that such experiments might have if tried out for "real"' (Prentki and Selman, 2000: preface). The idea that theatrical encounters create a safe space in which life may be rehearsed is perhaps the reason why community theatre as a movement has gained widespread recognition as an effective practice (Adrian Jackson, 2007). Thornton (2010) supports the idea of theatre being used primarily as a form of social engagement, extending power to the community to bring about actual change. van Erven (2001: preface) expands on the social purpose of community theatre, which he sees as a device enabling 'communities to collectively share stories, to participate in political dialogue, and to break down the increasing exclusion of marginalized groups'. Theatre as a social art form seems to have the ability not only to enable a 'rehearsal' for life scenarios but also to articulate opportunities for social change. van Erven (2001: 1) sees it as a form of 'sociocultural intervention', which suggests that a community theatre performance is not primarily concerned with the presentation of art for 'art's sake', and in practice amounts to using theatre as a vehicle for social change. While the act of making theatre is in itself a form of artistic expression, its principal purpose within the community setting is its ability to encourage social change, by prompting its participants/audience to question and then to act (see Anthony Jackson, 2007),

> Applied theatre programmes can be a vital part of the way that people engage in their communities, reflect on issues and debate

are allied to other emerging emancipatory movements. Many alternative approaches to the practice of alternative theatre are developed. There is very little connection between the alternative theatre movement and mainstream theatre.

- Phase 3 (1975-80/81): the combining of firmly established practices within the alternative theatre movement. Alternative theatre tries to infiltrate institutions and social groupings that fall outside its usual target audience. Even though alternative theatre continues to be recognised as an unconventional, perhaps radical practice in relation to mainstream, the distinction becomes less clear-cut.
- Phase 4 (1980-85/6): This is the era that sees a 'widespread retrenchment and reorientation'. Specialist areas of practice begin to secure their own place under the umbrella term of 'alternative theatre'. Each practice is distinct and holds its own ideological position. There is a shift away from a self-contained cultural movement towards the industrial sector, hence strengthening the links between alterative theatre and mainstream theatre.
- Phase 5 (1985-90): 'was one of fragmentation'. Experimentation in the area begins to diminish due to the shift towards the industrial sector, a characteristic of phase 4. The task of satisfying the needs of the 'market' and being economically 'competitive' fragments the movement.

van Erven (2001) adheres to Kershaw's (1992) account of the evolution of alternative theatre, with particular emphasis on community theatre. Even though, according to van Erven (2001), some could argue that the origins of community theatre are perhaps over three thousand years old coinciding with the birth of the Greek theatre, community theatre's actual growth and proper recognition as a self-contained form of practice has more contemporary roots. He suggests that its origins are indebted to 'the various forms of counter-cultural, radical, anti- and post-colonial, educational, and liberational theatres of the 1960s and 1970s' (van Erven, 2001: 1). The establishment of a vast network of improvisation-based community theatres that started in South America in the early 1960s was, according to van Erven, the start of an international phenomenon. Also referred to as 'grassroots theatre' or 'community-based' (van Erven, 2001: 2), community theatre was set to become a worldwide practice. It is a

part and parcel of the most extensive, and effective, oppositional cultural movement to emerge in Western countries in the post-war period: the international counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s'. The counter-culture movement to which Kershaw refers questioned the relationship between culture, class structure and society. Its ideological premise was partially based on the Marxist idea of the dominant class in society, where cultural production was being exploited to reinforce 'the structures of power by promulgating a dominant ideology which operates in the interests of such ruling classes' (Kershaw, 1992: 19). The counter-culture movement set about bringing marginalised cultural practices and institutions into a more central and influential position. Its overarching purpose was the democratisation of culture. It was this very objective to 'democratise culture' that was so important in the community theatre sector of the counter-culture revolution of the 1960s and 1970s (see Prendergast and Saxton, 2009). Building on the historical foundation of the WTM – a concern with relationships between culture, class structure and power is dramatised in the WTM play *Their Theatre and Ours 1935* by Tom Thomas (see Samuel et al., 1985), and the use of agit-prop, community theatre groups took their practice out into the community, into institutions or locations that least expected it. The most pertinent way of challenging the status quo was the deliberate distancing and breaking away from the mainstream institutions of cultural production. This coupled with theatre's potential for social and political commentary ensured the development and sustainability of the movement from its diverse beginnings to the present day (see Cohen-Cruz, 1998).

From the 1960s onwards, the multiple aesthetic approaches that were employed in the applied theatre movement along with the variety of geographical locations, have been traced by scholars such as Kershaw (1992), van Erven (2001), and Prendergast and Saxton (2009). Kershaw's (1992: 87-89) suggestion that there are five main phases in the development of alternative theatre has been highly influential,

- Phase 1 (1965-1970/1): charts the initial development, which was chiefly concerned with experimentation.
- Phase 2 (1970-5/6): where sub-cultures have been absorbed into the counter-culture. The audience base of alternative theatre is expanding; many groups

audience (Willett, 1986). Agit-prop became a widespread theatrical practice in Europe from the 1920s onwards, enabling effective, informative and entertaining commentary on current political issues. It was a form of theatre that was no longer dependent on the use of a conventional stage, drawing on interdisciplinary performance practices, including music, song, cabaret, improvisation, and audience participation (Bradby and McCormick, 1978; Anthony Jackson, 2007). Many of the Workers' Theatre Groups in Britain, America and Germany used agit-prop as the most effective way of distributing political and social messages (Samuel et al., 1985). The Workers' Theatre Movement (WTM) of the 1920s relied on theatrical production more than participatory drama projects (which would become commonplace in later decades) as its principal form of practice as it 'offered an immediate and visible platform for public debate and for the performance of protest, and it was thought to be a powerful way to reach the hearts and minds of its intended audiences' (Nicholson, 2005: 9). The WTM was a crucial move towards the establishment and recognition of theatre as something that need not be confined within the boundaries of mere entertainment. With the WTM, theatre became an effective force of social commentary (Drain, 1995; Innes, 2002).

Community theatre, therefore, was part of a much larger, general community arts movement and benefited from the numerous programmes that were initiated across the USA and Europe in the first half of the twentieth century,

> The concept of cultural democracy and the liberating of individual creativity surfaced as the twentieth century progressed. For instance, the Marxist view of 'social' art and artists as workers; Roosevelt's 'New Deal' and $46 million spent on commissioning work from unemployed artists (1935-1939) in the US; the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) established under the United Kingdom's 'emergency government' at the outbreak of the Second World War and a forerunner of the Arts Council of Great Britain.
>
> (Fitzgerald, 2004: 65)

It was not until the late 1960s that the community theatre sector secured recognition as a relatively self-contained movement, despite its interdisciplinary nature and the difficulty of clearly defining what community theatre actually encompassed as a practice. According to Kershaw (1992: 36) alternative theatre was, 'at least initially,

programme he initiated for local people to write their own plays. This somewhat narrow application of the term community theatre was extended by fellow American Louise Burleigh (Burleigh, 1917), who alludes to the social benefits attributed to community theatre. This is most evident in the prefatory letter – which interestingly anticipates the structuralist turn in urban geography studies (Hall, 2006), and argues that 'community theatre must be *seen* large in its far-reaching ideal, or it will fail. Its founders, in short, must have real vision – the vision to realise the deep, revolutionizing forces it sets free, in order that they may control and guide them to constructive social ends' (Burleigh, 1917: xii [emphasis in original]). The use of the term in contemporary criticism, however while having some resonance with Drummond's, and even more so with Burleigh's application, has developed considerably.

Community theatre was a principal component of the alternative cultural movement which began to emerge in post-war Britain, and whose broad social base produced an entirely new cultural politics (Sinfield, 1989). Alternative theatre [please note where Kershaw refers to 'alternative theatre' it encompasses 'community theatre' (Kershaw, 1992: 66), as understood and described above by this researcher] began as an oppositional force to the conservative establishment of the British theatre industry (see Kershaw, 1992: 7). Kershaw's (1992) seminal study dates the history of community theatre from the 1960s onwards, but even though community theatre secured a prominent and influential position in post-war Britain, the use of theatre as a form of social activism has much deeper roots. The power of theatre/drama to comment on the social and political issues of the day was significant in post-1917 Russia, where art's 'social task' reformed the role of theatre, emphasising accessibility and intelligibility as essential components for reaching and influencing public opinion (Chambers, 2002). Combining the forces of theatre and the newly available technology of film, a huge programme of popular education was launched in Russia in the early twentieth century (see Milner, 1979). Two significant events that challenged the conservatism often associated with the theatre of that time took place in November 1918 with the agit-train *Soviet Cinematograph* and *Theatre of the People,* followed in the summer of 1919 with the launch of the agit-ship *Krasnaya Svedsda* which sailed down the river Volga, removing theatre from its usual place of dwelling and expanding its appeal and communicating social messages to a broad

Prentki and Selman's definition of theatre and drama and their distinctiveness in the community setting suggests that experience and participation takes priority over commercial rewards. Thompson (2003: 13) suggests that applied theatre – which includes community drama and community theatre, is interdisciplinary, drawing on all types of theatre practices and drama processes. It 'has emerged in response to practice in a number of different social policy or educational contexts and it is grounded in a history of theatre that has sought to operate beyond the boundaries of theatre buildings'. While both terms denote an element of interdisciplinarity between the two concepts, they are also understood as an accumulation of hybrid practices (Nicholson, 2005). This study acknowledges the overlap that exists between many features associated with practices of community drama and concepts of community theatre. Prentki and Preston (2009) agree that three main types of practice exist within a community setting,

- *Theatre 'for' a community.* An example could be a theatre company touring a piece of theatre or a workshop to young audiences in schools, or to local community groups.
- *Theatre 'with' a community.* This could be workshop- or 'process'-based and involving participants in a devising or creative exploration that may or may not lead to presentation or performance to a wider audience.
- *Theatre 'by' a community.* Here the community make and perform theatre themselves possibly to communicate to a specific audience and setting.

(Prentki and Preston: 2009: 10 [emphasis in original])

While Prentki and Preston's (2009) definition demonstrates the elastic nature of the term community theatre and the multiple practices that it encompasses, the focus here, as the choice of case study (Chapter 8) suggests, is on a form of theatre practice which is produced in dialogue with people's narratives of themselves in their own place. This researcher will suggest that Dermot Bolger's *Ballymun Trilogy* at the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre questions the ability of 'community theatre' to capture the development, positioning and impact of these plays in the context of a new wave of urban regeneration.

4.3 The Origins of Community Theatre

van Erven (2001: 1) dates the term 'community theatre' from the 1920s, when it was used by a Professor Alexander Drummond of Cornell University to refer to a

accommodating a range of particular theatre practices to a specific form itself. She goes on to suggest that the discourse that has grown around the term defines an increasingly narrow type of radical practice, excluding many forms of practice which once belonged. She acknowledges the features which Prentki and Preston (2009) associate with the term (specific intention, participation and the use of non-conventional theatre spaces) and suggests that the actual term applied theatre is emerging as a label which brands particular types of practice. While Ackroyd (2007) declares that she is by no means adopting a pejorative stance in relation to the practices associated with applied theatre, she does point out that much of the current discourse enshrines applied theatre as being pure, with all applications of the practice distilled for the goodness of mankind. The term is being restricted to theatre and creative practices which have the explicit aim of benefiting communities and groups of people in their social and political situations. While it is important to acknowledge Ackroyd's (2007) analysis of the term and its use in contemporary discourse, the term applied theatre continues to be used and recognised not only for the social benefits associated with the work, but also for developing artistic and aesthetic capacities by means of a variety of theatre practices (Thornton, 2010).

This study will focus on one area of practice that falls under the banner heading of applied theatre and that is community theatre. The term 'community theatre' is often used interchangeably with the term 'community drama' and for the purpose of clarity within this study, it is necessary to differentiate between the two. As previously acknowledged, community theatre is often included as an aspect of applied theatre in particular, but is also linked with terms such as alternative theatre, radical theatre, theatre for development, cultural intervention, etc. (see Epskamp, 2006; Prendergast and Saxton, 2009). In both cases, the word community qualifies 'theatre' and 'drama'; this is done without reference to the two major typologies of community, that of locality and that of ideology, discussed in Chapter 2. That discussion showed the contested nature of community itself, and distinctions between drama and theatre are no less subjects for ongoing debate. According to Prentki and Selman (2000: 13),

> 'Theatre' implies that some level of performance is involved, whereas 'drama' is a process of activities and experiences which focus on the personal and group experience of doing dramatic activity rather than on a culminating performance.

same time. As the world changed dramatically, with 'militant reactions to issues such as the Vietnam War, urban poverty, radical inequality and increasing levels of debt among developing nations' (Hall, 2006: 26), established ways of seeing, thinking and doing came under pressure. Interestingly, for this study, what was happening to understandings of the city has a parallel in cultural work, and especially in the field of theatre practice. This parallel is made visible in the emergence in the late 1960s of a particular form of practice – community theatre.

As with several terms already discussed (community, globalisation, culture and the arts), the task of accurately defining a term whose usage is both diverse and widespread continues to be challenging. Nicholson (2005) suggests that community theatre co-exists alongside theatres of the political left, and drama and theatre in education. These three forms of practice fall under the collective heading of 'applied theatre'. This term, which has infiltrated public discourse in recent years encapsulates, according to Prentki and Preston (2009), a variety of theatre practices and creative processes, challenging the boundaries of conventional and mainstream theatre, responding to ordinary people's stories, lives and priorities. Common features of applied theatre include theatre that is produced with and/or for a specific community, often in informal spaces, for reasons beyond the exposure to an art form per se. Its use and application vary depending on the particular context,

> For both practitioners and participants there may often be an overt, political desire to use the process of theatre in the service of social and community change. For other practitioners and participants, the intention is less overt (but potentially no less in its effect) and concerned with using theatre to draw attention to or reveal the hidden stories of a community.
>
> (Prentki and Preston, 2009: 9)

Cohen-Cruz (2005) concurs with Prentki and Preston's (2009) statement, pointing out that applied theatre while generally concerned with social change, may be just as committed to conserving particular local cultures. She refers to the range of practices that are available to communities, from grassroots work, to oral storytelling, through to formal techniques created by professional artists. Ackroyd (2007) offers a definition contrary to that of Prentki and Preston (2009) and Cohen-Cruz (2005), suggesting that applied theatre as a term has moved from being an umbrella term

Chapter 4
Theatre in Urban Regeneration

> Every art contributes to the greatest art of all, the art of living.
>
> (Brecht, 1964: 277)

> The Theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it.
>
> (Boal, 1979: 122)

4.1 Introduction

Thus far, this study has considered the role of culture and cultural industries in contemporary urban regeneration programmes, mainly in terms of their economic importance. Arts provision has been recognised as a necessary and successful ingredient in urban regeneration programmes, because it enables economic diversification (see Pieterse, 2009). As discussed earlier, culture and the arts are umbrella terms, encompassing a variety of art forms. This study sets out to investigate the significance of a specific cultural practice in a community experiencing urban renewal, namely theatre. This chapter discusses community theatre against an historical and social backdrop, focusing on its current status and recognition within the broader field of theatre practice/theory, and bringing the Irish context sharply into focus.

4.2 Theatre, Community and the City

Delanty (2003) and Hall (2006) outline, from their particular points of view (sociological and geographical), a common trend in changing ways of understanding the city since World War II. This can be summarised as a movement of interpretations and planning practices from positivist to post-positivist positions. Hall (2006) states that the structuralist critique of positivism in urban geography studies was an important stage on the way to developing a post-positivist position. He refers to a moment in the late 1960s when 'there was a general call for geography to become more relevant, to help tackle and solve pressing social problems' (Hall, 2006: 26). He makes it clear that this call emerged from a combination of counter-cultural forces which revolutionised thinking about the nature and purpose of cultural work at the

regeneration projects have also been explored. The current implementation of what Hall (2002) refers to as the three-way partnership in urban regeneration programmes, with particular attention given to the recent addition of community consultation was discussed, especially in relation to the provision of the arts. The assessment of the social impact of the arts, and the lack of an internationally accepted template of evaluation, has been highlighted as one of the major difficulties in enabling arts projects to be valued on their own terms, as opposed to their economic viability. Matarasso's (1997) national report and Prentki and Selman's (2000) evaluation template have been proposed as examples of sustained attempts to develop a formula flexible enough to enable assessment of the diverse range of social impacts on individuals and communities. Matarasso's (1997) six point template and Prentki and Selman's (2000) evaluation template will be revisited in Chapter 7 where the perceived value and purpose of arts provision within the community of Ballymun is considered, while Chapter 8 explores assessing the social impact of Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy*.

While the elastic nature of the term 'the arts' has featured in this chapter, a more focused analysis of theatre, which is the art form under consideration in this case study, is considered in the following chapter.

approach reflects steps 2 and 4 of Prentki and Selman's (2000) template of evaluation employed in their particular field of practice.

