

Evaluating the Social Impacts of the Arts in Prestonpans



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Introduction

This paper discusses research into the impacts of murals projects in Prestonpans that has been conducted between July 2005 and July 2006. The paper begins by outlining general issues relating to the evaluation of the arts and an examination of previous evaluative studies highlighting problems with these that this research seeks to address. The paper then moves to a discussion of the method used in this research before discussing results and areas for further research – both in the Prestonpans case and in other murals towns internationally.

This paper should be considered a discussion of interim, rather than final results. The questionnaire survey at the heart of the research suffered from a lower than anticipated response rate. This has been identified as resulting from problems with the method of questionnaire distribution and collection and with the length and complexity of the questionnaire. These are discussed fully later in the paper. These problems have necessitated revisions to the questionnaire and the use of an alternative method of administration in the follow up survey that will be conducted in Autumn 2006. However, one of the aims of this research was to design a research method and instrument that would allow international comparative research in other murals towns around the world to be conducted. The timing of events allows the opportunity for comment from representatives from these murals towns on the revised questionnaire before it is finalised and the survey carried out. This paper, therefore, as well as being a discussion of the context, process and results of the Prestonpans research, should be seen as an invitation for murals towns internationally to get involved in the process of evaluating the impacts of arts-based regeneration in their towns and to feed their perspectives into this research process as it continues to evolve.

Evaluating the Arts: Previous Evaluative Studies and Literature

Community and public art based strategies have been increasingly advocated as means of urban regeneration and community development in recent years. It has been argued that they are able to contribute to the economic and social regeneration of deprived urban areas. However, commentators have frequently noted the lack of evaluation and research of the impacts of arts based regeneration projects. This is especially true of evaluation of social impacts. It has been argued, for example:

“Whilst it is relatively easy to measure economic impact... it is not so easy to measure social and cultural impact. However, just because something is difficult does not mean that it should not be attempted: indeed, the hardest to measure activities are often the most valuable” (Kelly and Kelly, 2000: 13)

“The social impacts [of community festivals] are often seen to be “external” to most forms of economic valuation. These impacts are less tangible than

economic impacts and are more difficult to understand and resolve. Considering the tendency of festival funding organizations to focus predominantly on economic criteria, the challenge of articulating, measuring, and understanding social impacts should be seen as equally important” (Delamere et al., 2001: 11).

There have been a number of calls for the development of robust evaluations of arts based regeneration strategies and the emergence of bodies of evaluative literature from a number of sources. However, even sympathetic critics have noted flaws in this literature (Selwood, 1995; Coalter, 2001; Jermyn, 2001; Bridgwood, 2002; Reeves, 2002).

A number of advocates have made claims about the potential impacts of the arts to urban regeneration and community development. These are summarised in the table below.

Claims made of community / public art

- Enhancing economic activity
- Developing and enhancing community identity and capital in economically deprived urban areas
- Developing and enhancing senses of place
- Addressing community needs such as aesthetically improving areas or contributing to environmental improvements
- Tackling social exclusion through the promotion of involvement and participation in projects
- Having educational benefits
- Promoting positive social change

Source: Hall and Robertson, 2001.

The acceptance of the need for robust evaluation is now widespread, both amongst advocates and policymakers (Arts Council, no date; DETR, no date). This was recognised by the Social Exclusion Unit (Policy and Action Team 10) (1999) in their report *The Arts, Sport and Social Exclusion*. They argued: “evaluation is taking place but on an ad hoc basis... there is a need for longitudinal studies and a coherent overview”.

Although it has been usual for artists to review and evaluate their practice in formal or aesthetic terms, there is no real tradition of evaluating the impacts of arts practice. Certainly there is no tradition of applying social science impact methodologies to the evaluation of arts projects. Concomitantly there has been a lack of funding and training for such evaluation and it has remained marginal to arts practice. However, Delamere et al. have outlined the benefits of evaluating the social impacts of community arts based initiatives.

“The measurement of resident attitudes toward the social impacts of community festivals, and the development of instruments to measure those attitudes, is of critical importance for communities and for festival organizers. As community leaders and festival organizers become more aware of the needs and priorities of

the community, they can better respond to community concerns and work together to maintain an appropriate balance between the social benefits and social costs that emanate from community festivals” (Delamere et al, 2001: 22).

Despite this Sara Selwood, while conducting research for her report *The Benefits of Public Art* (1995), “uncovered no attempts to formally evaluate any of the projects [she studied]... In fact, claims made for public art were almost always unsubstantiated” (1997: 17). Since then one of the most significant developments in recent writing about community and participatory arts has been the emergence of a literature that has sought to document and evaluate the claims made of the arts and which, on the surface at least, appears to address the criticism made by Selwood. Central to this literature has been the report produced by François Matarasso, *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* (1997) and a number of other reports and conference proceedings produced by the cultural consultancy Comedia (see for example, Landry et al. 1996; Matarasso and Halls, 1996; Phillips, 1997; Williams, 1997). However, contributions have also come from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (no date), the Local Government Information Unit (Chelliah, 1999) and been supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Dwelly, 2001).

