

The arts have an important role in regenerating communities

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This article was written by **Alan Kay**.

Summary

This article is based on a study of four arts projects in Scotland, each had an important role to play in local regeneration programmes. It found that, overall, art projects are versatile, can be used in training and employment, appeal to young people and to the most marginalised in society, are good at encouraging investment, and aid community development through active citizenship. It also pointed to the importance of proper evaluation methods for art projects and the need for better tools for measuring impact.

Community arts projects can contribute to the regeneration of an area using people-centred strategies

The paper examined a project in a housing estate; an arts project offering training for young people; a traditional dance and music summer school, and a city wide arts partnership working towards regeneration. Researchers compiled quantitative data and conducted a series of interviews and questionnaires.

The paper describes four elements of arts project in development settings:

The first is the importance of community consultation, involvement and ownership; the second is the measurement of the links between 'hard' and 'soft' impacts (how holistic the evaluation of impact is); the third is the strategic use of art within wider regeneration policies; and the fourth is the methods used for evaluating arts projects.

The paper also identified a range of other potential impacts of art projects

The arts can also increase personal development, assist social development, improve local image, and have a positive impact on health. They have a particularly significant role in areas of economic, social, cultural and environmental disadvantage. The arts need to work as part of a wider community development programme, with a holistic approach to people-centred development. The arts will only be valued by policy makers and practitioners in community development and regeneration when their impact is appropriately evaluated.

This summary is by **Paula Serafini, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

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