The question arises whether it is necessary to assess and evaluate participation in arts programmes, when many contributing factors could be seen to be dependent on unreliable practices of interpretation. The evidence cited in this chapter would suggest that it is, and it is important to formulate multiple models of evaluation that can be adapted (drawing on Moriarty's (1998) approach) to the particulars of whatever style or type of participatory arts project is to be evaluated. This appears necessary for a number of reasons. First, it could act as a means of ensuring that all projects are subjected to an interrogation of sorts, ensuring that their value and contribution has been appropriately documented, which is often essential for securing future funding. Secondly, it could enable the arts organisation or arts facilitators to reflect critically on their practice, permitting them to identify necessary improvements for future projects. Reeves (2002: 66) shares a similar view, acknowledging that particularly in more recent years, evaluative frameworks for assessing the social contributions of arts participation have centred around programmes for neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion projects. However, she feels that generally for art's sake 'there is a widespread consensus across the sector on the pressing need to develop comprehensive, robust and comparable methodologies for evaluating arts effectiveness, and toolkits for promoting and sharing best practice.' Such an approach or method should help to eradicate dependency on anecdotal evidence and help elevate the purpose and benefits of arts participation in the public realm as a practice that is characterised by robust evaluation and critical reflection.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the recent quest by western cities to secure global city status, being driven in particular by global economic activity. While cities have been busy reinventing themselves principally through multiple regeneration projects, their dependence on cultural capital has been especially noteworthy. Culture has come to be seen predominantly as a marketable asset, an instrument used primarily to construct positive urban images. This chapter has questioned the relationship between culture and identity and the pattern of how we define culture. The arts, practices that are often included under the collective term 'culture', and their role within urban

appropriate indicators which will 'reflect the aspirations of diverse stakeholders' one of the major difficulties in trying to assess the social impact of a project (Reeves, 2002: 41). Drawing on diverse sources of indicators from a variety of art forms, even though apparently a democratic solution, fails to take into consideration the evident incompatibility of one art form with another. Such an approach is flawed as it is based on making comparisons between bodies of work that perhaps have no real similarity other than that they are recognised as art forms. Moriarty (1998) suggests that it is pointless trying to formulate an overarching template of evaluation for assessing the social impact of participating in the arts, as each project is different and particular to the actualities of time and place, demanding the reworking and adapting of established models to cater for the suitability of the project in question. Moriarty's (1998) insight is supported by the findings of the Burns Owens Partnership (2006), which state that many projects tend to be evaluated on their own terms, regardless of the availability of established templates, such as Matarasso's (1997) work. The 2006 report emphasises the limitations of not having a generic template of evaluation for the arts, as a difficulty of comparison arises when projects and evaluation templates are not designed with similar outcomes in mind. The report also emphasises the severe lack of longitudinal studies in the area. It seems that individual arts projects often devise their own template in accordance with funding requirements, stipulations or local conditions. Few of these are ever published, and even then their circulation is limited to local documents. This means that they are rarely subjected to critical scrutiny, nor tested by means of replication. Therefore this researcher has concluded that Matarasso's (1997) work continues to be the most ambitious and influential of its kind in the last thirteen years.

The act of evaluation poses larger questions concerned with the ethics of judgement and value. Many writers (Matarasso, 1997; Reeves, 2002; Prentki and Preston, 2009) bring up the ethical issues that need to be considered when approaching an arts project within a community, when it is particularly concerned with facilitating or prompting social change. They all consider the danger of trying (whether intentionally or as an unpremeditated result) to produce change in individuals without their informed consent. This issue needs to be addressed at the initial stages of planning for a project, where the intended participants are actively involved in setting the principal objectives of the project while determining agreed criteria for evaluation. This

3. The **process** that is undertaken.
4. The **relationship of its creators** to the material and to the community which is most involved.
5. The **forms** used.
6. The **nature of the audience.**

(Prentki and Selman, 2000: 22 [emphasis in original])

Such a template enables the practitioners/facilitators to have something of an 'open brief' or perhaps to refer to it as a 'flexible brief' is more appropriate. The template is elastic enough not to need the social impact of the work defined before it has been completed. It may suggest the social impact within the first category under the project's 'intentions' but it does not set in stone the ultimate outcomes. This approach is more accommodating to the documentation of 'soft outcomes' referred to earlier. It is an approach which also reflects what Clements (2007: 327) refers to as the contemporary shift in emphasis in evaluation methods where 'the focus has shifted from a summative to a formative process in which design reflects a move from assessing outcomes and impacts to a concentration on the needs of programme operators and stakeholders in order to improve performance'. This approach enables a constructive dialogue between all interested parties to be established, enabling the project to reposition itself as it unfolds, directly responding to the requirements of the participants and the project.

It is very often the collation of information through evaluation templates, such as the above, which ultimately acts as the necessary 'receipt' for funding bodies. It was Matarasso's intention through the publication of *Use or Ornament?* in 1997 to try and establish a template that would be accepted as an appropriate tool for assessing the social impact of participating in the arts. The degree to which he has succeeded has been contested by some (see Merli, 2004; Clements 2007). However even dissenting voices such as Merli (2004) recognise that Matarasso's report's influence cannot be denied as it has been cited by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith.

The fact that arts programmes are often interdisciplinary in nature, and have to accommodate a variety of interest groups, makes formulating a generic set of

Clements (2007: 326) gives a historical backdrop to the evolution of evaluation methods defined by four distinct phases or 'generations',

- Phase One: based on the ideological premise of positivism, and the pursuit of 'accurate' measurement procedures.
- Phase Two (1920s): this phase was in direct response to the limitations associated with measurement, particularly in educational contexts. The act of evaluation came to be seen as a plural method, which could draw on a variety of tools. Acknowledgement of the role of evaluator also surfaced.
- Phase Three (1950s): recognised that measurement and description of programmes was susceptible to significant error. The role of the evaluator was examined further, and he or she was recognised to have to possess judgement and expertise in the field of research, so that standards against which judgement could be made needed to be firmly established. This failed to accommodate differences in value and diversity however.
- Phase Four: evolved around a constructivist framework that acknowledged participant needs and perceptions. Evaluation was seen more so as a form of enquiry and more aligned to acknowledging value judgement, requiring non-judgemental facilitation, eschewing scientific enquiry. The evaluation agenda and necessary information required for its completion is determined by the participants' claims, concerns and issues.

Clement's (2007) Phase Four suggests that depending on what art form is being evaluated, appropriate templates of evaluation are employed which should reflect the particulars of the group/project under scrutiny. Very often such templates will encompass elements that are adaptable to other art forms; for example, 'Popular Theatre' as defined by Prentki and Selman (2000: 8) is 'the practice of theatre as an expression of specific communities' stories, issues, knowledge and needs'. 'Popular Theatre' is a strand of the applied theatre movement. For Prentki and Selman (2000) this type of community theatre is best delivered and reflected upon, in light of the following evaluation template, with all sections being highly interdependent,

1. Its **intentions**.
2. The **context** within which the work is being pursued.

6. It strengthens rather than dilutes Britain's cultural life, and forms a vital factor of success rather than a soft option in social policy.

(Matarasso, 1997: V)

3.9.2 Evaluation of Arts Projects

Matarasso (1997) raises a very pertinent question in relation to assessing the impact of the arts, when he queries what value systems are to provide benchmarks against which work will be measured. Who defines quality, value and meaning? He maintains that defining value is an essential part of creating reality. The question of value judgements and the relevance or worth of the arts activities do not fit easily into a box-ticking template. However, to reflect on Matarasso's six areas identified above, it is evident that measurement of a sort can be achieved. Perhaps what is central to this discussion about the value of judgement and the pursuit of measurement is accepting that in social art forms, drawing on collective engagement from a community, the outcomes will vary between what Adrian Jackson (2007) refers to as 'soft outcomes' and 'hard outcomes'. Hard outcomes are easier to quantify, drawing on statistics such as number of participants, quantity of material outputs, direct impact on services etc. On the other hand 'soft outcomes' are more difficult to define, because very often they are associated with personal gains, where the external evidence is based on qualitative interpretation. Matarasso's (1997) first finding accommodates the assessment of soft outcomes by recognising that arts participation can enhance personal growth on a number of fronts. The fact that recording, quantifying or categorising personal gains is problematic should not undermine the importance of arts participation and the delivery of arts projects simply because they are difficult to assess using conventional systems of evaluation. The insistence on measuring outcomes of human engagement is not something that is confined to the fields of sociology or psychology; it has become a required method of justifying funding assistance, and therein seems to lie what artists and community activists perceive as the obsession with number crunching (see Chong, 2002). It is worth noting that such an insistence on producing numerical evidence is no guarantee of value when dealing with social art forms. The act of evaluation, however, plays an essential role when observing an artistic intervention/project or reflecting on the overall purpose of the activity. Methods of evaluation vary greatly, depending on the nature of the project. When reviewing the methods of evaluation that are available to social art forms today,

those very same issues he identified. Despite this fact, however, like Merli (2004), Clements (2007) acknowledges the impact of Matarasso's 1997 report.

In trying to assess the social impact of the arts, Reeves (2002: 21-22) posed the question as to what impact actually means and how is it possible to formulate an agreed definition. She concurs that impact presupposes a relationship of cause and effect – inputs, outputs and outcomes, which are the three basic components of performance used to measure the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the project/participation. She develops this by defining the social impact of the arts as 'those effects which are sustained beyond actual arts experiences, and have resonance with the life activities and processes of individuals' (Reeves, 2002: 29). A report issued by Arts Council England (Burns Owens Partnership, 2006) suggests that much of the published research into impact simply assumes that there is a clear development from a recognisable individual impact to a group impact, or that an organisational impact can become a wider community impact, without clearly defining how such a process can take place. Despite such criticisms, the findings of Matarasso's (1997) national report (examining 11 regions, encompassing a variety of arts participation projects) suggest that arts participation is the area that is most widely claimed to support personal and community development. His research findings claim,

1. Participation in the arts is an effective route for personal growth, leading to enhanced confidence, skill-building and educational developments which can improve people's social contracts and employability.
2. It can contribute to social cohesion by developing networks and understanding, and building local capacity for organisations and self-determination.
3. It brings benefits in other areas such as environmental renewal and health promotion, and injects an element of creativity into organisational planning.
4. It produces social change which can be seen, evaluated and broadly planned.
5. It represents a flexible, responsive and cost-effective element of a community development strategy.

The Community Arts Movement of the 1960s gained recognition in the public domain principally through its insistence on the social benefits that the arts can have for individuals and community development (see Kershaw, 1992). According to Reeves (2002), even though an extensive body of evidence existed to support this claim, most of it was anecdotal, with no uniform documentation or template being employed by the practitioners, inhibiting the emergence of an informed and measurable overview of the movement,

> The low priority accorded to the issue of impact measurement within the political and policy agendas of the time, coupled with the lack of a systematic evidence-base, meant that the case for the arts having a wider societal impact was never sufficiently robust to convince policymakers to release substantive funds for its further investigation. (Reeves, 2002: 7)

The quantifiable results of culture-led urban regeneration projects, such as job creation and output increases, gained superiority over the social contribution of the arts, such as increasing community cohesion and strengthening collective identities, which often defy quantifiable measurement. The first government-backed national attempt in Britain to try and assess the social impact of the arts in community settings was led by François Matarasso, and resulted in the publication of *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* (1997). The commissioning of such a report suggests the need, on behalf of the British government, to define the social outcomes associated with participating in the arts. It was the first large scale survey conducted in the UK and provided substantial evidence in support of the social relevance of participation in the arts and arts practices. According to Merli (2004: 1) 'Matarasso's study has played an important role in establishing a near-consensus in Britain among cultural policy-makers'. This body of work was significant because it was the first to try and document social impact, which can be slippery, not lending itself easily to measurement. Clements (2007) acknowledges the influence of, and need for, Matarasso's (1997) body of work, while emphasising some limitations. In his view, Matarasso is self-critical, and reflects and articulates the potential difficulties and problems associated with undertaking work of this nature. However, Matarasso (according to Clements, 2007: 326) has been criticised often for ignoring

Regeneration Project (1998-2012), which is the case study in this thesis and discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

3.8.4 The Threat of Gentrification

While this new wave of urban regeneration projects, with particular emphasis on community consultation, may be seen as a progressive and advantageous step in recent social history, it is worth considering the impact which the commercial success of a regeneration project in an urban landscape has had on the fibre of an already established social community network. 'As a district increases in prosperity, it becomes prey to gentrification in terms of the type of people and business it attracts, thereby potentially exacerbating social divisions' (Roberts, 1998: 103). The term 'gentrification' according to Hall (1998: 100) has 'come to refer to the movement of affluent, usually young, middle-class residents into run-down inner city areas. The effect is that these areas become socially, economically and environmentally upgraded'. The rise in property prices is a major factor that contributes to dismantling local identities, with, in extreme cases, some locals no longer able to purchase or rent property in the area (see Smith, 2007). The impact of gentrification varies greatly. It usually depends on a number of factors locally, nationally and globally. According to Maitland (2007: 37), if an urban regeneration programme employs a 'bottom–up' approach, focusing on inward investment which 'seeks to improve the capacity of incumbent communities, through a variety of skills and training, physical improvement [...] and neighbourhood renewal' this in turn leads to a 'gentrification' of the area from within. These particular issues will be looked at in more detail in the case study centring on the urban regeneration project started in 1998 in the north city suburb of Dublin, Ballymun.

3.9.1 Assessing the Social Impact of the Arts

Consideration thus far has been given to the economic viability of incorporating arts projects into urban regeneration programmes; however, the social impact of the arts is of equal importance. The trend toward incorporating the arts into contemporary urban redevelopments has been documented by a variety of agencies throughout Europe over the last quarter of a century (see Reeves, 2002). Even though substantive quantities of documentation exist, a universally accepted template for measuring the social impact of the arts has yet to be developed.

aligned many of its policies on urban development with established European practices. This was partially due to the need to secure funding for redevelopment projects. However since 1985, Ireland has been active in implementing a national urban redevelopment scheme,

> Core objectives of the schemes were to promote urban renewal and redevelopment by promoting investment by the private sector in the construction and reconstruction of buildings in designated inner city areas. The incentives introduced were primarily tax-based, targeting investors in and occupiers of properties in designated areas. (www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentandHousing/PlanningDevelopment/UrbanandVillageRenewal/).

Since 1999/2000, Ireland has been active in employing what the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government refers to as the 'Public Private Partnership' (PPP) which is a method that combines state-run and privately-run businesses to deliver a range of infrastructural and service developments. The 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme introduced by the Irish Government emphasised the necessity for the government to recognise, not just the transformation of the physical environment, but also the social and economic aspects of any redevelopment project. 'The scheme, which is benefiting 5 cities and 38 towns represents a more targeted approach to the award of urban renewal incentives, concentrating not just on areas of physical development but also on issues of local socio-economic benefit' (www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentandHousing/PlanningDevelopment/UrbanandVillageRenewal/UrbanRenewalSchemes/).

A network of County and City Development Boards was established in 2000 to respond to the challenge that faced the government in integrating local and public services, particularly in areas undergoing regeneration. Improved delivery of public services at local level is an important part of the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*, and also features in Ireland's *Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*. The National Spatial Strategy, launched in 2002, sets out a twenty year spatial framework with the aim of developing Ireland's regions in a balanced way, using a step-by-step approach (www.ndp.ie/documents/NDP2007-2013). The most ambitious urban regeneration project ever to have taken place in Ireland is the Ballymun Urban

Parkinson (1993: 3) consider elements such as 'the configuration of the geography of national cultural economies, the size and nature of the local market for cultural activities and the influence of external models of policy-making' as being significant when influencing government policy. A consultation document published by the British Government titled *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS], 2004) proposes that the integration of culture in urban regeneration, planning and development is vital for the well-being of the community, the local economy, and in contributing to achieving a sustainable and integrated regeneration. The DCMS 2008 manifesto for *Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion* positively restates the contribution the arts make to building community pride,

> We believe that culture and the arts should be placed firmly at the heart of both neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion. The arts have the capacity to:
>
> -develop individual pride and community spirit;
> -help reverse the spiral of decline in disadvantaged areas by fostering a new sense of community and civic pride amongst residents;
> -attract new commerce and businesses to deprived areas;
> -provide a positive focus for community activity and innovative training opportunities;
> -recognise and celebrate cultural diversity to the cultural benefit of the whole community. (DCMS, 2008)

This manifesto clearly establishes two strands. Firstly it identifies the social benefits of employing an integrated approach to neighbourhood renewal programmes, while secondly it recognises the economic benefits that are to be gained from placing culture and the arts at the centre of its renewal strategies.

A similar recognition of the value and role of the arts in urban contexts can be seen in the *Dublin City Development Plan 2005-2011*, where the importance of arts provision and development is addressed through the plan's 15 Policy Acts, while emphasising the opportunity that urban regeneration projects present for incorporating arts provision into communities for economic and social effect (Dublin City Council, 2005).

Since becoming a member state in 1973 of what was then the EEC (European Economic Community, now referred to as the European Union – EU), Ireland has

public consciousness and its current economic efficacy which has made the integration of the arts and culture into urban regeneration plans so alluring.

Arts Councils continue to be the central funding organisations in most European countries. The current global economic crisis has had a direct impact on state and regional budgets for Arts Councils. The Arts Council of Ireland is a case in point, where funding from central government increased from €26m in 1997 to over €82m in 2008. However, the recent crisis with the Irish economy has seen central funding for the arts fall to the annual budget of €75.7m in 2009 (AEIAI report, 2009).

3.8.3 Incorporation of the Arts in Urban Regeneration Programmes

Urban regeneration programmes employing what Hall (2002) refers to as the 'three-way' approach between the government, private partnership and the community (as mentioned earlier in the chapter) recognise the value of incorporating culture as a major component of the programme. Each party may value the use of culture at different rates and for alternative reasons however, common ground emerges around the economic advantages of culture-led programmes which in turn contribute significantly to improving the social aspects of urban living. Smith (2007: xvi) supports Hall's (2002) 'three-way' approach that has become common practice in recent years: 'A combination of government support and regulation, and private sector innovation and investment is essential'. While private partnerships are usually preoccupied with ensuring that their involvement in the programme produces a quantifiable profit (see Hassan, 2007), governments' concerns tend to be, or should be, quite different. Governments in the western world are expected to supply affordable, safe and suitable housing for their citizens (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Whether it is housing for the private market or social housing, government policy dictates the type and very often the success of housing programmes. Therefore western governments' active incorporation of the arts in recent urban regeneration programmes suggests that the arts have earned recognition as contributors to both social and economic well-being (Monclús and Guàrdia, 2006). Roberts (1998: 117) notes that the ethos of government funding for the arts changed direction from a position of 'art is good for you, to art is good for business'. The extent of a government's involvement in developing or actively incorporating the arts into a regeneration programme varies depending on the national context. Bianchini and

> amount to £11.6 billion. Many of our most successful creative industries and individuals started out in the subsidised arts, nurturing and developing their talent and ideas with the benefit of Arts Council support. Many of those we fund go on to become the engine of the creative economy. Much of the creative economy continues to depend on its publicly-funded neighbour. We want to continue to be the incubator for creativity in this country, as our economy increasingly depends on innovation and originality to keep us competitive in the global market.
> (www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/sr2007_chairman.php [12 Sep 2008])

According to the National Economic and Social Council 2009 (NESC) the current (2008-2010) economic downturn in the Irish economy, and the fragility of Ireland's economic reputation globally, has been fuelled by Ireland's apparent unwillingness to participate in major developments in the EU and a global awareness of Ireland's vulnerable financial situation (low growth, contingent liabilities to the banking system and increasing ratio of debt to GDP). Combined with close scrutiny of the national system of regulation, and the international perception that Ireland's response to the banking crisis was not sufficient, these factors have contributed to a loss of confidence in the Irish economy. According to NESC (2009), in an attempt to restore Ireland's reputation on the world market the arts have been recognised as central to 'reaffirm and re-establish our international reputation both through its position in the cultural tourism sector and also in terms of bolstering our economic standing' (*Assessment of Economic Impact of the Arts in Ireland* [AEIAI], 2009: 84).