The model of evaluation that has emerged within this literature has predominantly been participant and / or audience orientated research often using questionnaire surveys during, or at the termination of, projects to gather statistical information and personal testimony. The results of these evaluations, carried out, for example, in the UK, the USA and Australia, have been overwhelmingly positive. The evidence presented by these evaluations tends to support the claims that infuse the advocacy of community and participatory arts projects. For example, Deirdre Williams, in summing up the results of evaluations conducted for arts projects in Australia, argued that overall projects had helped build and develop communities, increased social capital, activated social change, developed human capital and improved economic performance within disadvantaged localities (1997:34). However, following an initially positive reception, the research carried out by Matarasso and Comedia cited above, has become the subject of criticism, and their claims and the reliability of the research process that underpinned them, called into question (Belfiore, 2002; Merli, 2002).

Devising a Method - Theoretical Considerations

Selwood's concerns, and the criticisms of Matarasso's and Comedia's research, provoke a number of specific questions of the evaluations that have been conducted to date and suggest they have limitations and that more robust, holistic evaluations might encompass a number of dimensions absent from the models of evaluation that emerged in the late 1990s.

First, evaluations to date have focused almost exclusively on the participants in arts projects or easily identifiable audiences, such as those attending specific events. They have said little about those not directly reached and engaged by arts projects or about less easily identifiable or more intangible audiences, such as those of a mural programme within a locality. There have been few substantive attempts to survey these populations.

Second, evaluations have largely failed to demonstrate that the positive short term outcomes resulting from community and participatory arts projects have been sustained into the medium and / or long term. This is not to suggest that positive outcomes are not sustained, or are not sustainable, but that the evidence to make these judgements does not exist to date. As Sara Selwood has argued, robust arts evaluation requires "longitudinal research... In short, it takes a long time to evaluate how public art tangibly contributes to regeneration" (1997: 98). This lack of evidence has implications in best practice terms. We are unable to judge, for example, why any short-term positive outcomes might fail to be sustained, or how the sustainability of outcomes might be enhanced.

In addition to this, evaluations to date have failed to demonstrate the wider impacts of community and participatory arts projects throughout deprived neighbourhoods. It has been claimed that community and participatory arts projects act as catalysts for the transformation of deprived neighbourhoods. For example Ramani Chelliah (1999: 11) has argued that: "The arts can not only improve the quality of life for the few, but transform social contexts, self-confidence and imaginative capacity of whole urban districts". However, in predominantly restricting evaluations to those directly involved in arts projects, the evaluations conducted to date have failed to provide the evidence to support such statements. While there is some evidence that the social capacity generated by arts projects has fed into sustained, on-going and far-reaching neighbourhood change, this evidence is scrappy, anecdotal and far from conclusive at present. The evidence collected to date is certainly insufficient to demonstrate some of the claims made of community and participatory arts projects in this regard.

The review above suggests a number of areas in which existing knowledge of the impacts of community arts based regeneration strategies is limited, despite the claims that have been made. These demand the development of robust models of evaluation if the evidence base is to be developed and debate in this field advanced.

The research process detailed below aims to provide a robust evaluation of the social impacts of the arts programmes in Prestonpans and to provide a model of evaluation that can be used by other participating towns at the 2006 Global Murals Conference. The work builds on and extends previous arts evaluation research using recognised social science research techniques that have been little applied to evaluations of the social impacts of the arts to date. The research will provide a blend of theoretical discussion and literature review, quantitative and qualitative data.

Research Plan

Stage 1: Updating of previous literature review and research into arts evaluation, theoretical discussion and debate

Stage 2: Community generated questionnaire survey of Prestonpans residents

This involves a survey technique developed and applied primarily in North America and Canada to evaluate the impacts of tourist developments and events, and to a limited extent the social impacts of community festivals. To date this technique has not been applied to the evaluation of the social impacts of community or public arts projects. This

involves the generation of a questionnaire through dialogue with communities that explores “community based perceptions of [the] social costs, benefits and impacts” (Delaware, et al. 2001: 12) using an attitude scale technique.

This process will result in a research instrument that can be used to assess the social impacts of community / public arts in other locations internationally and can be used by participants at the 2006 Biennial Conference to evaluate their own arts social enterprises.

There are a number of stages to this technique detailed below.

- Community meetings to generate items / contents for the questionnaire. Residents are asked to think of examples of social costs, benefits and impacts that they feel stem from community arts projects in their localities. These are collected and composed into a list, or questionnaire scale.
- Addition of further items. Additional items might be added to the scale at this point that have been highlighted by reviews of previously published literature into the social impacts of community / public arts projects. This will include items relating to the evaluative framework identified in previous research (empirical issues, policy issues, structural issues, civic issues and ideological issues) (Hall and Robertson, 2001: 22-23)
- Refinement of the scale. The scale is refined through review by an expert panel of professionals and academics with appropriate experience of arts advocacy and practice. The expert panel assess the questionnaire in terms of the validity of its contents – the extent to which the contents of the questionnaire reflect the concept it is exploring. The scale is modified following feedback from the panel and returned to them for further comment and review.
- Piloting, pretesting and further refinement. The questionnaire is piloted amongst residents of a town / area that has undergone arts based regeneration. The results of this piloting process are used to both test the clarity of the questionnaire and to eliminate items from the scale that correlate poorly with other items.
- Running questionnaire with residents of Prestonpans. A sample of residents are surveyed using the final questionnaire. The number of residents surveyed will depend on the number of items in the questionnaire scale. A ratio of 5 respondents for every item in the questionnaire scale is recommended as a robust sample. The methods of administering the questionnaire might include postal or face-to-face methods.
- Coding and analysis of results using Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This allows for thorough analysis of the results of the questionnaire data relating to the impacts of the arts against a number of dimensions (age, gender, location, etc.).

Stage 3: Qualitative interviews with residents of Prestonpans.

A number of follow up group interviews with residents of Prestonpans will be conducted to explore issues raised by the questionnaire in greater detail and collect qualitative data. Group interviews offer the opportunity to explore issues raised in the questionnaire survey in more detail. It produces rich, qualitative data in contrast to the predominately quantitative data produced through the questionnaire survey.

Operationalising the Method - Practical Realities

The initial research stage involved meetings with Prestonpans residents to generate items for the questionnaire scale. These were held in October and November 2005 at a variety of locations and with a number of different groups within the town. In total 31 residents were interviewed typically in groups of 3 – 4. Each group discussion lasted between 10 and 20 minutes. These meetings succeeded in producing a large number of items from which the questionnaire scale was subsequently drawn. The items were complimented by a number drawn from previous reviews of literature (Hall and Robertson, 2001) relating to the claims made of public art in the context of urban regeneration. Using this long list of scale items a draft of the questionnaire was designed. The majority of the questionnaire was concerned with the scale designed to measure attitudes towards the murals. The early sections of the questionnaire were concerned with collecting personal information about the respondents while the final section of the questionnaire offered the space for open, qualitative responses.

This was sent for comment to a panel of three experts drawn from the world of public art and community arts. This resulted in the clarification of wording on a number of items and the addition of a small number of further items suggested by the expert panel. The end result of these processes was a community generated questionnaire which contained a scale of 44 items covering a range of themes including: aesthetics, quality of life, history and heritage, educational value, the future, relevance to different groups, community acceptance, everyday life, the impact on the image of the area / outsiders' impressions, cultural / community impacts.

The scale utilised an attitude scale measurement technique where respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements, each of which represented one of the 44 scale items. Respondents were given the five possible responses outlined below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

The scale included a mix of both positive and negative statements to prevent respondents answering automatically or skipping too rapidly through the scale (May, 2001). A selection of the statements from the questionnaire scale is reproduced below:

- The murals make the town feel valued
- The murals improve the quality of life of the area
- The murals make me more aware of the area's heritage and history
- The murals are of educational value
- The murals are not relevant to some groups in the community
- The murals generate positive publicity for the area
- The murals have not lived up to my expectations

Once generated the draft questionnaire was piloted. The questionnaire was piloted amongst 20 members of the public in central Birmingham at various points adjacent to major projects of public art. The wording of the questionnaire was amended slightly to

ensure it was meaningful in the context in which the piloting was conducted. The piloting of the questionnaire was undertaken through face-to-face interviews. The piloting took place in December 2005. This resulted in a small number of minor amendments to the wording of the questionnaire but no additions or deletions of items.

It was decided to use a range of community groups and facilities to administer the questionnaires. This followed up the successful use of such groups in the earlier drafting of the questionnaire. A range of community groups were contacted to attempt to ensure a representative range and sample of respondents. The questionnaires were distributed during February, March and April 2006 with collection taking place during these months and into May and June 2006.

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed. In total 108 questionnaires were returned. This represented a response rate of 18 percent. It was perhaps a disappointingly low response rate. This can be attributed to a number of factors relating to the use of intermediaries to administer the questionnaire and to the design of the questionnaire. Different groups used different arrangements for the distribution and collection of questionnaires. Good practice demands that clear instructions for the collection of questionnaires are printed on questionnaires or accompanying letters, however, due to the different arrangements used by different groups this was not possible. In retrospect it is apparent that this led to uncertainty about the arrangements for the return of questionnaires that may account in part for the low response rate.

In addition, the length of the questionnaire and the complexity of its design is likely to have been a factor accounting for the low response rate. The questionnaire runs to three pages of, in parts, dense text. It is likely that a number of potential respondents have been put off answering the questionnaire because of its length. Analyses of the ways in which some respondents have completed the questionnaire have suggested that the complexity of its design has caused some difficulties. Within the returned questionnaires there are a small number of cases of incomplete responses to questionnaires and what appear to be internal contradictions in the way that people have responded suggesting they have had problems filling the questionnaire in and understanding it. In a further few cases a small number of respondents have abandoned the questionnaire before it is complete. It is likely that the complexity of the questionnaires design has been off putting to some potential respondents.

The piloting of the questionnaire used a different method of administration to the actual survey, while being very effective in picking up issues such as the clarity of the wording of questions, it failed to pick up issues such as the uncertainty over the arrangements for the return of questionnaires. Also in the face-to-face pilot interviews no respondent indicated that the complexity and length of the questionnaire was an issue. However, the survey itself was conducted without an interviewer present. It would appear that in these circumstances the design, length and complexity of the questionnaire was off putting to some potential and actual respondents.