With the arts securing financial support and promotion from government since the middle of the 20th century in both Europe and the USA, the formation of profitable cultural industries in the latter end of the century could be seen as a direct result of the earlier provision and development of the arts extended by the government agencies. To suggest however, that the cultural industries of the 21st century are a direct result of the establishment of Arts Councils alone would be naïve. The creation of what have become lucrative cultural industries, now a significant contributor to the economic health of many western world countries, is the result of a number of colliding forces – the life-commitment of artists, advances in technology, the onset of the globalised era and reformulations of culture's role and purpose. It is perhaps the 'happy marriage' of the positive attitude which is often associated with the arts in the

> particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes. (www.cultureireland.gov.ie/grants/applying.html)

In contrast to America's lead on urban regeneration practices and policies influencing European decision making, the provision for the arts in America was established as late as 1965 with the formation of the National Endowment for the Arts agency (www.nea.gov). Europe on the other hand, perhaps prompted by the urgency to rebuild society in the post-World War Two years, had Arts Councils active in many countries by 1965, including for example Bulgaria, Finland and Germany. Although this study is predominantly concerned with arts policy in the Western world, it is noteworthy that many other countries worldwide followed a similar development pattern.

The National Endowment for the Arts is a centralising body, which is responsible for the allocation of funding and arts development across the United States,

> The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. (NEA, 2008)

The principal purpose of such centralising arts organisations, in Europe and the USA, is not only the preservation and development of the arts for art's sake. They are also essential agents in promoting the economic advantages of a vibrant arts scene. Across the board, the organisations' agendas, initially through sponsorship schemes etc, pave the way for partnership building between the arts and the creative industries. The role of the Arts Council England in contemporary Britain is that of a significant player and contributor to the economic fabric of the country, while also strengthening England's competitiveness on the world stage. The current Chairman, Sir Christopher Frayling, stated,

> Creative industries in the UK are growing by 6% a year, more than any other sector, and our annual exports in cultural goods

Britain was the first European country to establish a government-sponsored organisation that was solely concerned with the provision and legislation of the arts (the Arts Council), in 1945. This organisation continues to ensure nationwide provision and support for the arts, employing a not-for-profit agenda. They have broadened their definition as to what qualifies as art in recent years and have adopted a very liberal view,

> We use a contemporary definition of the arts and are open to new trends in emerging – and sometimes challenging – arts practice. We recognise that each artform has its own distinctive qualities and each, to some extent, represents a distinct industry with its own economy. We also recognise artists' desire to work across boundaries. That's why we have policies for individual artforms as well as for combined arts and interdisciplinary arts.
> (Arts Council England, 2007)

Ireland was soon to follow suit, and in 1951 the Republic of Ireland established its own Arts Council, *An Chomhairle Ealaíon.* This again was set up on a similar premise as the Arts Council of Great Britain, to support and nurture the arts for the collective good of the people (see www.artscouncil.ie). The Arts Council of Ireland placed a significant emphasis on the preservation and growth of traditional Irish art forms, which continues to this very day. They also actively support contemporary Irish arts, and the promotion of international arts events within Ireland,

> As an advocate for the arts and artists, we undertake projects and research, often in new and emerging areas of practice, and increasingly in cooperation with partner organisations. Arts council funding from the Exchequer for 2007 was 80 million euro. (Arts Council [of Ireland], 2008)

Ireland's definition of 'the arts' and what qualifies as 'art' has changed on three occasions since the establishment of the council. The Arts Acts of 1951, 1973 and most recently 2003 have ensured that Ireland's provision of support for the arts is all-encompassing and compatible with contemporary artistic developments. The Arts Act 2003 states,

> arts means any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in

3.8.2 The Arts and Cultural Industries

The term 'culture' (see section 3.8) is an umbrella term which encompasses a variety of art forms and social practices. A detailed exploration of the much debated and contested concept lies beyond the scope of this study, however, the terms 'culture' and 'the arts' are often interlinked in the minds of policy makers, and this study is particularly concerned with the notion of arts practice as cultural work.

Smith (2007: 2) defines the link, or the relationship, between culture and urban regeneration when she states,

> In the context of urban regeneration culture can refer to anything from architecture, heritage, buildings and attractions, to the visual and performing arts, festivals and events, to entertainment and leisure complexes as well as culture as the way of life of people.

To define what qualifies as 'the arts' is somewhat problematic, and varies considerably from country to country. Bianchini and Parkinson (1993: 3) highlight the difference in the interpretation of the term, while suggesting that Britain had quite a narrow conception of what qualified as 'arts' and 'culture', manifested in the provision for arts and culture in governmental policies. On the other hand, they suggest that West European city governments 'encompassed a variety of elements, including not only the "pre-electronic" performing and visual arts (theatre, music, painting and sculpture) but also contemporary "cultural industries" like film, video broadcasting, advertising' etc. In more recent years however, Britain has broadened its definition of the arts. The House of Commons Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts has endorsed the following definition of the arts as defined by the American National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities,

> The term 'the arts' includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms and the study and application of the arts to the human environment. (NEA, 2008)

community involvement involves a shared, negotiated approach to the running, delivery and upholding of any regeneration project. This approach mirrors the particulars associated with the implementation of Amstein's (1969) steps 6, 7 and 8 on local participation, emphasising the power of citizen involvement. Perhaps one of the easiest ways of enabling a community to be active and involved in a project's delivery is the accessible and common ownership that is often associated with culture.

3.8.1 Employing Culture/the Arts in Urban Regeneration Projects

Apart from the evident economic advantages of employing culture, and the establishment of a cultural industry sector in an urban regeneration programme (as discussed earlier), it is imperative to query the extent to which culture has become a convenient and available vehicle that offers a versatile platform for participation, suitably endorsing, or lending a sense of ownership (even if false) on behalf of the individual and the collective. To what extent has the use of culture, as one of the main areas of community consultation, become a device which may be employed specifically to encourage a sense of active participation on behalf of the community in a process predominantly delivered to the governments' and private partnerships' agenda? This question will be returned to later in the thesis in relation to the case study of Ballymun Urban Regeneration Programme in north Dublin.

Social reform is very often attached to, and dependent on, the economic development of an area. If, according to Smith (2007), recent (1990s onwards) urban regeneration projects have been 'synonymous with economic development' one needs to consider what qualifies as potential or recognised economic developmental factors, in assessing the impact such initiatives have on the local community. Roberts (1998: 89) identifies the recent fashion of marrying urban regeneration programmes with economic development plans as a trend that is not the result of the intervention of some influential philanthropist in the Western world, but is a direct consequence of the global economic restructuring that has happened, and accelerated in the last two decades. She supports this view by examining the new 'mobility' that is associated with investment, with economies being no longer confined by regions or even nation states. One sector of industry that has been recognised as an influential player, not only in economic terms but also socially, is culture.

Ten years since the publication of Parkinson's (1998) work, Muir and Rhodes (2008) issued a report commenting on six regeneration programmes within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, which suggests that the troubles identified by Parkinson persist. They develop Parkinson's (1998) analysis even further, and evaluate the methods selected and used for community consultation, existing structures, and the rates of success and failure identified in their chosen six case studies.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), established in 1904, is an independent organisation committed to funding radical change towards a better world, mainly in the UK, Ireland and South Africa. It has been active in assessing what works in the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods, focusing strongly on the role that local residents and communities play (see www.jrf.org.uk). It suggests that to date a lot of community involvement has been tokenistic, though where it has been employed it has been successful in producing better results. Drawing on established good practices, their research suggests that communities should be involved because,

- Communities have a fresh perspective, and can often see the problems in new ways.
- Community involvement helps to deliver programmes which more accurately target local needs.
- The resulting projects are more acceptable to the local community.
- Programme outputs which have been designed with input from local residents are likely to last longer because communities feel ownership of them.
- The constructive involvement of communities in urban regeneration helps build local organisational skills, making it easier to develop strong successor organisations.
- Partnerships are here to stay – Government will insist on a demonstrably stronger role for communities within these partnerships.
- Successful community involvement helps to revitalise democracy.

(Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999)

The Foundation stresses the importance of partnership groups because community involvement is not just a 'bolt-on' or cosmetic activity. It suggests that real

xvi) notes that regeneration programmes are often too ambitious, trying to be 'all things to all people, or alternatively over-promising and under-delivering'. She goes on to suggest that too much emphasis is still given to the built environment (the power for which lies mainly within the government and the private partnership relationship), rather than the less quantifiable aspects, such as social and community issues, that are equally important. A report by Michael Carley and Karryn Kirk (1998: 1–7) centred on urban regeneration programmes delivered in Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and concluded that 'community participation is found to be fundamental to regeneration, but often chaotic under current arrangements'. He goes on to suggest that 'community participation remains one of the biggest challenges to regeneration. Temporary participation exercises are valuable but cannot be representative or democratic, nor do they allow communities to regularly influence mainstream programmes or strategic issues' (Carley and Kirk, 1998: 6). Twelve years on from Carley and Kirk's (1998) report, consultation practices in the regeneration of selected urban areas in Britain could be said to have deteriorated considerably. Communities undergoing regeneration, such as Derker in Oldham and Edge Lane in Liverpool, supposedly have experienced no real 'consultation' process whatsoever, but have only been consulted after Compulsory Purchase Orders have been issued (Minton, 2009). Such action is a direct consequence of the passing of the *Compulsory Purchase Act 2004,* which deems the 'economic wellbeing' of an area superior to local interests, and overrides established consultation practices (see Minton, 2009).

In regeneration programmes that have actively attempted to empower the community and their role within the regeneration project, including projects undertaken in Denmark, a range of familiar problems emerged,

- a lack of community capacity and resources in relationship to professionals and the public sector;
- low levels of community interest and worries about activist 'burnout';
- worries about community representatives;
- awareness of the long-term commitment required to empower communities. (Parkinson, 1998: 2)

As with many social programmes, Europe has often looked to the USA for guidance and inspiration (Hall, 2006). The USA pioneered many new approaches to urban housing projects, placing emphasis on listening to the voice of the local people from as early as the 1960s. Cowan (1998: 188) refers to the analytical work of the American sociologist Sherry Amstein (1969) who analysed the level of local participation within urban regeneration programmes. Amstein offers an eight step table starting from the bottom,

1- Manipulation
2- Therapy
3- Informing
4- Consultation
5- Placation
6- Partnership
7- Delegated power
8- Citizen control

She develops her analysis by suggesting that steps 1 and 2 are 'non-participation' stages, steps 3, 4 and 5 'degrees of tokenism' and steps 6, 7 and 8 'degrees of citizen power'. According to Cowan (1998: 188) what is particularly interesting about Amstein's theory is that it illustrates that participation has multiple meanings and variable levels of active engagement, which, depending on circumstances, 'could be used to control the public as easily as to enfranchise it'. Bianchini and Parkinson (1993: 14) comment on how the role of governments in western European countries since the 1980s includes the provision of cultural facilities and activities as part of local 'quality of life' factors. Such a clinical prescription of culture as suggested by Bainchini and Parkinson is perhaps compatible with Amstein's steps 3, 4 and 5, where it could be argued that its purpose is tokenistic and is aimed at giving the local people a sense of ownership and participation despite the reality that, even though active in the consultation process, their voices are rarely heard.

It could be suggested that community consultation is in fact the weakest link in Hall's (2002) 'three-way partnership'. A community's involvement in the regeneration process is often compromised, and this is due to a number of factors. Smith (2007:

> or visitor expenditure. However, as concern for the supposed beneficiaries (ie the people living within the target areas) of regeneration strategies has increased, the term appears to be more closely linked to the concept of 'community development'.
>
> (Smith, 2007: 2)

Two factors warrant consideration here: the reasons why urban regeneration has moved towards actively consulting with the inhabitants of a designated regeneration zone, and the nature of the relationship between regeneration programmes and economic development.

3.7.2 Community Consultation

According to many (for example, Greed and Roberts, 1998; Jones and Evans 2008; Horita and Koizumi, 2009), consultation has become a necessary component of any urban regeneration programme for a number of reasons. Principally they are concerned with how and why local people have become such an influential factor in the initial planning stages of a regeneration programme. This, it is suggested, is because urban design issues 'affect the quality and "feel" of areas in which people live' (Greed and Roberts, 1998: 7). Consideration of factors such as life quality, Greed and Roberts (1998) and Sirgy et al. (2009) suggest, seems to inform the switch in direction of urban regeneration programmes from projects which were predominantly concerned with the built environment to schemes that recognise the necessity of incorporating plans for social reform. Gupta (2004) claims that regeneration strategies have changed their emphases in recent years by seeing local people as the principal assets through which successful regeneration programmes can be delivered and sustained. McCarthy (2007) notes that recent urban regeneration programmes across Western Europe are concerned with improving levels of unemployment, education attainment, neighbourhood security – reducing levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, while strengthening and empowering local communities and voluntary sector agencies. Roberts (1998: 89) offers a similar analysis, and she claims that regeneration programmes were no longer solely concerned with the new physical environment which they were creating, but were active in the pursuit of economic development to encourage and strengthen social aspects of the community.

with very little consideration given to social aspects of the environment (Diamond and Liddle, 2005). That approach resulted in the inhumane high-rise concrete jungles that dotted the urban landscapes of the Western world, Ballymun in Dublin and the Gorbals in Glasgow being two of the most notorious and catastrophic failures (see www.brl.ie and www.gorbalslive.org.uk). As social insolvency became the legacy of many of the high-rise housing projects that were realised in the mid to late 20th century, an alternative approach needed to be employed by the Western world (McCarthy, 2007). Influenced by successful regeneration projects implemented in the USA, European governments began to recognise the need to regenerate not only the physical environment, but also the social and the economic (Diamond and Liddle, 2005; Maginn 2004). Initiatives by the UK government like 'City Challenge' and 'The Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund' invited 'local authorities and the private sector to make bids for money for regeneration projects which combined different types of regeneration, physical, economic, social and cultural' (Roberts 1998: 89). Schemes such as those mentioned (see McCarty 2007) recognised the importance of local heritage and encouraged governments to move away from the 'two-way' pattern of government and the private sector, to the 'three-way' pattern bringing together the government, the private partnership and the community (Hall, 2002: 73). Diamond and Liddle (2005: 126) refer to this three-way partnership as 'capacity building' which is concerned with 'enabling the local community to participate, as active and equal partners, in the decision-making process associated with the regeneration of neighbourhoods.' They recognise that it is no longer sufficient merely to communicate with the community about the proposed regeneration project; they must be enabled to act accordingly: 'Rather than engaging in physical and social renewal *of* local communities, the current aspiration is to develop an approach *with* local communities' (Diamond and Liddle, 2005: IX, [emphasis in original]). This approach, which actively engages with the residents of any given area designated for regeneration, is seen as a 'bottom-up approach'. Honourable as such a democratic approach may seem, some people remain sceptical about the ultimate intentions of such a relationship,

> Many policy and strategy documents for regeneration would still suggest that regeneration is synonymous with economic development. The process often tends to be measured in economic terms, such as employment creation, multiplier effects

are corroded by the supermarket view: 'people within the same society take different paths, culture as a coherent way of life becomes unrecognizable'.

3.7.1 Urban Regeneration and Community

The quest for global city status has inadvertently prompted a renaissance for the contemporary city. According to Hassan (2007: 24) 'regeneration and redevelopment' are the key words that describe the state of the modern city. Hall (2006: 84) goes further, by recognising the role of the host country of the 'global city' and that numerous policies and programmes have been implemented throughout countries in the Western world to enable 'speculative urban regeneration programmes and associated promotional activities' to be put into practice.

The regeneration of cities is not a new phenomenon. History would suggest that cities, even primitive cities, by their very nature were never stagnant entities but were always susceptible to change (Taylor, 2007). Notable early regenerations centred on the alteration of the physical landscape of the city. The Great Fire of London in the 17th century offers an example of how an urban centre had to regenerate itself in response to a manmade disaster (see Tomalin, 2002). According to Roberts (1998: 87), the nature of urban regeneration has changed considerably with the onset of the globalised era: 'The concept of regeneration has moved away from a physical definition, albeit with visionary overtones, to a more complex set of propositions which integrate social, cultural and economic goals'. Roberts (1998) develops this further by drawing attention to the fact that urban regeneration encompasses numerous meanings and categories and has in fact become an 'umbrella' term which covers areas such as job creation, community support, the physical restructuring of neighbourhoods and city skylines and complex cultural interventions. The elasticity of the term 'urban regeneration' continues today with its usage encompassing a range of meanings (see Jones and Evans, 2008; Herod 2009).

Expectations of regeneration programmes have altered considerably from earlier historical eras. The need for slum clearance in the 19th and 20th centuries was reason enough for many regeneration programmes, as were public health concerns in the interwar period in the UK (see Greed and Roberts, 1998; Smith 2007). The modernist era of the 1950s, 60s and 70s concentrated on the physical regeneration of an area

industries' (www.guardian.co.uk/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2009/apr/20/week). For the purpose of this study the term 'cultural industries' will be used throughout, with its meaning encompassing all new and old modes of cultural expression and practices.