The quantitative results from the questionnaire scale were analysed by awarding each respondent's answer to each of the scale items a score of between 1 and 5 where 1 was negative and 5 was positive. This allowed the average score for each item on the questionnaire scale to be analysed and its average found. The questionnaire scale

contained a mix of positive and negative statements. To ensure consistency the scoring system was reversed where appropriate. Further analysis of the items on the questionnaire scale included grouping them together into themes, for example, grouping together all of the scale items that related to aesthetics, or history and heritage, and comparing the average scores for all of these groups. Finally all of the scale items on the questionnaire were added together and a total score for the entire questionnaire, that represented respondents overall views of the murals was produced.

Discussion of Results

In addition to the relatively low response rate to the questionnaire survey there was some bias in the returns that were achieved (Table 1). The majority of respondents were female and tended to fall into older age brackets. Perhaps as a consequence of the latter, the large majority of respondents had been resident in Prestonpans for more than 10 years. Despite a significant number of respondents not wishing to answer what might be regarded as a sensitive question relating to household income, a more even spread of household incomes was found with a slight peak in the £10 001 - £20 000 category. Very few respondents had been involved directly in the production of murals and similarly few were members of arts groups in Prestonpans.

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	28	26.9
Female	76	73.1
Age	Number	Percentage
Under 18	10	9.6
18-30	8	7.7
31-40	6	5.8
41-50	14	13.5
51-60	26	25.0
Over 60	40	38.5
Length of time lived in Prestonpans	Number	Percentage
0-4 years	4	3.9
5-10 years	6	5.9
More than 10 years	92	90.2
Household Income	Number	Percentage
Under £10 000	8	12.1
£10 001-£20 000	20	30.3
£20 001-£30 000	10	15.2
£30 001-£40 000	14	21.2
£40 001-£50 000	6	9.1
Over £50 000	8	12.1
Involved in production of murals?	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	1.9
No	102	98.1
Member of Prestonpans arts group?	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	13.5
No	90	86.5

Table 1: Respondents to the Questionnaire Survey

The low response rate and the biases in the sample suggest that a more representative follow up survey is an imperative to ensure the validity of the results.

Despite the disappointing initial questionnaire response rate a number of issues emerged that are both of interest in themselves and provide the basis for further research in the subsequent questionnaire survey and group interviews with residents. The most striking finding was that an overwhelming majority of the respondents, over three quarters of all respondents, felt positively about the murals. 68 percent of the respondents felt 'positive' about the murals while a further 8 percent felt 'very positive' about the murals (figure 1). Of the remaining respondents only 2 percent felt 'very negative' about the murals and the remaining 22 percent falling into the 'negative' category overall.

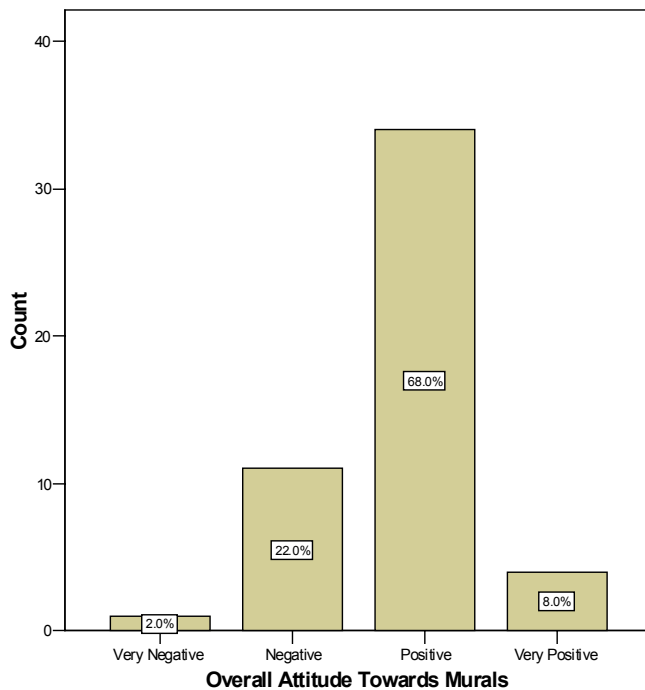


Figure 1: Overall score (attitude towards murals) from questionnaire scale n=106

This positive finding is mirrored by the fact that over 75 percent of respondents who answered the question indicated that they would like to see more murals in Prestonpans in the future.

Although some respondents expressed negative views of the murals there was only one example of a respondent expressing outright hostility towards the murals and finding no worth in them.

“The murals are awful and mostly plagiarised from other people’s work or photographs. Not real art and nothing to be proud of but they seem to be forced on us. This is Prestonpans not Chemainus, your Canadian town so please remember that!”

Looking within the broad results outlined above it is possible to discern differences in the feelings of the respondents towards different aspects of the murals. Grouping the individual items on the questionnaire scale indicated that there were a number of

aspects of the murals that scored higher average response scores and hence which people felt more positive about compared to others. Three aspects of the murals stood out as being particularly positively received by respondents. These were aesthetics, history and heritage and the intangible cultural impacts of the murals on Prestonpans.

There was broad agreement amongst the respondents that they felt positively about the look and appearance of the murals. All of the items on the questionnaire relating to the aesthetic qualities of the murals score high average scores from respondents. Some examples, along with the average score (out of 5.00) are detailed below:

- The murals brighten up the area (4.00)
- I like the look of the murals (3.72)

This was supported by qualitative comments made by respondents on the questionnaires. For example:

“Much skill has gone into producing these murals.”

“People in Prestonpans feel are proud of the murals on the whole. It is good that they haven’t been vandalised; perhaps this is a sign that they are appreciated and accepted.”

“Attractive, colourful”.

“I like what I see and the art work is excellent. Well done to the mural artists. They more than brighten up tired looking parts of the village”.

“The artists should be congratulated because the murals look very good”.

There was very little dissent from this view, however, one respondent did argue “I think they make the place look cheap” and two other’s expressed the view that although they liked the murals they felt that the town did not need any more.

“Although the existing murals do portray the history or Prestonpans I would not like to see too many more along our High street”.

“I feel that there are enough murals in this small town as any more would spoil the outlook especially the entrance to Prestonpans and the High Street”.

The heritage and historical themes within the murals was a further aspect that came out strongly as something that respondents were on the whole very positive about. In the initial meetings with community groups to discuss the items that should be included on the questionnaire the issue of heritage was raised frequently. It was a common view that the heritage theme of many of the murals was appropriate to the town, which has undergone deindustrialisation, and was an important way in which awareness of important elements from the past could be kept alive. A number of items on the questionnaire scale related to the heritage themes of the murals and again these drew a very positive response from the respondents to the questionnaires. Some examples of items relating to heritage are given below along with their average scores.

- The murals make me more aware of the area's history and heritage (3.85)
- The murals make me proud of the area's history and heritage (3.64)
- The murals celebrate aspects of the area that have been lost (3.89)

This positive view of the heritage elements of the murals was reflected in the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires. It was common for respondents to discuss this aspect of the murals.

“Those mural paintings show the industry we once had in Prestonpans. They are lovely to look at and I am sure tourists passing through our town will also stop and look at them”.

“The murals are a great asset to Prestonpans. They are colourful, bright and respectfully depict the heritage of Prestonpans. I hope they will continue to be a feature of Prestonpans for many years to come”.

“The murals help to keep the history of Prestonpans in the forefront of people's memories. There is history here which should not be forgotten”.

Despite the generally very positive view of the heritage elements of the murals there was a feeling amongst some respondents that exploring the town's heritage to the extent that the murals do ran the danger of trapping the town in the past. For example, one respondent argued:

“The murals are dark, they hold Prestonpans under the shadow of the past – not a good advert for a better future. We cannot live in the past. Let's see some more positive murals in the future”.

The concern over the effect of exploring the town's past rather than its future through the murals was also mentioned by a small number of other respondents. Although numerically not constituting a significant number of respondents these do suggest that there is some divergence of opinion amongst the respondents around the theme of heritage. This is an issue that might be picked up and explored in more detail in subsequent group interviews with Prestonpans residents.

Finally, the respondents felt that the murals had positive cultural impacts on the town, all be they somewhat intangible and unspecified impacts. Items on the questionnaire scales that reflected this view included:

- The murals make the town feel valued (3.56)
- The murals have had an on-going positive cultural impact on my community (3.63)

These results suggested that while the respondents clearly feel positively about the murals and their impacts on the community they are less able to specify exactly what these positive impacts are. There appears to be a general feeling amongst respondents that the murals have positive impacts on the town while ideas about exactly what these impacts are less easily discernable within the data. Indeed where items on the

questionnaire scale specified impacts the average score of those items tended to be lower than where they referred to more general impacts.

The murals tended to draw less positive responses where the items were concerned with outlining more specific impacts. These fell predominantly into three areas: impacts on individuals, rather than on the community or area more generally, impacts on everyday life and tangible, specific impacts on the community or the area. The latter was the opposite of the final positively viewed aspect discussed above but all of these themes suggest that the respondents are less able to identify specific impacts of the murals compared to more general feelings about their worth and impacts on the area. Respondents tended to be less likely, for example, to emphatically argue that they had personally felt that the murals had had positive impacts on themselves or their everyday lives. Some examples of questionnaire scale items that reflected these themes included:

- The murals have contributed to my quality of life (2.41)
- I have taken people to look at the murals (2.95)
- The murals improve the quality of life in the area (2.87)
- I regularly discuss the murals with other people (2.75)

As well as looking primarily at the quantitative data produced by questionnaires and discerning degrees of positivity and negativity in the responses, it is possible to recognise areas where there is broad agreement amongst respondents and areas where there is some disagreement, debate or divergence amongst the respondents over the impacts of the murals on the town. For example, as mentioned above with reference to the quantitative data, there was broad agreement amongst the respondents that the murals represented an aesthetic improvement to the area. There was relatively little dissent from this view and where there was dissent it took the view of direct disagreement or expressions of dislike about the aesthetic qualities of the murals or their aesthetic impacts on the town. The quote from one respondent that the murals “made the area look cheap” is a good example of this. More broadly there was wide spread agreement that the murals were a good thing or a positive addition for the town.