3.6 The Global City, Culture and Identity

Rennie Short (2004: 79) draws our attention to what could be interpreted as the contradictory nature of 'globalizing cities' and their dependency on culture capital: 'The important themes in globalizing cities are the capitalization of culture and the globalization of culture'. The city becomes the site which enables reproductions of global culture to occur. The dependency on global cultural works to fill the empty rooms of galleries, concert halls, theatres and stadia assists in pumping global culture through local channels. The impact of such intensive infiltration of global culture via the establishment of global cultural industries is 'significant sociologically because of the important part they play in establishing people's beliefs and aspirations as well as setting popular styles' (Abrahamson, 2004: 121). Culture plays a significant part in building a person's identity (see Friedman, 1996; Dillabough and Kennelly, 2010). Raymond Williams (1983: 87–93) suggests that culture consists of a series of signs and systems which represent an agreed meaning when interpreted through the cultural lens of the collective. Abrahamson (2004: 122) develops Williams' thesis, and identifies two distinct perspectives on culture. Initially he refers to 'the traditional view' which focuses on the indigenous way of life, 'organised around symbolic classification' giving structure and meaning to people's existence. The traditional view provides a 'behavioural road map for people'. The security of such a traditional view has been damaged and threatened by the onset of the globalised era. Abrahamson (2004) suggests that globalisation is responsible for bringing change and disruption to such a traditional view of culture and has prompted a second view of culture to emerge which is based on a kind of pastiche, where information and identities are available to people everywhere all the time. This second view of culture is more commonly referred to as 'the global cultural supermarket' (Mathews, 2000). The conflict that exists between the 'traditional view' and the 'cultural supermarket view' has a significant impact on the shaping of people's identity. Abrahamson (2004: 123) extends this by indicating that the securities (established and negotiated behavioural patterns etc.) that he believes to be characteristic of the traditional view

and the arts, acknowledging that culture has become an instrument in 'constructing positive urban images, developing the tourism industry, attracting inward investment and strengthening the competitive position of cities'. *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain 1998* established that the arts sector was a significant independent, growing and value adding sector in the British economy, with a turnover of approx £10 billion, employing some 500,000 people (cited in Reeves, 2002: 7). The buoyancy of the arts market and its economic impact in countries across the EU is acknowledged by the Arts Council of Ireland in their *Assessment of Economic Impact of the Arts in Ireland* (2009). This report cites *The European Commission Study 2006* which indicated that the cultural and creative sectors were responsible for generating a turnover of more than €654bn, contributing 2.6% of overall European GDP, and growing at a faster rate than the European economy overall.

In 1998, Hall suggested that there had been a shift away from what had been referred to as 'cultural industries', replacing them with what he referred to as the 'creative industries'. He suggested that this renaming was necessary to cater for the new models of development. The 'creative industries' were seen as new and dynamic, and having broad public appeal. Further, he went on to justify why the renaming of this industry was necessary. He suggested that, in the past, culture was associated with 'high culture' which suffers from a somewhat staid image. He supported this by claiming that the culture sector is not perceived as being flexible or dynamic, unlike the new 'creative industries', which are more all-encompassing, including many products for visual consumption in particular, such as advertising, cinema, design, fashion, video games etc, all of which are seen as being directly linked to innovation. Hall (1998) claimed that the major advantage of the creative industries, in developmental terms, was the high degree of linkage between creative enterprises and their tendency towards clustering. It is interesting to note that he proclaimed this major shift from cultural industries to creative industries as something that was, perhaps, inevitable, even though his statement was published twelve years ago. While his survey of the various components may still be useful, the term 'creative industries' seems to get secondary use in relation to the term 'cultural industries'. This is evident from a selection of recent publications such as Hesmondhalgh's 2007 book fittingly titled *The Cultural Industries* and, published blogs in the *Guardian* newspaper April 2009 where journalist Charlotte Higgins refers to 'job creation in the cultural

and Seifert (2008). Bianchini and Parkinson (1993: 22) anticipate Montgomery's (2008) view, as they also recognise the attraction of cashing in on a city's cultural lure, and suggest that perhaps cultural policy provision can be a 'strategy in its own right, to the globalisation of capital and the political necessity to marshal all available resources to attract and hold international investment'. Bianchini and Parkinson (1993) do however attach a warning to the employment of cultural means for economic ends, as opposed to culture for its own sake. They suggest that what might be referred to as the 'shallow' use of the arts is in fact a reflection of the homogeneous urban lifestyle that has become the signature of contemporary city living, weakening a person's sense of local identity through the dilution and commodification of a place's culture. A similar caution has been offered by Reeves (2002: 36), who asserts that many people who are active in the cultural sector are concerned that 'social and economic rationales for the arts, with their emphasis on the arts as a means to other ends will serve to devalue art for its own sake'. Such concerns persist and Coutts and Jokela (2010) reiterate the concerns voiced by Bianchini and Parkinson seventeen years earlier. This is a very interesting point and an issue that will be looked at in chapter 7 in relation to the provision of arts projects and their principal objective in the chosen case study.

According to Roberts (1998) it was not until the latter half of the 1980s that Western cities started to realise that art/culture projects such as art house establishments (opera houses, concert halls, galleries, museums, etc) could be of substantial economic benefit to a region, by creating jobs directly – in arts administration and promotion – and indirectly, by generating employment opportunities in venues such as restaurants, bars and cafés. There was an evident switch in perception of the economic value of the arts, as cultural projects soon became recognised as economic boosters as opposed to a supplementary spin-off from other industries. According to Reeves (2002: 10), by 1997 supranational organisations such as the European Commission, the World Bank and national and local government had come to recognise the creative industries as a 'major force in the fast-changing global economy'. This change in status for the creative industries, prompted by their rapid expansion, is in response to the switch towards service sector based societies in the western world, and the changing social trends resulting in an increase in time dedicated to leisure activities (see Henry, 2007; Moss, 2009). Bianchini and Parkinson (1993: 2) accept this positive aspect of culture

demonstrates the pivotal role culture had for image promotion and creating a cultural destination while also contributing to the social health of the community.

3.5 Cultural Industries and Global Cities

Culture, and the cultural industries (also known as creative industries), are now recognised as having a significant role to play in contributing to the success of urban regeneration programmes, enabling economic diversification (see Rennie Short, 2004; www.dublindocklands.ie). As mentioned earlier in relation to cities such as Bilbao and Barcelona, the fashion of drawing on the richness of an area's culture and heritage has been a significant factor in the regeneration formula. The emphasis on cultural richness has become a common feature in the accepted image of a 'global city'. Cultural capital has become the currency on which many cities' global status is built (see Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Smith, 2007). Montgomery (2008: 322) considers culture to be for the most part a readily available asset for cities to cash in on: 'Put crudely, culture can put you on the map and make your city more interesting'. Montgomery (2008) refers to the regeneration of Temple Bar, an area in the centre of Dublin city, whose property-led regeneration was allied to the redevelopment of the area as a cultural quarter. This was primarily achieved through the collaboration of existing small businesses and arts organisations in the area, who formed The Temple Bar Development Council in 1989. Through a combination of extensive lobbying and consultation with the Irish Planning Authority, Temple Bar Development Council succeeded in securing Temple Bar as a cultural quarter (see www.templebar.ie/culturalquarter). Stern and Seifert (2008: 1) refer to such an approach to urban regeneration projects, as employed in Temple Bar, as the cultivation of 'natural cultural districts' whose nature prompts a 'culture-based revitalization from the bottom up'. They suggest that this type of regeneration is made possible by the already established social networks that are geographically bound resulting in a density of cultural assets in a particular neighbourhood. What is interesting about their theory is the observation that, due to the unregulated or natural evolution of such cultural districts, the result mainly of the self-organised efforts of the local actors, the challenge for policy makers lies in achieving a sensitive social investment while maximising community benefits. The recognition, however, that culture has become an extremely attractive addition to the marketing and selling of a regenerated area perhaps dampens the philanthropist's approach as suggested by Stern

http://www.citymayors.com/economics/usb-purchasing-power.html). As recently as 2010, Dublin was also listed on The Global City Index 2010 as ranking 55 out of 65 qualifying global cities. The Global City Index bases its analysis/findings on the influence a city has beyond its own borders, and the sway it has in global markets, culture and innovation, (www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/11/the_global_cities_index_2010).

In addition to this, and of particular interest to this study, Dublin falls into Hassan's (2007) category of the modern global city where 'urban regeneration projects' have become common practice and are seen as a 'hallmark' of progress. The city of Dublin has actively participated in a number of high profile regeneration projects since the 1990s, including Temple Bar, the Docklands and Ballymun. Each project has addressed not only the regeneration of the physical environment but has also integrated social, cultural and economic goals. The fact that, according to Landry (et al 1996), local people in designated regeneration zones have become valued as 'principal assets' in ensuring the successful delivery and sustainability has influenced Dublin's approach to regeneration toward more progressive American and European models.

The LUDA Project was a European initiative (2004-2006) which identified 12 key cities (many of whom were recognised as 'global cities', Dublin being one) as cities which despite their affluence and development housed 'large urban distressed areas (LUDA)' usually in suburbs far removed from the 'rewards' of global status, but areas that ultimately put the sustainability of the city's global development at risk. Within the city of Dublin the distressed area identified was the suburb of Ballymun. As Ballymun is central to this research and will be returned to in detail in Chapters 7 and 8, it is interesting to note here that 'success' and global city status, does not mean immediate gain for everyone but could be seen to deepen the already extensive divide between rich and poor in an affluent society. The regeneration of Ballymun (1998-2010) will be examined, in terms not only of physical and economic improvements in the area, but also of the social implications for a marginalised community undergoing regeneration as part of a larger 'global city' package. Just as culture seemed central to the rebranding of Dublin as a global city, the regeneration of Ballymun (1998-2010)

3.4 Dublin as Global City

Cronin et al. (2002: 54) surveys the development of Dublin as a global city from its former, somewhat introverted standing to its current position in the great western global flow. He refers to the work of Joyce's *Ulysses* and its commitment to Dublin's daily localness, followed by the work of Yee and his book *The Silent Traveller in Dublin,* in which he notes how the Dublin of 1953 remained firmly outside the common European vibrancy of cosmopolitanism, 'the curious fact is that no one seems to walk fast on O'Connell Street. Dublin seems to retain all its eighteenth-century calm and to get along without any of the fuss and bustle of modern capitals' (Yee cited in Cronin et al., 2002: 53). The interim between the Dublin of 1953 and the Dublin of 1999 is where, according to Cronin, the insurgence of Dublin as a global force takes place. He draws on the very mundane example of an *AA Roadwatch* traffic report as a testament to Dublin's position of global importance, where a rush of affluence manifests itself in the jam packed roads and gridlocked travel networks of a bustling Dublin city.

Coulter (2003) takes up Cronin's (2002) analysis of the transformation of Dublin into its current global city position, suggesting that while late 1980s' Dublin was a fairly drab and unsophisticated place, it was in fact 'culture' that would play a pivotal role in forging Dublin's global identity through image promotion, in the 1990s. Building on Dublin's celebrations of its Viking past and the city's millennium in 1988, its hosting of the 'City of Culture' in 1991, followed by the unprecedented global phenomenon of Riverdance in 1994, the decision by MTV to host the European Music Awards in Dublin during the winter of 1999 capped a series of hugely influential cultural events during the 1990s, that launched Dublin on the global stage as 'one of the select band of urban centres that constitutes the principal network for the circulation of cultural capital' (Coulter, 2003: 3).

While culture played a recognised role in the establishment of Dublin city as a global player, the Celtic Tiger years (late 1990s-late 2000s) saw Dublin populate the economic and technical highways of globalization. Many hi-tech industries, including Microsoft, eBay and Google used Dublin (and continue to do so) as their European headquarters or operational base (see Buck et al. 2005). Despite the current economic meltdown Dublin was still listed in 2009 as the fourth richest city in the world, (see



Figure 3.1 Recently Adopted City Logos

Even though a city's qualification for global status is mainly dependent on its economic performance, more cities are striving to dress themselves in a cultural cloak, recognising the necessary ingredient for 'true global pretensions' as 'art and culture' (Rennie Short, 2004: 75). Cultural capital has very much become part of the global fabric of a city. The city, per se, has become the site through which the globalisation of culture has been most profound. According to Appadurai (2001: 295) cultural globalisation can best be conceptualised through the multiple 'sites' or 'realms' in which 'cultural flows' are continually shaping and reshaping the world. He identifies five such 'flows' all of which are housed in the modern city: 'ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes'. With the establishment of such overarching global cultural 'scapes', Appadurai (2001) suggests that local practices are constantly being positioned in relation to a 'tentative global culture' which is dominant and erosive. The constant bombardment of global culture into the local sphere finds global references being re-expressed through local contexts. The paradox there lies in the pursuit of 'cultural originality' as the unique selling point of a global city for market profit, while local cultural identity is eroded by the spread of cultural globalisation. In the latter half of the 20th century cities had to reinvent themselves, emphasising organic cultural lineage, to be competitive in the pursuit of the 'global city' title. It has been suggested that the modern city has become the embodiment of the fictional character Dr Faustus, created by Marlowe (Worthen, 1993), and has sold its soul in pursuit of material wealth and the title of 'global city'.

they reveal. She concludes that relationships of spatial power in urban spaces can be altered by human actions, political will and ingenuity. It is the people who hold the power, especially when part of the collective. Lefebrve (1984: 11) is of a similar mindset to Massey (1999), arguing that space serves to support oppressive hegemonic systems, enabling the bourgeoisie literally to keep the proletariat in their place, in urban spaces defined by those with power. Understanding space as a means of social control is a theme in broader theoretical debates, such as those offered by the Chicago School and in the field of 'ecological positivism'. The latter considers human behaviour as determined by ecological principles, where the most powerful groups (usually defined by income) will obtain the most advantageous positions. Such action ensures that 'groups' advantaged by material wealth will congregate in certain zones, creating physical and social divides between different sections of society and in turn sustaining hegemonic systems of power relations, (see Hall, 2002).

3.3.2 The Contemporary City – A Mere Commercial Logo?

Western cities' project of reinventing themselves as successful players on the global economic stage has given rise to an era of urban regeneration and redevelopment. The role of Western cities, according to Smith (2007: 133), has changed dramatically and 'rather than being prized for their productive capacities, cities are now valued for their cultural and entertainment attractions'. The profit driven 'cultural revival' of cities has become established as a successful means of creating a particular brand which aids marketing. While strengthening the tourist industry, some fear that it reduces the complexity of the city to a mere commercial logo (see figure 3.1),

> The urban formula of success – first tried and tested in places like Barcelona and Bilbao – has become an increasingly narrow one, with diminishing results. It reduces cities to participation in a kind of cultural arms race, competing with iconic buildings, galleries and museums, riverfront developments and squinty bridges. (Hassan, 2007: 24)

industrial economy of these cities, an alternative approach was required. According to Abrahamson (2004: 4) most cities had to adopt 'the globalization response' in order to survive and establish themselves as global cities, competitive and economically sound. Such a response required the city to build an infrastructure that would support recruitment efforts. The ability to lure transnational corporations and the specialised firms (offering legal, accounting, and other services) that follow these corporations, and provide cultural attractions for international tourists, seemed to be the secret formula for rebuilding a city that would gain global recognition (see Greed and Roberts, 1998; Brenner and Keil, 2006). The 'globalization response' as a 'one formula fits all scenario', has been acknowledged as a significant driver of the spread of a homogeneous global culture (Ray, 2007).

The most immediate realisation of cultural standardisation is made apparent in the architecture of global cities: 'Across different societies and cities, skylines are changing, and the same faceless, shining buildings are rising, often owned by the same corporations' (Hassan, 2007: 24). Hassan (2007: 24) extends his argument by referring to cities of the West as an 'identikit city that you can practically buy off the shelf'. The drive to attract and accommodate the multinational corporate giants (Sony, Disney, Enron etc.) has, according to Hassan, colonised city landscapes, displacing or erasing national cultural particulars, creating 'placeless' cities. 'The problem of serial reproduction seems to underwrite the idea that globalization is creating more "placelessness" in cities, as similar environments are copied across the globe' (Smith, 2007: 14). Despite the creeping presence of an 'artificially' created physical environment which may have no connection to local architectural culture, a city's soul lies in its inhabitants, and it is the distinctiveness of the people's culture that has come to be the signature of a city (www.comedia.org.uk). 'Scousers are the Culture' was a slogan that decorated many public walls in the city of Liverpool as Capital of Culture 2008, in protest at the over-commercialisation of the event and the lack of recognition of potential local contribution; it asserts that it is the people and not the location that makes a city distinctive. Massey (1999: 164) argues that the populace has a central role in forming a city's identity, and extends her analysis of urban space to consider significant spatial relations between individuals, buildings, institutions, etc. She questions how such spatial formations, and the negotiations between individuals and their environment, are perceived and interrogated in relation to the power relations

note that a city's identity is not an organic product that has been established without the influence of outside forces. Locality (the city), is built on a collage of diverse historical events,

> The processes that shape locality are not just one-way interactions but are rather dynamic and multifaceted so that hybrids of the 'newly arrived' and the 'previously there' are constantly reconfigured and remobilized through global flows. (Rennie Short, 2004: 25)

Rennie Short's (2004) analysis supports the view that cities are places in which the 'hybridization of culture' occurs. For centuries cities, and port cities in particular, have been mixing bowls of culture, where languages, cultural practices and politics have all fused and influenced the 'native' systems of living (Seabrook, 2007). According to Ray (2007: 30) 'the city becomes a trans-cultural space shared by a mixture of cultures in various relations of ethnic segregation, integration, assimilation and cultural hybridization'. It is the rate of cultural hybridisation within cities, which has rapidly accelerated over the last few decades, that has prompted consideration of the profound effects on individual cultures (see Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Willis, 2005; Pieterse, 2009). An individual's identity consists of layers of cultural reference on a local, national and global level. It is their cultural co-ordinates which enable the individual to make sense of their place within the world (Williams, 1983). When globalisation gets its grip on culture, it homogenises it so that it can be packaged and sold. Such an impact succeeds in eroding local and national traditions, resulting in the layers of one's identity being weakened, with individual satisfaction privileged over the collective (see Hassan, 2007).

3.3.1 The Role of Culture in the Reinvention of the Modern City

The fact that cities are the nodes through which the economic networks connect encourages competition between cities to become significant players in the global market. As a result, they have to consider their economies' reorientation around financial and producer services (Hall, 2006). In the Western world cities that were dependent on 'heavy' industries, like mining and shipbuilding, which declined greatly towards the end of the 20th century, have had to reinvent themselves. To try and counteract the severe social and economic problems resulting from the demise of the

'private' life. It pervades everything, driving people apart, disengaging them from ancient bonds of duty and custom'. Such a claim invites a consideration of what the relationship between the individual and city has come to be.