However, there were issues raised by respondents where not only was there a more discernable divergence of opinion but around which more wide ranging debates about the town, and the role of the murals within it, were opened up. The example of the exploration of heritage and history within the murals, which was cited above, is a case in point. While the majority of respondents felt that the heritage theme in the murals was appropriate to the town and was a positive aspect of the murals, there was a smaller undercurrent of concern that this suggested the town was harking back to its past rather than looking to its future. Rather than simply taking the opposite view to other respondents the issue of heritage was one around which wider, more complex, discussions of the town emerged. Another of these areas around which debate / discussion arose was the nature of regeneration needed by the town. While many respondents felt that the murals made a positive contribution to the regeneration of the town a number were prompted to discuss what needs they felt the town had which had not been addressed. Rather than these responses simply representing degrees of agreement or dissent amongst respondents they were often wide ranging and complex in their nature. A selection of examples of such responses is reproduced below.

“I think there would have been more impact if there had been more involvement with socially excluded / disadvantaged groups, particularly disaffected young people, and more partnership working with other professionals and agencies within the community”.

“I personally think the murals look good. However, it is not the answer to the problems in the area. We need more shops / amenities for young people”.

These findings relating to the areas of debate and discussion can only be very tentative given the low response rate. These are issues that could be profitably explored in subsequent group interviews with Prestonpans residents.

Future Research I - the Prestonpans Study

A number of areas of research remain in the current study. The disappointing response rate from the questionnaire survey has revealed flaws with the design of the questionnaire and its method of administration. To rectify this it is intended to produce a revised questionnaire that is considerably simpler in its design and shorter than the original questionnaire. The evidence from social science research literature is that this will lead to an improvement in response rates. The revised survey will be distributed randomly to households across Prestonpans. It will be hand delivered and posted with an accompanying letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire, instructions for filling the questionnaire in and also covering the return of the questionnaire. The intention is for the questionnaire to be distributed to approximately 400 houses across Prestonpans and to be collected by hand three days after being delivered. The revisions to the questionnaire and the revised method of administration should produce a more representative response than has been produced by the original survey.

The results of the second survey will complement those of the original survey. The second survey will be conducted during September / October 2006. A draft of the revised survey and accompanying letter is attached to the appendix of this paper for comment.

The group interviews with residents of Prestonpans will also be conducted in autumn 2006. Group interviews provide a rich, qualitative record of a focused group conversation. The intention is to hold 4 or 5 group interviews each with a group of between 4-10 participants. Each interview will last between 30-60 minutes. The intention of these interviews is to follow up and explore issues raised in the questionnaire survey in greater depth. Specifically they will be concerned with exploring what views people have of the murals in Prestonpans, why they hold these views and the ways they vary between members of the group. A number of themes will be explored in the interviews including the impact of murals on:

- The appearance of the area
- Regeneration / future development
- Quality of life
- Sense of pride in the area
- Awareness of history and heritage
- Community cohesion / identity

- The externally perceived image of the area

The interviews will also explicitly seek to discuss resident's views about the links between the mural projects in the towns and the wider arts activities currently taking place.

Future Research II - Undertaking Your Own Evaluation

The research discussed here offers a glimpse into the attitudes towards the murals that have been produced in Prestonpans. This will be developed further and complimented by the work that is to follow in Prestonpans. However, international comparisons offer a significant opportunity to further research into and understanding of arts based regeneration around the world. The different histories of, both the various urban settings within which the murals are located, and the mural projects themselves suggest that it is dangerous to assume that the results found in Prestonpans will be replicated in other places. While there are likely to be a number of comparisons and broad similarities between towns there are also likely to be significant differences that the research is likely to highlight.

The method outlined here offers a ready-made research method with which to undertake this international comparison. The questionnaire is designed to be applicable in a number of different geographical contexts. That said the questionnaires (both the original long questionnaire and the shorter revised version) were derived through a dialogue with a population with a particular experience of murals development. It is likely that the contents of the questionnaire reflect that experience. For this reason the revised questionnaire is attached to this paper as a draft for comment. It is hoped that offering it for comment from representatives from various murals towns around the world will reduce its particularity and ensure its more general applicability. Instructions for comment are available in appendix II.

For international comparative research to be valid the research processes in each town should be as similar as possible. Some pointers to assure this are outlined below:

- The sample should be representative of the wider population. This will vary with the size of different towns, however, a ratio of 5 respondents for every item on the questionnaire scale is recommended as a minimum in determining sample size.
- The methods of questionnaire distribution and collection will have a profound influence on the response rate and potentially the representativeness of the sample collected. Experience with the original Prestonpans questionnaire survey has highlighted difficulties with using community groups as intermediaries. In the light of this experience, the use of a household administered survey as outlined above is recommended as good practice both in terms of ensuring adequate response rates and sample representativeness.
- Although funding for this research might be an issue it is advised to draw on professional expertise or agencies rather than relying overly on volunteers to conduct the research.
- Follow up group interviews are recommended to explore issues raised in the questionnaire in more detail and to explore other issues salient to the research.

It is important that there is some degree of consistency both between the interviews conducted within each town and between towns. An outline interview schedule is provided above which might be used as the basis of group interviews. However, this schedule should not be utilised in an overly rigid or deterministic way. There should be scope for the interviews to explore issues that are particular to individual towns or to alter its focus according to local circumstances.

Conclusions

The research discussed in this paper has highlighted a number of aspects of the impacts of the murals in Prestonpans and attitudes of residents towards them, while also highlighting that a number of areas of further research remain. On the basis of the evidence from the research we can confidently say that the murals are a welcome addition to the landscape of Prestonpans. The murals were received very positively and respondents were particularly positive about the aesthetic impacts of the murals on the town and the ways in which they conveyed information and encouraged awareness of the town's heritage and history. This evidence in itself offers justification for the development of murals in Prestonpans and suggests that they will be seen as positive developments in similar urban contexts.

It is difficult to make recommendations for the themes or contents of murals on the basis of this research. However, it is worth reiterating the extent to which the local themes explored in a number of the murals were positively received by respondents. It would seem to be important to recognise that murals will be particularly positively received where their audiences can recognise their local relevance and that of the contents and themes they explore. It will be instructive to compare these findings to those of other towns who may have radically different mural styles to those in Prestonpans with, perhaps, much less local referencing.

Some grand claims have been made about the ability of public art to regenerate deprived urban communities. When asked about the specific impacts of murals on their everyday lives, rather than on the area or town more generally, respondents felt less positive or less able to support these claims. While not dismissing the wider impacts of murals and other public art on their localities, these claims are clearly problematic to sustain and will be inevitably open to question from critics. This research would suggest that it would be wise to advocate murals projects on the bases of areas where firm evidence exists to support them. These would include aesthetic improvement, raising awareness of local issues (particularly those related to the heritage of areas) and community acceptance of murals.

Murals, and indeed all forms of public art, are inserted into often fractured social contexts. It is common for pieces of public art to highlight social divisions and to become the foci of discussion and debate, and sometimes protest, over local social issues that might be highlighted in and through this art. This does not appear to have been the case with the Prestonpans murals to any discernable extent. There was little evidence of this in the responses to the questionnaires and the fact that the murals have remained largely unvandalised is further testimony to this. The ability of murals and other works of public art to open up debate and discussion, even controversy, within

localities should be recognised as one of the key contributions that such art can make to localities. There is evidence from the research of the Prestonpans murals opening up areas of discussion within the town, for example, around the role of heritage and the future regeneration and needs of the town. Having said this, however, the challenge that faces localities is in giving these local dialogues meaning in practical terms, recognising and capturing them and feeding them into appropriate forums and processes of change.

Despite the positive impacts that these murals appear to have had on Prestonpans and the extent to which they have been accepted by the respondents to the questionnaire survey, it is important to recognise that the urban landscape is not a blank canvas. Rather it is a terrain with which people and communities make strong and enduring attachments. This applies to even the most prosaic of urban landscapes. Any intervention into the urban landscape, permanent or temporary, is likely to encounter and potentially rub up against these place attachments and feelings. The Prestonpans murals have been largely recognised as a welcome addition to the landscape of the town and indeed can be seen as a way in which attachments to the local area might be further developed and enhanced. There is evidence from social and cultural geography (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001) that these attachments to the local area deepen where people feel involved in the processes of change and development affecting their locality and tend to feel disempowered and frustrated where they feel they disconnected from these processes. This points to the importance of consultation and involvement with local residents in the development of mural projects or other projects of public art. A small number of respondents, for example, felt that although they liked the murals they would not want to see any more developed in certain locations. Statements such as these can be read as expressions of attachments to the local area. It is important to be sensitive to such local feelings and to ensure that mural projects are not seen as another process of development affecting the local area from which residents are excluded. Fortunately to date quite the opposite seems to have been the case in Prestonpans.

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Appendix I – Original Questionnaire



Prestongrange 2006

The Impacts of Murals in Prestonpans

I am a researcher at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham. I have recently been asked to undertake an evaluation of the social impacts of the mural arts projects in Prestonpans. As you may be aware the Global Murals Association will be holding their international conference in Prestonpans next August, where I will present the findings of the research. I hope that the findings of the research will feed into future regeneration and arts projects in Prestonpans and elsewhere. As part of this research I am undertaking a questionnaire survey of residents in Prestonpans. All responses are strictly confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. Please read each question and the answers fully before responding. The questionnaire should only take a few minutes to complete. Thank you very much for your time.

Section 1

Please tick the box next to the answer that best describes you:

1. Are you:

Male [] Female []

2. How old are you?

Under 18 [] 18-30 [] 31-40 []

41-50 [] 51-60 [] Over 60 []

3. How long have you lived in Prestonpans?

0-4 years [] 5-10 years [] More than 10 years []

4. What is the approximate gross annual income of your household?

Under £10,000 [] £10,001-£20,000 [] £20,001-£30,000 []

£30,001-£40,000 [] £40,001-£50,000 [] Over £50,000 []

5. Have you been involved in the production of any of the murals in Prestonpans?

Yes [] No []

6. Are you involved in any arts group in Prestonpans?

Yes [] No []

7. Would you like to see more mural projects in Prestonpans in the future?

Yes [] No []