The ancient premise of the city – the polis (Delanty, 2003: 12) as a republican ideal, a site of civic equality and a forum of social, political and economic debate – has been persistently undermined over the centuries. Accordingly, some now see cities as 'bases of the globalist capitalist class' with 'little resemblance to imaginings of the times when urbanism stood for citizenship, civic behaviour and the ideal public sphere' (Amin, 2007: 10). The role of the citizen, confined to privileged social classes in the ancient city/polis, was very much part of the collective. All matters were dealt with in a democratic manner, with public spaces and communal amenities adding to the sense of a self-governing and contained community of locality. It is worth noting here, however, that such a democratic city also had its shortcomings. According to Delanty (2003: 13) 'it appears that the price for the inclusion of some is the exclusion of others. Thus the Greek communitarian ideal of the polis may be seen in a negative light as constructed around strong codes of us/them'. Despite the polis being a very strong example of a self-contained community of locality with very little documented evidence available to suggest that there was any degree of interaction with the wider globe, exclusion still persisted within a rigorously implemented class system of citizens, non-citizens and slaves (see Stockton, 1990; Thorley, 2004).

In contemporary Western cities, despite the cloak of democratic practice that covers political regimes, the sense of belonging to a community with its own layers of identity is becoming ever more fragile. The capitalist insistence on looking at the individual in terms of material consumption, married to the neo-liberal obsession with privatising public amenities (Klein 2000, 2002, 2007), has had a detrimental effect on the public perception of what constitutes a community, actively encouraging individualism at the expense of the collective (Diamond and Liddle, 2005). Not only does such a destructive, profit-driven approach to governing a Western city affect the identity of the city, but the city also has to contend with outside global forces that succeed in penetrating all aspects of everyday life. Such forces dilute its cultural identity, with many of its inhabitants aligning themselves to global or cosmopolitan identities, as opposed to the more immediate identity of the city. It is important to

Tokyo, are 'sites of the largest stock exchanges in the world' (Ritzer, 2007: 5). According to Hall (2006: 46), 'the headquarters of large multinational corporations have tended to concentrate in the very largest cities, and have become disproportionately concentrated in a small number of "world cities" or "global cities"'. Rennie Short (2004: 10) suggests that Saskia Sassen was one of the first theorists to use the term 'global city' in 1991, when she proposed that cities which were in a position to offer 'knowledge-rich' environments accompanied by progressive technological development would become central to the workings of the global economy, and thus become recognised as 'global cities'. The extent to which a city is absorbed into the global economy varies greatly: 'most Western cities have been remarkably successful, since they have long been at the centre of economic activity' (Seabrook, 2007: 15). If we accept that cities have become global primarily to satisfy economic activity, the question arises as to whether an intensification of communication between distant places, adopting uniform modes of practice, has eroded individual cultures and identities. Or have cities always been by their very nature, places of transition, with historically established flows of people and goods, contributing to the hybridisation of cultural forms? These are some of the questions that will be explored in this chapter.

3.2.2 The Relationship between Globalisation and Global Cities

There has been a significant development since Sassen's (1991) diagnosis of the 'global city'. According to Taylor (2007) all contemporary cities, regardless of geographical location, will house a selection of indicators which demonstrate the penetration of globalisation. The impact of globalisation varies considerably from city to city, but its presence is unavoidable. 'The fate of cities (and their residents) has become increasingly tied to their position in international flows of investment and trade' (Taylor, 2007: 14). The impact on urban geography of globalised economics is usually easy to identify. Suave high rise buildings, large and prosperous financial districts and extensive shopping malls have become the predictable fabric of a 'global city'. What is of interest to this particular study is the degree to which the establishment of a vibrant economic market, with all the evident material advantages, translates into a homogenous landscape, devoid of any sense of uniqueness. Seabrook (2007: 158) points out that with economic development and the spread of capitalism an 'ideology of individualism does not obligingly halt at some notional frontier of

Chapter 3

The Global City: Regeneration, Community and the Arts

3.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the emergence of the global city, its status and impact upon community. Regeneration and reinvention has become the signature of the new global city. Questions as to how regeneration programmes act upon local cultural identities and practices will be central to this inquiry. The consideration of culture as a commodity, something that can be packaged and bought, or culture as a set of resilient practices that can sustain their own particular qualities in the face of regeneration will be reviewed. Developments in approaches to structuring regeneration will be assessed, with particular emphases on the role of the community and the consultation process. The purpose and provision of the arts in regeneration programmes is considered. Questions as to how value is assigned to the arts and what templates of evaluation are available for documenting the social impact of the arts are also examined.

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3.2.1 What is a Global City?

Most social, economic and political movements which have been influential in shaping human practices establish a network of control centres (see Haviland et al., 2007; Taylor, 2007). The nature of these networks varies, for example, from the World Bank to national banks; however, their ability to penetrate and influence human behaviour is profound. Globalisation as a social movement adopts a similar pattern. Cities have become the centres of control which are of paramount importance in fuelling globalisation and enabling it to succeed. In response to the onset of the globalised era, according to many (see Ray, 2007; Mayaram, 2009; Imrie et al., 2009), a new type of city is emerging – the 'global city'.

As discussed earlier, the impact of globalisation is felt across the spectrum of human existence; however, the relationship between economics and globalisation is one which has drastically altered the role of the city. It is not by chance that the cities which have become recognised as 'global cities', such as New York, London and

Examining the role of theatre in this globalised era, raises larger questions concerning culture in general and the role of arts provision within communities. The spread and infiltration of globalisation on a worldwide scale has been facilitated by the role of the contemporary city (see Ritzer, 2007; Ray, 2007). Cities have been key enablers of contemporary globalisation. The global city, the quest for global city status, and the accompanying commodification of culture is explored in the next chapter with particular reference to the role of arts (provision, participation and perception) within urban settings, while investigating the social value of the arts in general.

the world in terms of freedom from exploitation, and the vindication of human rights (see Dee, 2004).

In concluding this survey, this researcher is prompted to question why the task of defining the social condition of globalisation is so difficult, when numerous 'movements/concepts' have gone before which were more easily summarised in the literature, such as internationalism, imperialism, neo-liberalism etc (see Weinstein, 2005). To speculate, globalisation's penetration of our daily existence from minor matters to those of a grander scale leaves people feeling somewhat powerless to resist or alter its impenetrable nature. So it could be argued that more people may fit into Held's (2004) 'Globalists' category than is acknowledged.

This chapter has considered the meaning of community in the 21st century and teased out broad arguments as to the impact of the most recent social and economic phenomenon: globalisation. Particular attention has been given to acknowledging the spread of a homogenous western culture in this globalised era and the effect it has had on the idea of 'local' or 'national' community. Culture as understood by Williams (1983b) is a means of talking to ourselves about ourselves and contributing significantly to the establishment of group and individual identity. Harvey's (2004) attention to the 'material implications' of 'the treatment of communities as if they are comparable (by say, a planning agency)' is of considerable importance to this research. This is, in part, because he argues that 'the social practices of [local] people' are important resources which they draw on to respond to homogenisation. (2004: 205) Theatre, as a form of culture, is perhaps one of the most public of platforms upon which dramatic narrative poses questions about community and identity. It is interesting to note an echo of Harvey's (2004) point in Nicholson's (2009) view that in this technically advanced globalised era, the live practice of theatre is more necessary than ever, because of its ability to speak directly and intimately to a local community about itself. Theatre, it would seem, despite its ancient origins, has carved out a necessary place in this globalised era. Theatre as the 'most human' of all the art forms, continues to imitate nature and humanity's actions, enabling communities to critically reflect on their circumstances.

diversity simultaneously operating at a number of levels'. Castells (1998) offers a very interesting thesis on the impact of migration in the globalised era. He suggests that patterns of migration create a global elite with a similar lifestyle in every big city in the world, regardless of hemisphere. He uses the notion of the 'fourth world' representing the pool of migrant and local labour that exists at the bottom of the labour market in every world city. He associates globalisation with extensive inequality, with the bottom of the labour market excluded from the economic advantages associated with globalisation. Not only does globalisation disadvantage the poor in terms of labour opportunities, it is also, according to Held (2004: 57), responsible for widening the 'gulf between those with an increasing array of information devices and sources – "the information rich" – and the "information poor", who lack electricity, communication technologies or access to information'. This particular point underlines the importance of the technological advances in communication networks which have made 'information' the most valuable commodity of this era.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the effect of globalisation on community in the 21st century. The literature suggests that communities have had to renegotiate understandings of their collective identity in the face of this recent phenomenon. Whatever origin or constitution is attributed to globalisation, one definite fact is that globalisation is very real. Whether understood as a movement which only came to light after the Cold War, or as something which is the result of centuries of economic, political and cultural interdependencies and accumulation, what is striking about its contemporary state is its range, and the speed and ferocity of its impact (see Cohen, 2006; Herod, 2009; Schaeffer, 2009). This is fuelled by the technological advances of our era, intensifying communication networks and making possible the rapid global transportation of people, goods, images and symbols. The literature would suggest that it is impossible for a state to remain truly 'independent' and even though most people live life in one place, it has become almost impossible for them to exist in such a location without feeling or recognising the impact of global forces on their everyday existence. The ferocity with which global forces are experienced is something which varies with location, with the Western world perhaps more fortunate than the rest of

nation's people and acknowledge that 'in a globalised world we will be unable to predict social practices and preferences on the basis of geographical location' (Waters, 1995: 3). The weakening of territorially based culture and the avalanche of 'foreign/western' cultural forms could be seen as a potent combination with monstrous consequences for the viability, and even survival, of individual cultures (Bryman, 2004; Herod, 2009; Giusta et al., 2006).

2.7.7 Cultural Hybridity

A significant consequence of contemporary globalisation is the increase in the movement of people across the globe. Migration has become a common experience, with economic and social migrants appearing in diverse global locations (see Spring, 2008; van Naerssen et al., 2008). Local and national cultures are being exposed not only to new, or different, cultural practices through technological advances (especially the media), but also by this rise in global migration. This interaction, and confrontation, with alternative cultural codes and practices, can produce cultural hybridisation. 'Much that was different is becoming standardised, but at the same time connexity makes it easier for bits of culture to be combined, hybridised and transformed' (Mulgan, cited in Held 2004: 14). Communities of ideology are very often focused on reuniting diaspora cultures. The integration of diaspora communities into larger, more established communities is very often where exchange between cultural practices takes place (Ember et al., 2004; Pomeranz and Topik, 2006).

An optimistic view of cultural hybridisation would see it as a process where aspects of alternative cultures combine, enabling the negotiation of collective meanings. Such a process should eliminate or lessen aspects of national difference, which often, when taken to the extreme, are responsible for racist and fundamentalist movements (see Creswell, 2004). The elimination or lessening of such extremism is surely one of the positive aspects of globalisation. However, some argue that it is the very existence of globalisation which has encouraged some communities to redefine their collective identity along extreme lines, and violently to pursue global recognition, as in the cases of the Taliban and Al Qaeda (see Steger, 2003; Whitaker, 2007). Robertson (cited in Beynon and Dunkerley, 2000: 5) recognises surges in 'local, regional and nationalistic pride and the push for nationhood as being very much part of the globalized process. Rather than being about unity, globalization would appear to be about increasing

(2004: 48) suggests that cultural imperialism is principally activated through the flow of 'cultural goods to the rest of the world, inculcating US and Western values in those recipient nations. This process prepares the ground for the import of other western goods'. Tomlinson (2003) accepts that globalisation has, and can have, a corrosive effect on collective identities, but he is more optimistic than Giddens (1999) or Held (2004), and emphasises the resilience that local and national communities can demonstrate in the face of globalisation,

> Far from being the fragile flower that globalization tramples, Identity is [...] the upsurging *power* of local culture that offers (albeit multi-form, disorganized and sometimes politically reactionary) *resistance* to the centrifugal force of capitalist globalization. [Emphasis in original] (Tomlinson, 2003: 270)

While noting the impact of globalisation on individual and collective identities, it is important to consider the role of nation states in shaping collective identities. The nation, perhaps in recent times, has been challenged by the economic, social and political impact of globalisation to redefine collective national identity (see Hayward, 2009). The nation state now seems to be caught between the local on the one hand and the global on the other: 'the local and the global form endpoints of a spatial continuum whose central portion is marked by the "national" and the "regional"' (Steger, 2003: 12). The establishment and implementation of the 'free market' has been pivotal in reducing the role of the nation state in economic self-regulation. According to McMichael (cited in Timmons Roberts and Bellone Hite, 2007: 221), 'The global economy itself became consequential in reshaping the conditions under which states made economic policy'. It is evident from such statements that the significance of the nation-state is perceived to be in decline. Held's (2004) 'Globalists' would share the view that the role, and the power of the nation state is being corroded by the force of globalisation, despite isolated attempts to resist it. This lessening in the power of the nation state is supported by Roberts and Hite (2007: 232): 'Many contemporary problems cannot be adequately studied at the level of the nation-states, that is, in terms of each country and its inter-national relations, but instead need to be seen in terms of global processes'. If the nation state is defined by physical borders, and the disintegration of such physical borders is a recognisable aspect, even consequence, of globalisation, we have to consider the impact of the weakening of territorially constructed social and cultural guiding principles for a

campaigns, the cliché 'act locally, think globally' describes a condition which, for many, has become an unavoidable reality. Tomlinson (2003: 269) suggests 'that before the era of Globalization, there existed local, autonomous, distinct and well-defined, robust and culturally sustaining connections between geographical place and cultural experience'. Such connections, according to Tomlinson (2003), were the very fabric of one's – and one's community's – cultural identity. This account of cultural identity suggests that culture is in fact a sort of inheritance, which has strong social, cultural and political resonance, enabling a sense of belonging, firmly established in deep historical origins (see also Williams, 1983). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, membership of communities of locality, in particular, is usually associated with, and dependent upon, ancestral lineage. Cultural identity – individual, local and national – is not something that just manifests itself through everyday interactions; often it is a deliberate construction, maintained through numerous institutions, both social and regulatory, of any one country (see Hayward, 2009). Political, social and educational systems are pivotal in moulding national culture and directly influence the individual and collective psyche in the constitution of cultural identity. If culture is something which is so firmly established through a lengthy and intricate set of social processes, does globalisation erode that sense of identity, or, as in Tomlinson's view (2003: 269), is it 'much more the *product* of globalisation than its victim'? [emphasis in original].

2.7.6 Cultural Inequality

As mentioned earlier, globalisation and the spread of a homogeneous culture tend to privilege forms derived from mainstream Western culture. It is the part of the world that appears to sit comfortably in the mainstream flow of capitalism while, with the assistance of the globalisation movement, readily exporting a standardised version of its culture worldwide (see Klein, 2002). This pattern would suggest that economic vulnerability could be directly associated with cultural vulnerability. While the Western world has the resources and the means, both economically and politically, to penetrate and control the world market, it could also be argued that Western cultural products may take precedence over non-western cultures. The global spread of cultural products such as Disney, MTV and CNN exemplifies how culture has become a profitable commodity, and one which has the power to significantly alter, influence or even destroy collective identities (see Giusta, 2006; Pieterse, 2009). Held

> Because a territory has undergone a high degree of economic integration into the global economy it does not follow automatically that there will be a similar degree of social or cultural convergence. Cultures may prove more sticky and recalcitrant than flows of capital, goods and technologies.
> (Ray, 2007: 32)

In short, Ray (2007) suggests that even though markets may be open and borderless, cultural and linguistic differences will remain (see also Tomlinson, 2003). However, the fact that English has become recognised as the 'global language' (Beynon and Dunkerley, 2000) and information the prime global product, linguistic difference is under threat, as knowledge of the English language is becoming unavoidable. Bhagwati (2004) is optimistic about the spread of the English language as the new global linguistic base and suggests that such permeation is in fact responsible for the revival and survival of local indigenous languages.

Cultural infiltration, mainly through audio and visual technology, means that local, small communities are living in an increasingly global context. According to Urry (2000) the role of the nation state is lessened in this global context, due, in part, to the establishment of 'global' organisations such as the World Bank and World Trade consortia (see also Schaeffer, 2009). This, in turn however, 'may also encourage (rather than discourage) the scope for local difference and diversity, since it is more difficult for nation states to impose uniform identity on their citizens, and connections between places often cut across national boundaries' (Held, 2004: 14). Therefore it is interesting to note that the spread of a homogeneous cultural form has perhaps been the catalyst that many communities needed to provoke them into reinterpreting and refreshing long-established local values and ways of life. Today, in the Western world, many people may be experiencing the drive towards, in cultural and economic terms, the phenomenon of localisation and regionalisation (see Tomlinson, 2003). For some, such as Chomsky (1993), a paradox emerges, that although capitalism is centralising in character, nevertheless around the world there seems to be much more involvement in regionalism, grass root organisations, where the idea and practice of local autonomy is steadily emerging. Such shifts in practice may be small but they are significant indicators of change nonetheless. It has become fashionable to support local products over imports and encouragement to source and buy organic, local, and in-season food stuffs drives many national advertising campaigns. Despite such active

three main concerns: cultural homogeneity, inequality and hybrid culture, all of which will be dealt with in turn.

2.7.5 Cultural Homogeneity

Held (2004) suggests that the industrialised North holds the dominant position over cultural distribution, eroding individual cultural difference by the westernisation, even Americanisation, of the globe. The visual homogeneity of culture, which Ray (2007) refers to above, is perhaps the easiest impact to identify. It is arguable that the most visible cultural expressions of globalisation are evident in the colonisation of public spaces, which have become little more than enormous advertising canvases for multinational companies (see Klein, 2000). American enterprises such as McDonalds, Coca-Cola and Disney have become familiar images in all corners of the world. Despite local or national cultural peculiarities, the power of globalisation and the establishment of the 'world market' has enabled what has been referred to as an unregulated infiltration and dominance of one cultural form at the expense of another (see Bryman, 2004). According to Beynon and Dunkerley (2000), the emergence of a global culture is directly related to late capitalist restructuring which actively shaped desires, created needs and thereby pursued new sites for capital accumulation. This can be seen as 'blatant cultural degradation by the media, advertising and communication industries in their drive to maximize profits' (Beynon and Dunkerley, 2000:15).

If it is accepted that globalisation is very much a reality, whose impact plays out as cultural imperialism, the question arises as to what the ultimate affect of the spread of a homogeneous culture will be. Will it successfully erode millennia of historical and cultural differences, or does it, by its very aggressive nature, inspire people, communities and even nations to stand up and reclaim their territory, redefining who they are in response to the impending threat of erasure of their cultures? People who actively try to resist the globalised movement, those who fit into Held's (2004) 'Transformationalists' category, very often base their principles on the fact that dominant multinational corporations and technologies are systematically eroding local cultures and spreading a homogeneous global culture. According to Ray,

seek economic, political and cultural dominance over the rest of the world (see Held and McGrew, 2007). Held (2004) offers a pessimistic view of global imperialism, where he identifies the fact that it is largely an affair of the industrial North, in which the developing societies of the South have a very limited active role, if any. This power imbalance widens the gap of inequality and tends to favour the rich disproportionately over the poor, echoing Giddens' (1999) observation. Held (2004: 12) goes on to suggest that rather than founding a 'global village', contemporary globalisation results in 'global pillage'.

2.7.4 Globalisation and its Impact on Culture

Globalisation is predominantly discussed in relation to economics (see Giusta et al., 2006), however, it is the cultural impact of globalisation that concerns this particular enquiry. It is important to recognise that culture and economics cannot exist in isolation from one another, and one is very often influenced by the other: 'the very fabric of the global economy is part and parcel of world culture. Economic integration is more than a material juggernaut, it is at least in part, the realization of ideas' (Lechner and Boli, 2005: 8). The pursuit of economic success very often leads to systems of exploitation, such as imperialism, which in turn corrode the rich cultural fabric of a country (see Inda and Rosaldo, 2008). According to Ray (2007: 2), a general agreement exists which recognises that 'globalization is destructive of traditional bonds of social solidarity, but little work is done on theorising the new forms of sociality that emerge within a global order'. The cultural impact of globalisation is, in many ways, difficult to quantify (Pieterse, 2009). Unlike the economic impact, which can be recorded through quantitative research methods and expressed in statistical data, cultural impact is somewhat harder to describe, and therefore, to analyse (Agnew, 2009).

Culture concerns itself with an array of social processes, with the individual and the collective at its core. Our cultural 'DNA' defines who we are and how we make sense of the world (Williams, 1983). Ray (2007: 4) poses an interesting question where he asks to what extent cultural imperialism and globalisation create 'a global culture of visual homogeneity in which everywhere looks superficially the "same"' or, on the contrary, does it bring increased differentiation between globalized winners and losers along with eclectic hybrids of local and global cultures?' This question highlights

Ray (2007: 13) suggests globalisation is, or may also be analysed as, 'economic neo-liberal globalization and a corporate agenda that is intent on constricting individual freedom and local lifestyle in the name of profit'. An alternative perspective is offered by Kenichi Ohmae (1994) who believes that a 'borderless world' is a vast improvement for the human condition. He claims that with a free flow of capital and goods, people benefit from free choice and an extensive selection of the best global products. Bhagwati (2004) and Wolf (2004) are of a similar mindset to Ohmae (1994), arguing strongly that free trade enables more effective allocation/distribution of global resources. Giddens (1999) is less enthusiastic, however, about what he refers to as a 'run-away world'. He suggests that the new global order is not one of equality for all, but is driven predominantly by the interest of a select minority – the rich. Giddens' (1999) observations on the impact of globalisation on people, and how the movement favours the rich and reinforces their power within a new global structure, aligns globalisation with familiar, long-established, and unequal social, economic and political systems, including imperialism.

The vast body of literature which explores contemporary globalisation makes recurring reference to a possible link between globalisation and imperialism, with the suggestion that globalisation is merely a pseudonym for imperialism,

> The word "global" and its derivatives (including "globalization") have, over the last five to ten years, been used to discuss and analyze empirical features of the world that, prior to the 1990s were usually discussed and analyzed using the word "Imperialism". (Kitching, 2003: 169)

Bhagwati (2004) argues that the impact of globalisation, however undesirable, is not in any way comparable to the historical pillage characteristic of the European conquest identified as 'colonialism and imperialism'. He acknowledges that communities may have been weakened by the onset of the globalised era, but argues that ultimately, the benefits for the new global community outweigh any negative impacts.

Imperialism is understood not only in terms of economic imperialism, but as political and cultural Western imperialism. It is argued that America and the United Kingdom

'actual character' of the social condition is shrouded in a cloak of ambiguity. The following section will attempt to explore its meaning(s).

It is suggested that the most common features among the extensive range of definitions of globalisation are physical distance and social relations, 'A new geography is being created within which physical distance is less important than electronic connectedness' (Held, 2004: 10). It has been recognised (Sparks, 2007) that the advances in communication technologies have enabled the intensification of social relations and thus the compression of physical distance, where the human social landscape seems to be at the mercy of, and is being reshaped by, innovative information technologies. On reflection, this researcher is prompted to ask to what extent such a compression of the global space intensifies the consciousness of the world as a collective whole. The fact that social interactions are no longer obstructed by physical distance, with physical borders rapidly dissolving, suggests that the onset of the globalised era has successfully fostered a keen sense of becoming part of a global whole. It is arguable that the daily 'global' experiences that people are confronted with, such as surfing the net and purchasing groceries from a multi-national chain, ultimately alters people's sense of individual and collective identity. According to McMichael (cited in Timmons Roberts and Bellone Hite, 2007: 217) globalisation is mainly concerned with economic integration 'observed through local prisms, or "grounded" in local terms, giving a local face to processes of globalization'. Similarly, Giddens (1990: 64) recognises the 'two–way' impact of the infiltration of global practices on local communities, 'as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. With the onset of the internets intensification and acceleration of social exchanges and activities, what has become apparent is that the dissolving of physical boundaries and distance has created a smaller, more intimate and dependent, globalised world in which people in disparate locations are enabled to experience events simultaneously. This erosion of physical boundaries and the shrinking of the globe has been fuelled by the establishment of the so called 'world market' built upon the power and influence of transnational corporations. It is important to consider the human cost of such economic advances.

Ray (2007) offers a similar theory, suggesting that the idea of a 'globally integrated world' is not a new one and that writers active in the 19th century, such as Marx, envisaged the world as increasingly interdependent, where the role of national identities would decline. The theory and implementation of capitalism, especially in the 20th and continuing into the 21st century, suggests that global development is best understood as a single world system in which events at local level are set in motion by the structure of the systematic core (see Inda and Rosaldo, 2008). Robertson (1992) argues that globalisation as a movement was something that originated as early as the 1400s, with the onset of global explorations and the spread of the Roman Catholic Church. He then identifies four other significant periods/phases which accelerated the rate of implementation. Phase 2 (1750-1875) saw the emergence of international relations and the onset of the 'international' society. Phase 3 (1875-1925) is referred to as the 'take-off' phase, marked by communicational advances and increasing economic, political, and cultural connections. Phase 4 (1925-69) sees the struggle for global dominance with WW II and the splitting of the atom, corresponding with the establishment of global organisations such as the UN. Phase 5 (1969 to date) brings us into the present day where the emergence of global institutions, global mass media and the call for international human rights is characteristic of this highly technical and interdependent age. It is this 'phase 5' which McMichael (cited in Timmons Roberts and Bellone Hite, 2007) argues is the most influential of all the phases for the implementation of the movement. This phase corresponds with the embedding of capitalism as the main global economic system and the weakening of cold war politics.

2.7.3 Towards a Definition

As acknowledged, the term globalisation has become a convenient and commonly used attachment to a variety of academic, political and social terminology (Herod, 2009). This apparently easy-fitting application often distorts the actual meaning of the term, with its widespread infiltration in all areas of the public sphere perhaps depleting its meaning altogether. According to Wiseman (cited in Held 2004: 14) 'the term "globalization" [...] is too readily used to explain any international phenomenon that is occurring'. He therefore argues for a more careful application of the term, enabling its actual character, extent and effects to be studied. What constitutes the

or is it just a new title for a set of long-established social practices whose mutation indicates 'business as usual'?

The principal debate about the 'evolution' or 'implementation' of globalisation moves between the idea of globalisation as a historical project 'originating in the stabilisation of world capitalism after the inter-war crisis and in the context of the cold war' (McMichael, cited in Timmons Roberts and Bellone Hite, 2007), and the view that it is a 'direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonization and cultural mimesis' (Waters, 1995: 3). If globalisation is a historical project, it seems reasonable to argue that its rate of development has been irregular, with an abrupt and recent acceleration. According to Waters (1995), globalisation could not have occurred until after the Copernican revolution (15th and 16th century Europe) which was the mechanism through which humanity was confronted with the fact that we did in fact inhabit a globe. Until then, most people were confined by the borders of their continent, and lived in almost complete ignorance of the existence of fellow humans on the other side of the globe. This 'outward expansion of Europe' (Beynon and Dunkerley, 2000: 7) brought with it an expansion of geographical and cultural knowledge, technological innovations to aid travel and communication, the beginning of a 'global consciousness' based on an international imposition of European standards such as the 'Gregorian calendar and the notion of the nation state' (Beynon and Dunkerley, 2000: 8). According to Anthony Giddens (1990) globalisation is a continuation of modernity, as it is in keeping with the development of modern societies, fuelled by industrialisation and material resources accumulation. Like Giddens (1990), others such as Bhagwati (2004) and Held (2004) acknowledge that globalisation is the 'natural progression' of a set of historical processes. Held (cited in Beynon and Dunkerley 2000: 9) cites a list of factors in support of his theory that contemporary globalisation is just the latest stage in a set of historical processes. He claims factors such as the prehistoric and historic migration of people, the global spread of world religions, impact of great empires, expansion of Europe, modern nationalism, capitalism and English as the global language, have all accumulated and are contributing factors to contemporary globalisation.

as an inevitable evolutionary progression of institutional and ideological relations constructed by powerful social forces (Stiglitz, 2003).

David Held (2004) devised three categories in which he could confidently place what he identified as the three main positions in the debate on globalisation as a social condition. The first category is what he refers to as 'the Globalists' who see globalisation as inevitable and something that cannot successfully be 'resisted or significantly influenced by human intervention, particularly through traditional political institutions, such as nation-states' (Held, 2004: 22). The second category he refers to as 'The Inter-nationalists' who, according to Held (2004), argue that the significance of globalisation as a new phase has been exaggerated. They insist that 'most economic and social activity is regional rather than global, and still see a significant role for the nation-states' (Held, 2004: 23). The third category Held (2004) calls 'The Transformationalists', those who openly recognise that globalisation 'represents a significant shift, but question the inevitability of its impact' (Held, 2004: 23). They are of the opinion that a central position for the role of local and national government persists, regardless of the onset of the globalised era (see Waters, 2001).

Despite the evident differences which characterise each of Held's (2004) categories, the three listed groups recognise globalisation as a social force which has a direct impact not only upon the nation (the severity of the impact being contested), but also on the individual. This raises the question as to whether the so called 'global village' has become our new collective place of residence, and if it has, what this might ultimately mean for individual cultures and nations. To understand globalisation's impact on the cultural and social health of communities, it is necessary to consider its place of origin and constitution.

2.7.2 The Origins of Globalisation

There is extensive evidence to suggest that globalisation has had a significant impact on all aspects of our daily existence (Herod, 2009). With such recognition comes the question: is globalisation specific just to the current era, or is it only an ideological concept used to 'justify the spread of western culture and of a capitalist society'? (Waters, 1995: 3). If viewed as a social condition, is it revolutionary or even original,

Having looked at the relationship between communities of ideology and nation building, it is important to note that communities of ideology did not give way to nationalism but share common characteristics with and, for the most part, can coexist within nationalistic structures, even while they contest homogeneous narratives of belonging, characteristic of nationalism (Nicholson, 2005). This multifaceted existence poses many questions concerning identity. Identity as a social construct, something that is informed by place attachment and shared ideological space (see Anderson, 1991) will be revisited in more detail in Chapter 5, where the role of narrative (storytelling) within communities is examined in relation to identity formation.

To conclude, this section interprets community, whether defined by locality, ideology or both, as a social system that has people at its very centre. As noted earlier, communities are not stagnant entities but always in transition, sensitive to the political, social and economic climate of the time. In this historical moment, the most powerful influence is the phenomenon of globalisation, which must now be considered.

2.7 Globalisation

2.7.1 Globalisation: An Outline of its Impact on the Cultural and Social Health of Communities

Globalisation is a term that has infiltrated public, political, economic and cultural rhetoric since the end of the 20th century. Even though commonly recognised as a contemporary 'buzzword' (see Pieterse, 2009; Timmons Roberts and Bellone Hite, 2007), its actual meaning continues to be somewhat contested, perhaps mirroring the particulars of the social condition itself. According to Steger (2003: 9), 'There exists no scholarly consensus on what kind of social processes constitute its [globalisation] essence'.

An all-encompassing and agreed definition of globalisation remains elusive, despite exhaustive deliberation as to the constitution of the phenomenon (Weinstein, 2005). The debate seems to fall between theorists who believe globalisation to be a force which must be embraced without reservation (Bhagwati, 2004), and those who see it

dynasticism throughout Europe enabled people collectively to aspire to the realisation of a nation state.

2.6 Communities and Nationalism

To explore Anderson's (1991) argument that all communities are in fact 'imagined', for the purpose of this study, it is important to identify the extent to which communities of locality and ideology overlap with nationalism. As recognised earlier, communities of ideology are collections of people who, for the most part, choose to be associated. This is in contrast to communities of locality, where membership is usually determined by birth rights. Therefore the reality or concept of nationalism distorts the clear categorisation between all three groupings. Like communities of locality, your nationality is something with which you are 'rewarded' by your birth circumstances. But according to Anderson (1991), nationalism is a construct of the collective imagination, and therefore should be similar in principle to communities of ideology, where participation should be a personal option, but for the most part is not,

> Dying for one's country, which usually one does not choose, assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party, the American medical association, or perhaps even Amnesty International can not rival, for these are all bodies one can join or leave at easy will. (Anderson, 1991: 144)

The contractual tie between nation and the individual is one which has accumulated superiority over and above the ties grounding communities based on ideology, even if the overlap between the three types of communities is not clear cut. The success of establishing the unquestioning loyalty characteristic of most nationalist movements has been based on the psychological conditioning of its members, whose very membership is often considered as something that is fundamentally pure. For the most part it is the nation state that is the machine through which nationalistic 'propaganda' is converted into the natural order of things. This is usually evident in the nationalist ideology that filters its way through all public spheres such as the political, social and cultural systems where the educational curricula, administrative regulations and the role of the media are paramount in the successful nationalistic conditioning of its people (see Barsamian and Chomsky, 2001; Hayward, 2009).

For their part, Turner (1969), Cohen (1985), Crow and Allan (1994), Anderson (1991) and Jenkins (2004) all recognise that community may be understood as a symbolic construction, where social worlds are consciously created rather than simply avowed. The role of rituals and shared consciousness of boundaries is pivotal. 'The symbolic nature of community consists in the ability of the community to construct boundaries that are enacted in rituals' (Delanty, 2003: 49). They acknowledge that boundaries associated with communities of ideology, and even communities of locality, are fluid in nature and can accommodate a variety of interpretations of what actually constitutes a community. Benedict Anderson (1991), who is perhaps perceived as the forefather of community analysis, presented a widely influential theory that all communities were in fact 'imagined'. His study concentrated on the observation that with the onset of 'print capitalism' and the decline of the 'true' languages, a broader perception of what a community actually meant was enabled. 'The convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation' (Anderson, 1991: 46). The wide distribution of the novel and newspaper were central in forming symbolic representations of a community. Such representations were forged through the assertion of calendrical time and familiar landscapes. Newspapers were pivotal in reinforcing the sense of the provincial, while at the same time locating one community in conjunction with others. Geographical borders, according to Anderson (1991) were no longer the only grounds on which a community could forge a homogeneous sense of identity. Communities of ideology, while not usually associated with any one location, are very often still dictated by borders. Their boundaries are not physical in nature but similarly serve to discriminate the community from other groups or places (see Young, 1990).

The boundaries of ideology and physicality often exist together however, most evidently in large scale communities such as nations. Anderson (1991) associates such a practice with the onset of political entities. He dates the movement between 1776 and 1838 in the western hemisphere when countries 'self-consciously defined themselves as nations' (Anderson, 1991: 46) and in turn provided the first model of what a state should look like. Historical events such as the French revolution were crucial to the acceleration of nation building. The availability of such social models coupled with the spread of national print languages and the rapid decline of high

used to its advantage. The conflict that exists is not only confined to communities of locality, society and the state but also features strongly in the relationship between communities of ideology and their strained relationship with society and the state.

2.5 Communities of Ideology

The strained relationship between communities of ideology, society and the state, is a result of the fact that many communities based on a shared ideology tend to be marginalised community groups whose membership within the traditional community of locality may have been denied (Nicholson, 2005). Such factors have contributed significantly to the establishment of communities of ideology where participation is a matter of choice. The realisation that 'traditional' communities of locality could no longer satisfy the shift in contemporary social living resulted in broadening the categorisation of community,

> Concepts of community have been rethought as a result of new cultural, political and economic realities in which generations of men and women have found themselves with a sense of belonging to more than one place, or feel kinship to people with whom they share styles or political solidarity. (Nicholson, 2005: 94)

As noted by Nicholson (2005), communities of ideology are based on the premise that groups of people who are not connected through geographical roots but share common views on matters diverse as political, social or cultural ideals are linked together by strong empathetic identification. Such a collection of individuals enables multiple identities to coexist, to all intentions, harmoniously. The development of such communities has very often been in response to social prejudice. Communities such as 'the gay community' and 'woman's liberation community' were built on understandings evolved in circumstances of common struggle. In part, this divide between community of locality and community of ideology has been in response to a conservatism which is often characteristic of communities of locality, where 'the ideal of community has been de-territorialised and allied to mobility rather than stability, to the possibility of multiple identities rather than those simply inscribed through geographical location' (Nicholson, 2005: 84). The convention of dividing community into two main categories has been subjected to detailed scrutiny.

seen in terms of civic bonds. According to Kaldor (2003: 1), 'Civil society was associated with a rule-governed society based largely on the consent of individual citizens rather than coercion'. Today however, that active participation which was once commonplace is less evident, and community and society are often based on 'non-contractual ties' (Delanty, 2003: 7). If it is accepted that society resulted from the need to monitor or even 'control' social relations (of economic, cultural and political significance) across an extended geographical location, then pressure to establish institutions was inevitable: 'society [...] the body of institutions and relationships within which a relatively large group of people live: [...] The condition in which such institutions and relationships are formed' (Williams, 1976: 243). While society initially stemmed from the formalisation of direct interpersonal relationships between individuals and their immediate and broader communities, the state was something that came to be perceived as an enemy of the people. Lacking the personal recognition of the individual as a member of collective communities, the development of the state has frequently been associated with the destruction of community. 'Community is seen as something that has been lost with modernity and is something that must be recovered. As a process dominated by state formation, modernity has allegedly destroyed community' (Delanty, 2003: 10).

In recent years the movement for the re-establishment of communities, where the ideal of community has been reconfigured as something that is attainable, in a globalised age where an actual sense of belonging is increasingly under threat, has ignited state politics (Tomlinson, 2003; Hutchison, 2007). The acknowledgement by the state of communities of locality as relatively self-contained units is more as a source of convenience for policy making and reasons of quantification, than evidence of respect for 'local' cultural values. The spatial segregation of communities has, on many occasions, acted as a reflection of social structures, and the distinction of social class structures is easily identified through community labelling, for example 'the urban working class community' (Ackermann, 1996; Anderson and Taylor, 2006).

The interrelationship between community, society and the state, with particular reference to communities of locality, clearly exposes a potential source of conflict, because society appears to have been formed in response to community on the one hand, where the state often sees community as a convenient construct, which is to be

> familiar, proximity – and, on the other, it refers to the universal community in which all human beings participate. The double sense of community, all the more accurate today with cosmopolitanism at the forefront of political debate, has always been central to the idea of community. (Delanty, 2003: 12)

This idea of community as a local social construct, existing within larger social systems, echoes Plato's idea of metaxis, where there are communities within communities (see Boal, 1979: 7). The relationship between a community defined by locality and larger social constructs such as society and the state will now be considered.

2.4 Communities of Locality, Society and the State

Communities of locality are a significant part of contemporary society; however, they are very often seen as something which is in opposition to it (see Segesvary, 2000). Community of locality is commonly considered as an organic entity, whose development coincided with the evolution of man, catering for the integration of the individual into a group sharing a common identity. Society, on the other hand, is often considered to be a clinical and mechanical construction, where individuality is diminished by the pursuit of social uniformity. Danahay (1993: 21) cites Tönnies' suggestion that,

> In communities individuals 'remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors' while in society 'they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors'. Community is linked to the private and intimate while society is identified with the atomistic and alienated individual.

There was little if no distinction between community and society in ancient Greek society, where individuals (excluding slaves and women) were seen as active citizens who were expected to contribute to all matters political and social (see Vlassopoulos, 2007). An expected active engagement between the individual, community and society persisted in Europe well into the enlightenment period. 'In early modern thought community and society were virtually interchangeable: community designated the social domain of the 'life-world', the lived world of everyday life' (Delanty, 2003: 8). Such a strong interplay between community and society planted the seeds of a civil society, where community, economic and political affairs are all

community. From a historical perspective, communities that were determined by geographical confinement, clearly defined within physical borders, enabled a self-contained set of social networks to be established with autonomy. The narratives of particularity and exceptionalism derived from the geographical segregation of communities enabled, for example, racial distinctions and prioritisation of social groups. This gives rise to a contradiction exposed by Harvey (2004: 204), 'we appropriate ancient spaces in very modern ways, treat time and history as something to create rather than to accept.' While a location may be revered because of how it embodies times past, its sacred status is always available to be used to underpin future projects. Throughout Europe, in particular, during the twentieth century, the glorification of authentic descent in specific communities of locality has been pivotal and influential in the nurturing of nationalist, fundamentalist and fascist ideology. The boundaries for a community of locality are therefore not only defined by the physical landscape but are often extended into the psyche of its people, where perceived differences constitute the inhabitants of the location as a collective 'us', and superior to all others (outsiders), 'them'. As Cohen (1987: 14) states: 'Crucial to this process of constructing communities is the definition of the boundaries which serve to discriminate the community from other places and groups'. Young (1990) puts forward a similar thesis and argues that regardless of whether a community is one of locality or ideology, it successfully segregates people into packs, which act as a means of exclusion, separating 'them' from 'us'. She is sceptical about community assumptions that 'subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves' as well as the desire for community, which in her view 'relies on the same desire for social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism on the one hand and political sectarianism on the other' (Young, 1990: 302).

Unlike the physical boundaries which clearly define a community of locality in terms of geographical coordinates, the complex interwoven web of social interactions which take place within the confines of the space defies clear categorisation. First there is a need to acknowledge a contradiction that exists at the very foundation on which an understanding of what constitutes a community of locality rests,

> On the one side, it [community] expresses locality and particularness – the domain of immediate social relations, the

such a clear cut distinction between the two 'main' types of community, as implied above, opens the door to inaccuracies and unjustified conclusions: 'Community has a variable nature and cannot simply be equated with particular groups or places' (Delanty, 2003: 3). In recognition of such a fact, it is important for this research to acknowledge that community, whether bound by geographical circumstances or formed on an ideological consensus, is always in a state of transition. Communities are built on complex social networks, which are never stagnant and are always in a state of development. Therefore, any typology of any given community, at local, national or global level, remains sensitive to the social, political and cultural circumstances of a particular time. The common denominator which unites the two segregated accounts of community, whether of locality or ideology, is that both evolved in response to an ancient human need – to belong (see Annen, 2003). Therefore, if it is accepted that the principal motivation for the evolution and development of communities is to cater for such a need, the nature of contracts of belonging within such communities needs to be considered. When a person is born into a particular location, with strong social, cultural and political structures in place, a sense of belonging is anchored by deep historical origins. Common membership of such communities is usually associated with and dependent on ancestral lineage (see Haviland et al., 2009). Communicative factors, such as language and the arts, are often particular to the cultural traditions of the location. Ideology is often shared, and religious and political unity obtains. Contracts of belonging are often associated with moral conditioning, a process which shapes and moulds people socially. In this sense, community environments are usually highly regulated (Allen and Crow, 1994; Prinz, 2007). In contrast, the desire to belong within a community based on common ideology is, in the majority of circumstances, a matter of choice (see section 2.5). Consideration will now be given to characteristics associated with communities of locality.

2.3 Communities of Locality

Communities of locality are understood to be communities which have been shaped and created within a defined geographical location. Such communities are often associated with traditional, even romanticised values, where a homogenous origin trumps the 'weak' heterogeneous character of the community based on ideology (see Kautz, 1995). Communities of locality are often considered to be the 'truest' form of

with notions of warmth and wholesomeness in the public consciousness has been challenged notably by the derogatory usage in print media. Headlines such as 'The Terrorist Community' and 'The Sniper Community' are all too familiar, and confront us with the necessity of re-evaluating what community actually means in the 21st century. Interestingly, derogatory uses of the word are perhaps more in keeping with its literal meaning, which according to Caputo (cited in Arrigo and Williams, 2005: 112) derives from *communion* (fortified on all sides) and *munis* (defence): terms which have military roots in building a common defence and keeping foreigners out.

Depending on the field of study through which one approaches the task of defining community, its origins, structure and purpose are all contestable. Harvey (2004: 204) warns that the same concept of, say, 'community' (as a social entity created in space through time) can disguise radical differences in meanings because the processes of community production themselves diverge remarkably according to group capacities and interests. Delanty (2003) identifies four main areas of scholarly enquiry which have been influential in defining and theorising the role of community in contemporary society. Sociologists, anthropologists, philosophical and historical scholars have all been active in the pursuit of clear and comprehensive definitions of what constitutes a community, and in developing criteria to be applied in such an endeavour. Anthropologists have applied the term community to culturally defined groups, with philosophical and historical studies being more concerned with the idea of community as an 'ideology or utopia' (Delanty, 2003: 2). In his influential work, *Whose City?* Ray Pahl (1970: 218), suggests that 'the basic framework of urban sociology is constructed around 'the pattern of constraints which operates differently in given localities,' arguing that population groups can be defined both spatially and socially. For Delanty, the sociological approach has been concerned with the 'particular form of social organisation based on small groups, such as neighbourhoods, the small town, or a spatially bounded locality' (Delanty, 2003: 2).

Drawing on a sociological approach, this researcher will look at community, in the first instance, as a clearly defined set of social practices bounded by their locality. This will be followed by an investigation of a contrary theory, which understands community as a symbolic structure, de-territorialised and accommodating multiple identities. Some theorists (see Sennett cited in Parker, 2004: 141) would argue that

Chapter Two

Understanding Community and Globalisation

2.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with community theatre. Theatre as the 'most human' (Prentki and Selman, 2000: 1) of art forms is centred on people and their relationship to content, practices and each other. Because people are at the very centre of theatre as an artistic practice, the broader social structures which define or dictate to human social behaviour need to be considered. The construct of 'community' will be addressed in this chapter with questions posed in relation to the nature and constitution of 'community' in the western world. Community, both conceptually and in practice, is altered by the recent phenomenon of globalisation. Understanding both community and the impact of globalisation is necessary for this researcher when examining the role of community theatre in this globalised era.

The social role of theatre is re-examined in light of globalisation. Characteristically, the art form is 'live, local and public', and for some it has 'the potential to disrupt the homogenising tendencies associated with globalisation' (Nicholson, 2009: 44).

2.2 Community – An Ideal or Reality?

> There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses.
> (Williams, 2001: 46)

> I don't much like the word community, I am not even sure I like the thing.
> (Derrida, 1995: 355)

The term community is problematic. There is no clear consensus as to what community actually means. Derrida (1995) dislikes the word and the thing of community. Very often the use of the word community in contemporary rhetoric invokes positive connotations of local communities as comfortable social systems of idealised integrated living (see Haviland et al., 2009). The association of community

under the National Development Plan and delivered through the Centre for Cross Border Community Development. The participants on the course were from a variety of places in the region, and they were actively running a selection of drama youth groups, adult theatre companies, etc, without any formal qualifications in drama or theatre. The objective of the course therefore was to introduce the participants to a range of models of effective community drama/theatre practices most of which were derived from the applied theatre field.

As part of the course, there was a schedule of theatre visits to established theatres in Dublin such as the Abbey and the Gate. At the time, the *axis* Theatre in Ballymun had just recently opened its doors. I read a very favourable review of Dermot Bolger's play *From These Green Heights* and presented the group with the idea of visiting *axis.* As was to be expected, due to the nationwide stereotypical view of Ballymun as a dangerous place that should be avoided, a lively discussion ensued with the ultimate agreement that should we be guaranteed that our cars would be safe, then 'yes' the group would happily check out this new venue.

The performance of the play on the night proved to be a very provocative and interesting experience for all of us. As a facilitator the occasion posed particularly challenging questions for my understanding of what the term 'community theatre' actually meant in practice. The play, the venue, and the audience seemed to confront accepted definitions of community theatre and question the boundaries of existing categorisations. As part of our post-play analysis, playwright Dermot Bolger was invited to come and hold a seminar for the course participants, talking about the production process, and the objectives of the work. The following week, the group had a session with the professional actor Vinnie McCabe (who starred in *From These Green Heights),* who gave a workshop on the play and spoke about his experience of working alongside amateur actors within the community of Ballymun. Both of these reflective events proved to be an invaluable experience for the participants. Personally, they had the effect of strengthening my curiosity as to whether the Ballymun story and the establishment of a professional community theatre in the heart of the regeneration programme were unique in the context of Irish community theatre. A lengthy and detailed analysis ensued. The following study is the fruit of that labour.

methodological issues in general (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, triangulation, etc), with the second section focusing on the choice and application of the methods selected for the realisation of this research project.

The case study is the focus of Chapters 7 and 8, with the urban neighbourhood of Ballymun, North Dublin, and the current regeneration programme central to the research. Chapter 7 offers an historical account of the area (Somerville-Woodward, 2002; Norris, 2001) from its beginnings, to first attempts at regeneration in the 1990s, through to the current programme of regeneration. The *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre is identified as one of the flagship buildings of the regeneration. Its purpose, status and value within the community is explored. The community of Ballymun is also considered, with particular emphases on the role that place and narrative have in establishing a sense of community. This chapter also offers the findings of the field research, where the voices of the people of Ballymun have been documented and collated (by means of a variety of research methods), presenting statistical data on their perception of the value and role of arts provision within the area.

Chapter 8 presents an evaluation of a major arts project realised through the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre – *The Ballymun Trilogy* (2004-2008) by Dermot Bolger. This body of work (*From These Green Heights* (2004), *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006) and *The Consequences of Lightning* (2008)) poses particular problems for sociological and aesthetic categorisations, which are discussed in some detail. The dramatisation of local narratives raises questions about the act of interpretation and the relationship between teller, material and receiver (Benjamin, 1936) and ownership of narrative content and empowerment in acts of performance are explored.

Chapter 9, the conclusion, offers a summary of the overall findings of the study, and identifies recommendations, limitations and areas for further research.

1.4 Researcher's Note

In 2004, I was a facilitator on a community drama/theatre programme for the border counties of Louth, Down and Cavan, based in Dundalk. The programme was funded

economic activity. As such cities actively pursue 'regeneration', questions are raised as to the use of culture as a commodity facilitating urban regeneration projects, at the expense of its potential as a resilient practice which enables communities to confirm their collective identity in the face of powerful external forces. The purpose and provision of the arts is central to the discussion, and this study confronts the suitability of available templates for evaluating participatory arts provision in wider regeneration programmes (Matarasso, 1997; Prentki and Selman, 2000).

Community theatre, as an arts practice, is the focus of Chapter 4. Such a practice is explored in relation to its ultimate purpose and the value of deployment – whether as a commodity or as a means of social efficacy. A chronological account of the origins and development of the community theatre movement is offered (Kershaw, 1992; Nicholson, 2005), with the Irish context coming sharply into focus. The central Irish arts organisation CREATE (formerly known as CAFÉ) and its current status is investigated. The chapter concludes that community theatre continues to offer the public a platform for their voices to be heard, justifying its persistence in this globalised moment.

Chapter 5 further develops the relationship between communities and narrative, and explores narrative, identity formation and place. Questions are posed in relation to how space is humanised and becomes place (Benson, 1988, 2001), and how the establishment of such place gives people cultural co-ordinates necessary for identity formation (Williams, 1983). The need for humans to tell stories (Bruner, 2002; Kearney 2002) is acknowledged, with theatre as a public platform being central for a community to actively engage in 'collective memory' (Jenkins, 1996). The act of interpretation and the relationship between teller, material and receiver (Benjamin, 1936) is also explored. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the act of storytelling within an aesthetic realm offers a distance where articulation or contemplation can take place, and people contribute collectively to the task of identity formation.

Chapter 6 documents the methodological approach chosen by this researcher as most suitable for the completion of a study which, while firmly positioned in the field of arts and humanities, is interdisciplinary in nature. First the chapter examines

of the area in their particular struggles to retain their identity and sense of community in a period of encroaching globalisation.

The nature of this study has required a mixed methods research approach to be employed, involving an extensive literature review of areas such as community, globalisation, arts provision in urban settings, applied theatre, narrative construction and interpretation, and identity formation. Qualitative methods such as interviews with key personnel in the *axis* centre, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd., playwright Dermot Bolger and local residents of Ballymun were also conducted. Quantitative data in the form of structured questionnaires to local residents, and documentary evidence from local and government reports were used to enable conclusions to be reached about the role and impact of arts provision (via the *axis* centre) in Ballymun in particular and in large scale urban regeneration programmes in general. Finally, the study makes recommendations in relation to the efficacy of arts provision within an area zoned for regeneration.

1.3 Thesis Layout

The study is organised in nine chapters, and their contents are summarised below.

As it is suggested that theatre is the most human of art forms with people at its very centre (Prentki and Selman, 2000), Chapter 2 considers the broad social structures which define or dictate human experience. The chapter considers contracts of belonging to communities of locality and communities of ideology, and to larger entities such as society, state and nation. As globalisation penetrates all aspects of living, including these relationships, the chapter reviews the phenomenon of globalisation, and the problems of defining it, with reference to Giddens (1999), Ray (2007) and Held (2004). Globalisation appears as a new form of imperialism in three areas of debate as relevant to this study: cultural homogeneity, inequality and hybrid culture, all of which are explored in turn. The chapter concludes by suggesting that live theatre's ability to speak directly and intimately to a local community about itself constitutes its vital role in the urban spaces of the 21st century (Nicholson, 2009).

Chapter 3 explores the emergence of the 'global city' as a direct response to cities playing new roles under globalisation, as nodes of social control, facilitating

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study, *Theatre in Urban Regeneration: Global Cities, New Narratives and the Regeneration of Ballymun (1998-2010)*, sets out to investigate and document what this researcher sees as a new wave in community theatre, where old definitions and understandings of the art form need to be renegotiated. While community theatre will be considered within an historical and social context, it is its current status and use within urban regeneration programmes which poses particular questions about defining, and redefining, the art form. Recent research and practice in the area of applied theatre (of which community theatre is a central practice) has given considerable attention to the move towards establishing a 'poetics of applied theatre'. This research draws on Prentki and Preston's (2009) idea of a 'poetics' as the critical analysis of the relationship between three interrelated aspects of a creative process,

Form + Its Application + Its Perception = Poetics

Such an equation is particularly applicable to this research, where the 'Form' constitutes 'the arts' in general, but theatre in particular, 'Its Application', investigates arts provision (theatre) in an area undergoing regeneration, with 'Its Perception' being a central component of the research, which has investigated people's perception of the value and purpose of the arts (theatre) in the recent regeneration of Ballymun. Applying such an equation to this body of research has required an inquiry into the historical and social background of urban regeneration (and related areas), the arts (community theatre in particular) and the collection of original data from the case study. Specifically this research examines,

- the extent to which the Ballymun regeneration may be seen as a microcosm of the 'global city' regeneration approach;
- the perception of the value of arts provision among local residents and key personnel working in the area, while also assessing the social impact of theatre on the community of Ballymun with particular reference to Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* (2004-2008);
- relationships between narrative and identity, to establish the extent to which dramatisation of local stories may act as a form of affirmation for the people

Republic of Ireland, and to this researcher offers a local microcosm of the global city approach to rebranding by regeneration. At its centre, supported but not controlled by Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. (BRL), is the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre. The implications of the centre's commissioning and programming for community identity and cohesion will be explored, with particular emphasis on the role of theatre.

It is argued that theatre is the 'most human' of all the art forms, placing people at its very centre (Prentki and Selman, 2000: 1). According to Aristotle, theatre is a means of imitation, whereby art imitates nature (McLeish [trans.], 1999). It is theatre's capacity to imitate and comment on life through dramatic narrative which has secured its existence over millennia. The history of the development of theatre, from the first recorded plays in ancient Greece over two and a half thousand years ago to its present day status, is a complex and intriguing story which is beyond the scope of this study (see Brockett and Hildy, 2003). However, it is important to note that theatre has always been recognised as a powerful communicator of ideas. The counter-cultural revolution of the mid to late 20th century saw the democratisation of theatre, which according to McGrath (1981) and Boal (1979) had become the property of the middle classes. The 20th century saw the development of the applied theatre field, which encompassed three significant areas: theatres of the political left, community theatre, and drama in education (Nicholson, 2005). The establishment of these three related disciplines democratised theatre, bringing multiple forms of theatre practice into communities and settings that had no prior claim on the art form. Theatre was no longer confined to purpose-built venues, and its sister forms were much more democratic in their approaches, and were ultimately recognised as a powerful vehicle through which people could be educated, informed and empowered (Kershaw, 1992).

Dermot Bolger's *The Ballymun Trilogy* (performed at the *axis* Arts and Community Resource Centre, 2004-2008) is a unique creative achievement, and provides the central case study through which the purpose, outcomes and value of theatre in regeneration projects is investigated in this study. The trilogy of plays foregrounds relationships between narrative, identity and ownership, and enables inquiry into the extent to which the dramatisation of local stories may act as a form of affirmation for the people of the area.

Chapter 1
Introduction

> The most significant thing about the theatre is that it is *not* global, but firmly resistantly *local.*
>
> (Rebellato, 2009: 10 [emphasis in original])

1.1 Background to the Study

This study investigates the deployment of theatre within community settings at the beginning of the 21st century, and explores its purpose, outcomes and value. The new century has seen the acceleration of technologically-driven globalisation, where physical distance is less important than electronic connectedness (Held, 2004), and a view of the world as a smaller place has taken hold. The globalisation phenomenon has prompted reconsideration of the meaning and legitimacy of social networks which are commonly taken to constitute 'community'. For this reason, questions as to the nature, purpose and dynamics of communities in the 21st century are of central importance to the discussion. This study sees global cities (Sassen, 2001) as key enablers of the current phase of globalisation, not least because the signature of the global city is arguably global branding by urban regeneration. According to Hall (2002) a common approach to urban regeneration is visible in state policies across the Western world, and it has altered over the last two decades. Community consultation and flagship cultural projects are now actively incorporated to facilitate the transformation of place, and produce positive perceptions of planning, process and outcomes. The provision of arts programmes within communities undergoing urban regeneration has also produced a need to assess and evaluate the social impact of participation in arts activities and the perception of the value of arts provision. This study engages critically with the efficacy of established and available models of evaluation as applied to theatre (see Matarasso, 1997; and Prentki and Selman, 2000).

Historically, community has been understood as a central influence on group and individual identity, and this new wave of urban regeneration poses particular questions in relation to community identity and cohesion. The Ballymun Regeneration Project (1998-2010) in Dublin city is the most extensive ever undertaken in the

(Image of Axis' logo)
www.axis-ballymun.ie/images/pageElements/logo.gif [20.July 2009] 191

7.8 The Plaza Outside *axis,* Malone, N. (2008) Private Collection 214

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Dedication

To my mother Hattie (Rita) Malone, with heartfelt thanks for your unwavering belief, encouragement and all the sacrifices over the years.

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The interaction of narrative, identity formation and place informs the overall analysis, which suggests that theatre's power to provide a public platform to a community for its multiple voices to be heard remains significant, even in this moment of globalisation. The onset of the current wave of urban regeneration poses new considerations for defining community theatre as a practice, and the broad definition of community theatre as theatre made 'for/by/with' a community, offered by Prentki and Preston (2009), is renegotiated in this study to accommodate the work of Bolger, the particular circumstances of the *axis* centre, and the community of Ballymun. *The Ballymun Trilogy* is looked at both as a direct response to cultural pressures on contemporary communities, and as a potential disruption of one direct consequence of globalisation, the erosion of particular local identities and cultural practices. This case study suggests that, even in the global city, the creation, dramatisation and exhibition of relationships between place, narrative and identity on the stage has a logic and value, independent of the economics of regeneration. The study concludes by considering ways in which the approach taken at the *axis* to community theatre may indicate new directions for the development of community theatre in the 21st century.

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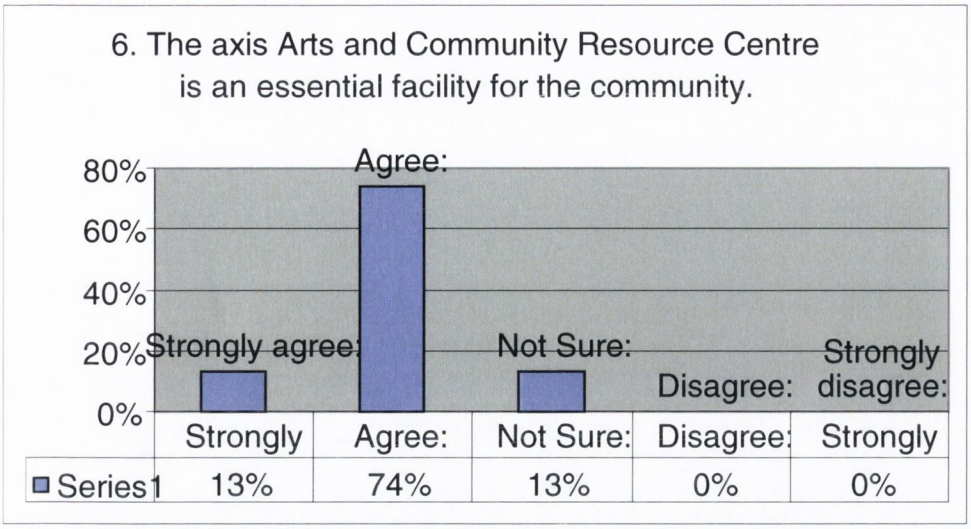

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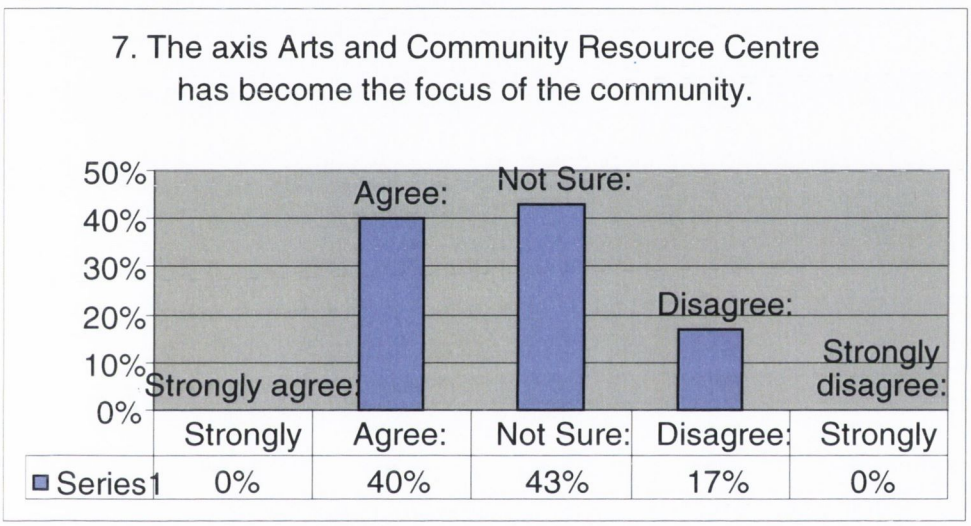

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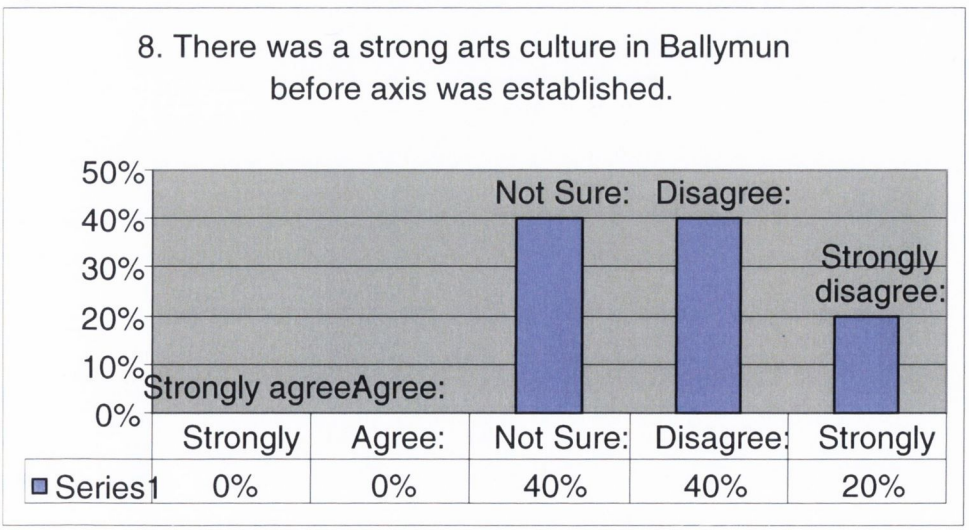

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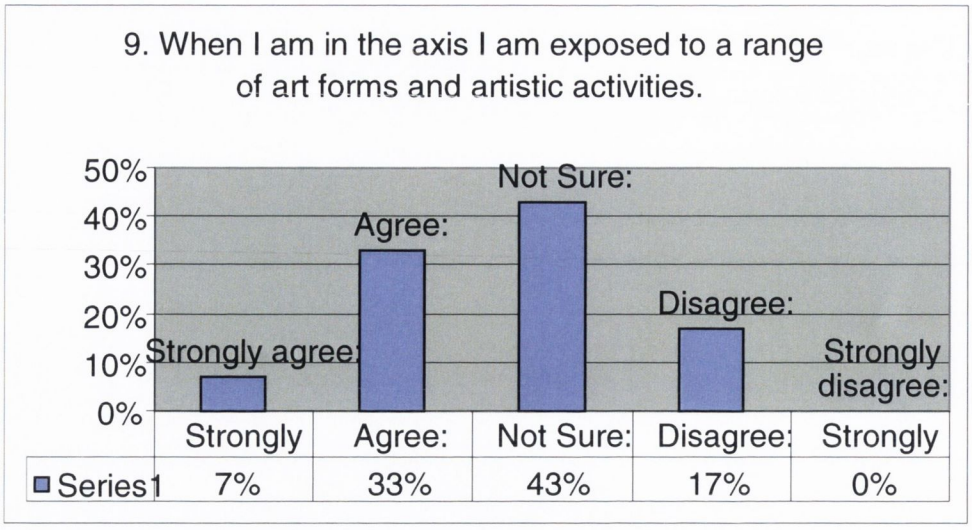

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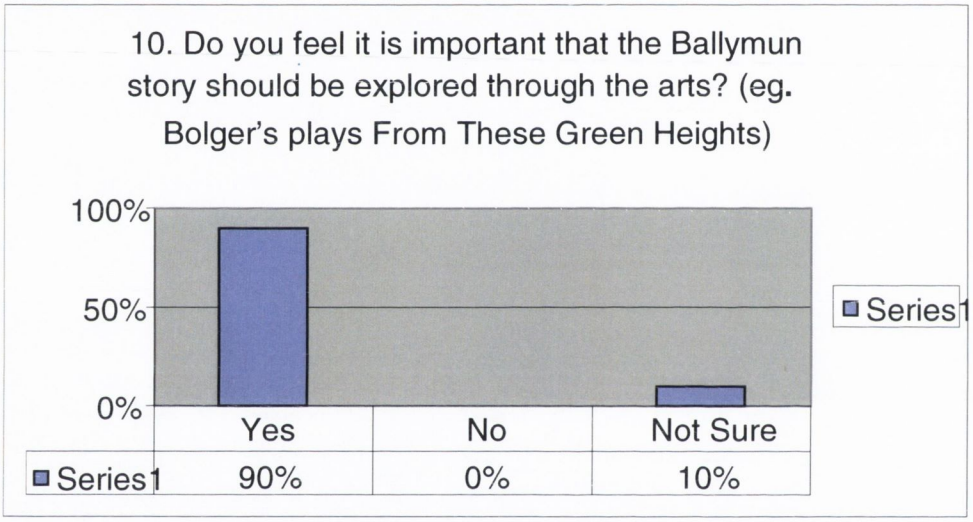

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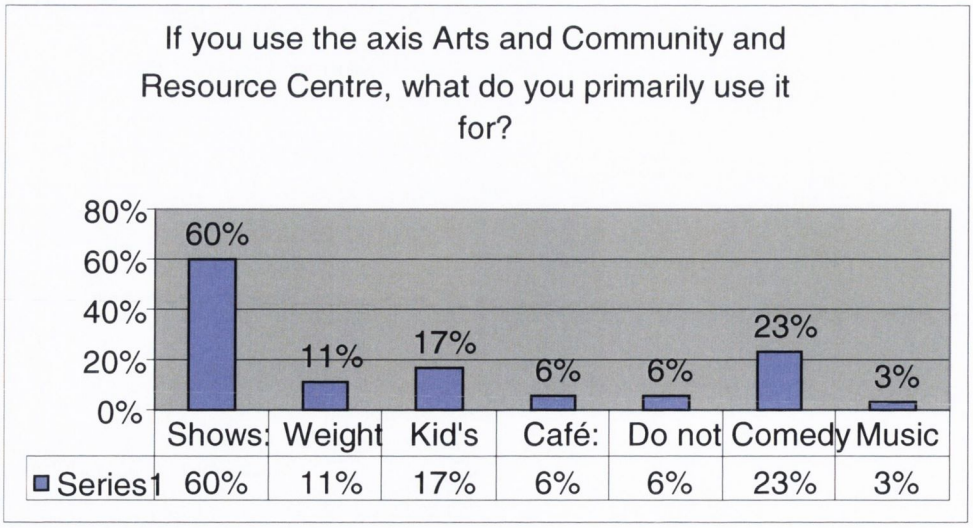

Appendix 4

Arts Contribution to Building Community Pride Questionnaire

Please answer using bullet points.

The DCMS 2008 manifesto for *Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Cohesion* positively restates the contribution the arts make to building community pride:

> We believe that culture and the arts should be placed firmly at the heart of both neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion. The arts have the capacity to:
> -Develop individual pride and community spirit
> -Help reverse the spiral of decline in disadvantaged areas by fostering a new sense of community and civic pride amongst residents
> -Attract new commerce and businesses to deprived areas
> -Provide a positive focus for community activity and innovative training opportunities
> -Recognise and celebrate cultural diversity to the cultural benefit of the whole community. (DCMS 2008)

In what ways do you agree with this statement?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you think that the provision for the arts in Ballymun's regeneration has met all, or some, of the above?

_____
_____
_____

Can you refer to any examples?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 5

Ballymun Incantation
By Dermot Bolger

Whose voice can you hear?
Who calling down the stair?
What Ghost trapped in a lift?
What Child who played and laughed?

In Nineteen hundred and Sixty-Seven,
Craning our necks towards heaven,
We arrived here by truck and bus,
Three thousand families of us.

Tea chests and cardboard Suitcases,
Boxes bound with old shoelaces,
From tenements in condemned streets,
Now the world appeared at our feet.

Crowding the lifts and up each stair,
Onto the balconies to breathe the air,
We were so dizzy all Dublin Spun,
The chosen families of Ballymun.

I think this heat is killing us.
Why can't we turn of the radiators?
Where are the shops we were promised?
Why won't they come to fix the broken lifts?

My name is Mary, when I turned nine
I slept alone for the first time,
My sister whispering secrets overhead
In Ceannt Tower in a new Bunk bed.

In Plunkett Tower my wife grew shook,
She was alone when the lift got stuck,
She hated the squatters jarring her nerves,
I still see her shaking, reciting prayers.

My name is Agnes, when I was born
The Civil War was still raging on.
I moved to Balcurris with my grandchildren,
I lived for Novenas and Sweet Afton.

My name is john, I stole my first kiss
Just before the doors opened in the lift,
Eilish was still in her school uniform,
Surely no other could be this strong.

Help me, I'm still lost here and all alone,
I inject my mother's hopes into my arm,
Shivering in the depths of cold turkey,
I thought I could fly from this balcony.

Why won't the voices stop whispering,
Straining to be heard amid the babbling?
Lives that were ended and lives begun,
The living and the dead of Ballymun.

Remember my name, it is Elizabeth,
In the local workhouse I faced my death.
Cholera stole away my famished son,
I buried him amid the fields of Ballymun.

Remember me, my ghost also haunts here,
Seeking my child who fell through the air.
The coroner declared my death a suicide,
I just wanted to be at my dead daughter's side.

I loved the marches during the rent strikes,
All us boys riding behind on chopper bikes,
It was brilliant there laughing with my mates,
That's where I asked Joan for our first date.

Every touch and every thrust and every kiss,
Every feud, every fight, every lip split,
Every face lost at the window of a tower block,
Every loan shark with a list of women in hock.

Every whiskey, every valium, every cigarette,
Every couple holding hands in a kitchenette,
Every laughing child being spun in the August sun,
Every boy with a piebald horse to gallop on.

Every mother dreaming about some different life,
Every first tooth, first communion, every surgeon's knife,
Every welder, office cleaner, every unemployed,
Every girl who fought back when her dreams died.

Every young poet who wrote it out in verse:
McDonagh and MacDermott, Connolly and Pearse,
Every name scrawled on walls in each tower block,
Every face that is remembered, every face forgot.

Every life that ended here and every life begun:
The living and the dead of Ballymun.

Printed in Bolger, D. (2010) *The Ballymun Trilogy,* Dublin: New Island, pp. xviii-xxi.