PLEASE CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

Section 2

For each of statement below write an **X** over the number to the right that best fits your opinion. Please use the scale provided below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Statements about the Prestonpans murals	Opinion				
The murals make the town feel valued.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals brighten up the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals have not contributed to the regeneration of the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals improve the quality of life in the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals are a talking point in the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals are not of relevance to the younger generation.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals are a source of controversy.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals make me feel proud of the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals make me more aware of the area's history and heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
I like the look of the murals.	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly notice the murals when I am in town.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals would not be missed if they were taken away.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals bring outsiders into the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals have not contributed to my personal quality of life.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals are an important part of the area's future.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals promote understanding about different cultures and communities in the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals make me proud of the area's history and heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals are of educational value.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals celebrate aspects of the area that have been lost.	1	2	3	4	5
The community has not accepted the murals.	1	2	3	4	5
I have taken people to look at the murals.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals show that the area is a good place to live.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals raise awareness of local issues in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly discuss the murals with other people.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals celebrate important aspects of the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals make the area a more interesting place.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals cannot address the problems of the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals create a good impression to outsiders.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals contribute to making the area feel safer.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals contribute to a sense of community well being.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals weaken the identity of the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals have had an on-going positive cultural impact on my community.	1	2	3	4	5
Local residents involved in the production of the murals have the opportunity to learn new things.	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Statements about the Prestonpans murals (continued)	Opinion				
The murals are not relevant to some groups in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy meeting mural artists	1	2	3	4	5
The murals have caused disagreement between groups in the community	1	2	3	4	5
The murals introduce new ideas into the community.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals generate positive publicity for the area.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals have helped community groups work together to achieve common goals.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals help enhance community identity.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals have not lived up to my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals contribute to a sense of togetherness in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals allow a sharing of ideas amongst the community.	1	2	3	4	5
The murals provide a stereotypical view of the area.	1	2	3	4	5

Do you have any other comments regarding the impacts of the murals in Prestonpans?

I am hoping to hold some follow up interviews with respondents to the questionnaire to discuss these matters in a little more detail. These would only take around 20 minutes and could be arranged at a place and time convenient to you. Again all of the material gathered in these interviews would be treated in confidence. Would you be prepared to have a brief interview about the murals?

Yes: my telephone number / email is: _____

No thank you []

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix II – Revised Questionnaire

Instructions for Feedback

It is hoped that this questionnaire will be used for comparative research in a number of mural towns internationally. The questionnaire was derived primarily through a dialogue with the population of Prestonpans. While being designed to be generally applicable it is likely that the scale items reflect, to some extent, the experiences of the Prestonpans population.

The attached questionnaire is attached for comment. If you have comments on ways in which the questionnaire might be revised to ensure it is generally applicable please pass on a marked up copy of the questionnaire to Tim Hall during the Global Murals Association Conference or pass on comments via email or post to the addresses on the front cover of this paper.

Dear Householder,

I am a researcher at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham. I have been asked to undertake an evaluation of the social impacts of the mural arts projects in Prestonpans. As you may be aware the Global Murals Association held their international conference in Prestonpans in August, where I presented the initial findings of the research. I am following up the research presented there with a more comprehensive survey of the attitudes of residents of Prestonpans to the murals. I hope that the findings of the research will feed into future regeneration and arts projects in Prestonpans and elsewhere.

All responses to this questionnaire are strictly confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. Please read each question and the answers fully before responding. The questionnaire should only take a few minutes to complete. I, or another member of the research team, will be returning on *** to collect the questionnaires. If you are able to complete the questionnaire by then I would be very grateful. If you have any questions about the survey I can discuss those with you then.

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tim Hall



Prestoungrange 2006

The Impacts of Murals in Prestonpans

Section 1

Please tick the box next to the answer that best describes you:

1. Are you:

Male [] Female []

2. How old are you?

Under 18 [] 18-30 [] 31-40 []
41-50 [] 51-60 [] Over 60 []

3. How long have you lived in Prestonpans?

0-4 years [] 5-10 years [] More than 10 years []

4. What is the approximate gross annual income of your household?

Under £10,000 [] £10,001-£20,000 [] £20,001-£30,000 []
£30,001-£40,000 [] £40,001-£50,000 [] Over £50,000 []

5. Have you been involved in the production of any of the murals in Prestonpans?

Yes [] No []

6. Are you involved in any arts group in Prestonpans?

Yes [] No []

7. Would you like to see more mural projects in Prestonpans in the future?

Yes [] No []

PLEASE CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

Section 2

For each of statement below write an **X** over the number to the right that best fits your opinion. Please use the scale provided below.

SD	D	N	A	SA
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Statements about the Prestonpans murals	Opinion				
The murals make the town feel valued.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals brighten up the area.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals have not contributed to the regeneration of the town.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals are a talking point in the area.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals are a source of controversy.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals make me feel proud of the area.	SD	D	N	A	SA
I like the look of the murals.	SD	D	N	A	SA
I regularly notice the murals when I am in town.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals would not be missed if they were taken away.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals have not contributed to my personal quality of life.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals are an important part of the area's future.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals make me proud of the area's history and heritage.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals are of educational value.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals celebrate aspects of the area that have been lost.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The community has not accepted the murals.	SD	D	N	A	SA
I have taken people to look at the murals.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals show that the area is a good place to live.	SD	D	N	A	SA
I regularly discuss the murals with other people.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals cannot address the problems of the area.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals create a good impression to outsiders.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals contribute to making the area feel safer.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals contribute to a sense of community well being.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals are not relevant to some groups in the community.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals introduce new ideas into the community.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals generate positive publicity for the area.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals help enhance community identity.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals have not lived up to my expectations.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals allow a sharing of ideas amongst the community.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The murals provide a stereotypical view of the area.	SD	D	N	A	SA

Do you have any other comments regarding the impacts of the murals in Prestonpans?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME