

How does Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford employ co-creation through mural art to foster social inclusion and regenerate Waterford city?

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In today's society, there is an increasing use of arts within urban regeneration schemes. The arts act as a catalyst for strengthened community cohesion, greater community pride and an enhanced appreciation and trust for governmental institutions. This research uses the case study of Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford from the years 2018-2020 to identify the variables needed for a successful application of mural art programmes within low income communities. This research elaborates on existing literature by looking at the impact urban regeneration has on low income communities and whether co-creation can foster social inclusion for these communities. The relevance of studying such themes is to understand how those who experience social exclusion i.e. Asylum seekers can feel socially included through the use of mural arts. This specific case study stood out due to their commitment to regenerating Waterford through murals and involving hard to reach and low income communities in the process. Based on in-depth interviews with stakeholders involved in the project, a secondary source analysis in the form of an online panel presentation regarding learning outcomes of the project, this study shows there is a mutualistic relationship between urban regeneration, social inclusion and co-creation. In the case of Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford co-creation is the vehicle to which the urban regeneration project involves locals in decision making processes whilst fostering social inclusion for community members. As a result of the process of creating the murals, social inclusion seemed to be achieved due to various participant groups feeling 'heard' and 'included' in changes to their urban environment. Furthermore, the murals resulted in multiple outcomes such as improving the look of degradation buildings, increased tourism and improved social cohesion.

Key words: Co-creation, urban regeneration, social inclusion, mural art, gentrification, community, local

Table of Contents

Figures and Tables..... 5

1.0 Introduction..... 6

2.0 Literature..... 9

 2.1.1 *Co-creation and its associated terms* 9

 2.1.2 *Use of co-creation in Planning*..... 12

 2.1.3 *Use of co-creation in arts programmes*..... 13

 2.1.4 *Role of the Political Climate on co-creation*..... 14

 2.1.5 *Value of co-creation on low income communities*..... 15

2.2 Urban regeneration..... 16

 2.2.1 *Housing regeneration*..... 18

 2.2.2 *Urban Governance Regeneration*..... 20

 2.2.3 *Public space regeneration*..... 21

2.3. Mural Art..... 24

2.4 Social Inclusion..... 26

 2.4.1 *Social Inclusion and Urban Regeneration*..... 28

 2.4.2 *Fostering social inclusion in urban regeneration*..... 29

 2.4.3 *Social Inclusion in the arts*..... 32

2.5 Benefit of Art to Society..... 37

2.6 Conclusion of Theoretical Framework.....38

2.7 Conceptual Model based on Theoretical Framework..... 39

3.0 Methodology..... 40

 3.1.1 *Table translating concepts into codes*..... 41

 3.2.2 *Limitations to Research*..... 43

 3.2.3 *Interview Recruitment*..... 43

 3.2.4 *Primary data sources*..... 44

 3.2.6 *Sources answering research questions*..... 47

 3.2.7 *Introduction to Case Study*..... 50

 3.2.8 *Setting the scene for urban regeneration within Waterford city*..... 53

3.2.9 Case Study : Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford 2018-2020..	54	4.0
Results	56	4.1.1
What are the necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation within Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford?.....	56	4.1.2
What role do the murals created by Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford play in Waterfords urban regeneration scheme?.....	59	4.1.3
How can the findings from Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland?.....	61	5.0
Discussion	64	5.1.1
Co-creation, communication and community	64	5.1.2
Urban regeneration, governance and cultural controversies.....	66	5.1.3
Socially inclusive mural art	68	6.0
Conclusion	69	
6.1.1 How does Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford employ co-creation through mural art to foster social inclusion and regenerate Waterford city?.....	69	7.0
Bibliography	72	
Appendix A - Interview Agreement: Katherine Collins.....	85	
Appendix B - Interview Agreement: Cristina Ciampaglione.....	86	
Appendix C - Interview Agreement: Shane O’ Driscoll.....	87	
Appendix D - Interview Questions Katherine Collins	88	
Appendix E - Interview Questions: Cristina Ciampaglione.....	92	
Appendix F - Interview Questions: Shane O’Driscoll.....	95	
Appendix G - Transcript : Katherine Collins	97	
Appendix H -Transcript : Cristina Ciampalione	115	
Appendix I - Transcript: Shane O’Driscoll.....	123	
Appendix J - Transcript: Murals for Communities Online Panel Discussion.....	128	

List of figures and tables

<i>Figure 1</i> - Urban revitalisation projects (Inter American Development Bank, 2017).....	17
<i>Figure 2</i> - Urban regeneration governance (Xie et al, 2021)	21
<i>Figure 3</i> - Modes of URG (Xie et al, 2021)	22
<i>Figure 4</i> - Garenthill Park, Glasgow (Discover Glasgow, 2021)	23
<i>Figure 5</i> - Garenthill Park, Glasgow (Discover Glasgow, 2021).....	24
<i>Figure 6</i> - Plymouths ‘Drake Circus Shopping Mall (Plymouth Live, 2018).....	31
<i>Figure 7</i> - Arts Ecosystem (Create Equity, 2021).....	33
<i>Figure 8</i> - Athlone accommodation centre (Google Maps, 2021).....	34
<i>Figure 9</i> - Accommodation provided (Independant Westmeath, 2020).....	35
<i>Figure 10</i> - Benefit of art to society (Create Equity, 2021).....	37
<i>Figure 11</i> - Conceptual Model (Created using Diagram.net, 2021).....	40
<i>Figure 12</i> - <i>The Walls Project Waterford’s Murals</i> (The Walls Project Waterford, 2021).....	51
<i>Figure 13</i> - The Apple Market (Dlight, 2021).....	53
<i>Figure 14</i> - Mural signifying Polish community (Waterford Walls, 2021).....	62
<i>Table 1</i> - Table translating concepts into codes	41
<i>Table 2</i> - Primary data sources.....	44
<i>Table 3</i> - Outlining secondary data sources.....	46
<i>Table 4</i> - Sources answering research questions.....	47

List of Abbreviations
MFC Murals For Communities

1.0 Introduction

The arts are increasingly used in policy and regeneration schemes to improve communities in terms of crime, health, employment and education (Belfiore, 2002). Mural art in particular can be seen as a catalyst for urban regeneration and growth (Nichols and Schwartz, 2006). This research explored the concepts of co-creation, urban regeneration and social inclusion through a theoretical framework focusing on their use in planning, arts programmes and value on low income communities. Various community based projects such as *Murals for Communities* which take a bottom-up approach by involving locals employ concepts such as co-creation to allow locals to have a say in how their urban area looks. Murals play a large role in urban regeneration schemes as they involve the process of improving the look of run-down buildings. Therefore the linkage between concepts in this research is that co-creation is the vehicle to which locals are involved in regenerating their urban area whilst fostering a sense of social inclusion for low income and hard to reach communities. All these concepts work best with low income communities due to a variety of reasons such as; facilitating a space to talk to government officials, learning valuable skills, networking and creating bonds within a community setting. These are relevant to study due to the fact that top-down urban regeneration schemes have been proven to cause social exclusion for low income communities (Inroy, 2000). Therefore, this thesis focuses on urban regeneration schemes which involve locals in processes of decision making.

This thesis aims to understand how co-creation can be employed in mural art programmes to foster social inclusion for low income and hard to reach communities. Often lacking a sense of belonging, the collaborative aspects of projects such as *MFC* aim to ‘*become a powerful tool to bind peoples within and among communities*’ (Murals for Communities, 2020). This thesis employed the case study of *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* from the years 2018-2020 to analyse the role of murals within urban regeneration schemes and whether they can foster social inclusion for community members such as asylum seekers. As such, it prompts the

following main question:

How does Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford employ co-creation through mural art to foster social inclusion and regenerate Waterford city?

6

To provide an answer to this main question, the following secondary questions are being answered in the process:

- 1. What are the necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation within Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford?*
- 2. What role do the murals created by Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford play in Waterford's urban regeneration scheme?*
- 3. How can the findings from Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland?*

To answer these questions, this thesis used a theoretical framework that is built on literature surrounding co-creation, urban regeneration and social inclusion. It operationalised these concepts through looking at international case studies to understand the variables needed for a successful application of each concept. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with various stakeholders within the *Murals for Communities* and *Walls Project Waterford* organisation. Along with analysing secondary data sources such as an online panel session, methodology for community engagement and a local newspaper article. The results of the research will contribute to existing literature as well as to society on highlighting the benefits of the arts to communities.

Scientific relevance

Various studies have been done on the role of art within urban regeneration schemes (Inroy, 2000). However, the use of co-creation within mural programmes has not been studied in depth. Therefore this research has identified a gap, whereby the variables for a successful application of co-creation within a mural art programme along with its ability to regenerate an area whilst

fostering social inclusion are explored. It is important to study the use of co-creation within mural art programmes as it facilitates the creation of a space where government officials can communicate directly with locals about issues that affect them (Xie et al. 2021). This research enhances discussions surrounding bottom-up area regeneration as it allows locals to

7

have a visual impact on their community. This also supports the discussion that Kay (2000) argued, he found that government programmes that include the arts in policies surrounding regeneration improves areas in terms of crime, health and education, especially valuable for low income communities. This suggests that arts programmes need to be implemented in a top-down sense and represented in legislation; however the subjective nature of art creates a paradox that can be difficult to implement. The academic relevance of this research is to understand whether art needs to be implemented in a top-down sense to see tangible benefits to society.

Social relevance

The social relevance of art to society is important to remember within this research. Art allows people to contribute something that is ‘valuable’ to society (Askins & Pain, 2011). This value actualises itself in terms of culture and is particularly useful for fostering a sense of social inclusion as it allows people to feel a sense of belonging. The Central Statistics Office (2020) revealed that 85,400 immigrants entered Ireland in April of 2020. Therefore, studies related to the integration of the migrant population are important within today’s society. The third research question of this thesis is as such: ‘*How can the findings from Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford be applied to foster a sense of social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland?*’ It is relevant to study the ability of arts to foster social inclusion within Ireland as Asylum Seekers are currently placed in direct provision centres which is temporary accommodation supplied to asylum seekers by the state whilst they wait for refugee status (CSO, 2020). Several studies agree that direct provision isolates refugees and asylum seekers from their communities creating ‘social isolation’(Ryan et al. 2008). Therefore, this research aims to apply the findings from *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* on whether or not fostering a sense of social inclusion for asylum seekers can be done through the use of mural art.

The thesis is structured as follows: To start, the theoretical framework is explored where this research is based upon. Secondly, the methodology which introduces data collection. Afterwards, the results of the research will be explored and then debated in the discussion. Finally, the conclusions of this research are stated.

8

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This section will introduce the theoretical concepts that will be explored in this thesis whilst also exploring the relationships between them. It does this through the creation of a conceptual model which is seen at the end of the chapter. Understanding the core concepts of these theories in academic literature is a necessary step in exploring their practical application in the spatial planning process. Therefore, this section used case studies from international contexts for each concept to allow for a greater understanding of how different groups understood them.

2.1.1 Co-creation and its associated terms

Co-creation is the first theoretical concept to be explored in this thesis. Co-creation and the variables needed for a successful undertaking of it within mural art programmes have been studied due to the fact that it is a key concept undertaken by the case study of this thesis : *Murals for Communities: the Walls Project Waterford 2018-2020*. Co-creation more or less concerns the process of communication between stakeholders within a certain project (Leminen & Westerlund, 2015). In the context of this thesis, co-creation is the process by which arts programmes involve participants. Certain variables of the concept came to light from a literature review such as defined power structures, clear definition of concepts that are related to the project and testing beforehand. The terms associated with co-creation such as co-collaboration, co-design and co-production will be explored below as they are interchangeable in this research.

There is a large body of academic work concerning the definition of co-creation however the consensus is that it concerns non-governmental actors having a say in the design or delivery of a service (Verschuere et al. 2012). There are numerous terms which fall under the umbrella of

co-creative services such as co-collaboration, co-design and co-production however they all concern the process of working with people to achieve a certain goal (Holscher & Frantzeskaki, 2020). In order for the various concepts to be understood I will differentiate them below. Firstly, co-collaboration concerns the collaboration of various stakeholders in the aim of achieving a certain goal (Sandchez, 2020). Co-design is an attempt to define a problem and then define a solution; co-production is the attempt to implement the proposed solution; co-creation is then the

9

process by which people do both (McDougall, 2012). Therefore co-creation is the combination of both defining problems and solutions whilst implementing a proposed solution. Co-collaboration generally refers to participatory forms of community bonding through collaboration between various stakeholders (Sanchez, 2020). When employed in spatial planning it has the power to alter the design and function of an urban setting (ibid). Collaborative design is especially effective in spatial planning because it facilitates a space for discussion where various viewpoints are explored (ibid). Beyond the spatial planning sphere, co-collaboration is employed in many work place settings as it encourages communication between people. This is due to the nature of 'collaboration' itself which can inspire leadership and motivate people to work toward a common goal (Anson et al. 1993). Co-collaboration actualises itself in many facets of life, for example, group projects in educational settings encourage people to work together. Naturally, a leader then emerges from the group however power struggles can also come to light (Anson et al. 1993). Competition and a motivation to work independent from the group can create tensions therefore impacting the results of said project (ibid). Therefore, collaboration and the various concepts that come with it are not always straightforward and require boundaries along with clear power structures.

Co-design can be understood as an attempt to define a problem and then define a solution to that problem (Farr, 2017). It has been used in the past when employing techniques which explore people's experiences (ibid). These techniques include stakeholder mapping and service prototyping which inturn promote equal relations between service users and professionals. Farr (2017) discussed co-design and co-creation specific to the healthcare field however her findings can also be applied to the field of spatial planning. Farr (2017) operationalised these concepts in a short film through which she conducted a variety of interviews that explored how patients

experienced hospital-based breast cancer services. The film was showcased at a co-design event where patients and staff members came together to discuss changes that could be made. Some negative results did come to light such as staff disengaging in the process due to feeling criticized (ibid). However, service changes were implemented through staff and patients voting on various service improvements (ibid). A commitment to the concept was implemented through ‘co-design groups’ whereby regular meetings were held to discuss service improvements.

It could be argued that the success of this project lay in the creation of a space which allowed for communication between both staff and patients to identify common goals and the

means to achieve these (ibid). Stakeholder mapping also played a role, as staff and patients were aware of various power dynamics. Therefore, the successful application of co-creative concepts requires a mutual level of respect between stakeholders along with a commitment to regular meetings to discuss and deliberate on pressing issues.

Co-production is most similar to co-creation. As a concept, it generally concerns people having a say in how certain services are run and delivered (Adams & Boateng, 2018). It does this through facilitating, coordinating and managing a complex set of social, psychological, cultural and institutional interactions (Farr, 2017). Co-production has been used when developing user-centered public services whereby government agencies make sure that users give input and feel as though their feedback is taken into consideration and acted upon (UsabilityGov, 2021). Wilkie et al (2014) discussed the use of co-production in *Politique de la Ville* which was a set of actions taken by the French State to regenerate its run-down neighbourhoods.

It also aimed to increase social inclusion by creating a social mix policy however it did receive some backlash as ghettoization still existed in troubled neighbourhoods (Wilkie et al, 2014). Therefore the project did not succeed in fulfilling all of its aims. Various stakeholders were involved such as planners, local authorities and social landlords. Co-production facilitated a relationship between the State and local authorities (ibid). Similar to literature on co-design, co-production sees the best results when employed in the long-term. Wilkie et al (2014, p.278) documented the benefits of a 10-year long commitment to co-production, ‘*the aims of the Politique de la Ville to improve and reduce regional inequalities in quality of life were met. The sustained use of participative co-production along with its continued use today in the sustained-success areas, provided evidence that the policy aim to encourage resident*

participation was also achieved.'

2.1.2 Use of co-creation in Planning

This research will focus its attention on co-creation as it is a key method employed by *Murals for Communities* for 'The Walls project Waterford' ; the case study for this thesis. co-creation falls under the category of co-productive services which more or less concern people having a say in certain processes. Co-creation is often employed alongside 'Living Labs' which are interactive spaces in which stakeholders can test new technologies and services in real life

11

contexts (Leminen, 2015). With the help of co-creation, 'Living Labs' can act as '*multi-actor processes of developing and experimenting with new strategies, agendas, and actions towards sustainable cities*' (Puerari et al.2018,p.2). Lund (2018) laid out a practical application of the concept in regard to 'Living Labs' specific to Surrpelto, a new urban area, located in Finland. In collaboration with a university, a project to promote co-creation to cater for the areas urban needs was created. They carried out surveys, events and service experiments to develop services and service concepts. The results of this project were successful as the 'Living Labs' created innovative solutions to complex problems by engaging in the reality of the project through employing people who use the amenities on a daily basis. Vogel et al (2020) also discussed the use of co-creation in 'Living Labs' specific to the construction of houses and the employment of new, innovative methods rather than old less successful ones.

They believed that co-creations power lay in its ability to test things which in turn created radical innovations (ibid). They stated that '*these labs are a way to work on complex, multi-stakeholder and urgent problems in a co-creative way*' (Vogel et al, 2020. p.2). They also facilitate the '*co-creation of knowledge, products, technologies, and service innovations in local experiments*' (Puerari et al.2018. p.2) Therefore, comprehending the concept from Living Labs suggests that an operationalisation of co-creation which employs people who themselves make use of the service allows for creative solutions to complex problems (ibid). This is down to various experiments and the nature of testing itself which encourages communication and allows for problem solving.

Co-creation can also be seen as a way of ensuring that no one gets left behind and that

different people's skills and expertise are valued (Daykin et al. 2017). This in turn suggests that people with different backgrounds can contribute knowledge to certain projects. However, with formal co-creation the participants are often selected based on how much value they can contribute to certain activities for example lead-users and frontrunners (Puerari et al. 2018). This suggests that informal co-creation values people with different skills and expertise that don't necessarily relate to the project at hand. Informal co-creation, on the other hand, grows from processes of collaboration that emerge out of shared goals (ibid). Whereas participants who are involved in formal co-creation processes also affect the outcome of such projects. Their motivation to engage relates to their goals, resources, and expectations of the value of the outcomes (ibid).

12

2.1.3 Use of co-creation in arts programmes

Horvath et al. (2020) maintained that co-creation breaks through traditional notions of power by providing a space where all stakeholders can communicate freely with each other. This makes it ideal to study in tandem with arts programmes as background knowledge and 'artistic snobbery' does not exist as everyone contributes their own knowledge through '*crossing disciplinary boundaries and exchanging skills*' (Horvath et al. 2020, p.174). Co-creation within arts programmes focuses on '*knowledge production*' where research is also seen to have a high level of importance (ibid). This correlates with the case study of this thesis *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* as they provided a 'methodology for community engagement' which focused on backing up their work with academic research. This document is analyzed as a secondary data source in the discussion segment of this thesis.

Horvath et al. (2020) also stated that co-creation allows artists and non-artists to explore social issues through creative channels. However, a debate presents itself as using art specifically for communicating social issues also has its problems. Some argue that art should be created for the sake of art instead of being used to communicate political, cultural or social commentary (ibid). However, it could be argued that this is inevitable and that art is subjective so therefore it is in the eye of the beholder to retrieve meaning and understanding from various works (ibid). Horvath et al. (2020) also introduced the idea that there is a certain pressure placed on non-artists to create something that is aesthetically pleasing to the eye and fit into society's standards of

‘beautiful.’ Research has showcased that when employing artistic programmes through co-creation certain variables need to be considered such as the level of skill of a non-artist, what the actual piece contributes to the urban landscape and what hidden messages can be derived from the artistic piece in question.

2.1.4 Role of the Political Climate on co-creation

The political climate was shown to have an effect on ‘The Politique de la ville’ project (Wilkie et al. 2014). He found that co-production facilitated policy and project aims however it impacted negatively on social cohesion due to the political climate at the time. The political

13

climate in France in the 1990s deterred people from collaborating with each other in the aim of social cohesion. The political and social background whilst *Murals for Communities* were completing ‘The Walls Project’ in Waterford City from 2018-2020 is also important to take into account. Still recovering from the 2008 financial crisis, by which Ireland was severely affected, Waterford City recorded one of the lowest youth unemployment rates across the country (Waterford City Council, 2021). It also experienced deterioration and neglect of its public spaces and a growing phenomenon of ‘ghost estates’ which were unfinished housing estates that never saw completion due to the property collapse which in turn created a sense of carelessness across the urban landscape. The political landscape for minorities whilst *Murals for Communities* were completing ‘The Walls Project’ in Waterford City is also of importance. This is explored more in depth in the methodology section of this thesis, under the heading ‘setting the scene for urban regeneration within Waterford city.’

Initially defined by Wirth (1970), a minority group is ‘*a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination*’ (Wirth, 1985, p.1047). Using this definition, It could be argued that asylum seekers, in Ireland, are a minority group. However, applying the label of ‘minority group’ has its difficulties as it assumes there is something ‘minor’ about them (Forbes, 2020). Wirth’s definition was also written in 1970, which could be viewed as outdated. This thesis looks at the ability of co-creation to facilitate a space for such minority groups to have an impact on their

local area whilst regenerating the area at the same time.

2.1.5 Value of co-creation on low income communities

Watson (2014) detailed the use of co-production in South Africa maintaining that it represents a way in which poorer communities can make significant changes to their urban environment. This manifested itself through ‘toilet festivals’ whereby locals were able to showcase their construction skills to authorities (Watson, 2014). Co-production, in this sense, facilitated a relationship between state and society therefore allowed people to have a say in how

14

their urban area looked and functioned. Co-creation is increasingly used in urban governance as a way for people to gain back autonomy (Lund, 2018).

Using the definitions of co-creation supplied by various scholars would lead one to believe that it is a relevant method to employ when working with minority or low income communities to gain back autonomy due to the collaborative nature of it. Osborne et al. (2016) maintained that co-creation can be especially valuable for low-income communities as it allows them to communicate with municipalities and have a say in how their urban area looks. *Murals for Communities* employed co-creation when creating artistic murals in tandem with artists and community members during ‘*The Walls Project*’ in Waterford, which allowed various communities to have a say in how their urban area looked (Murals for Communities, 2021). They worked with various international communities such as the Polish Community, Sudanese Community and the Penrose Court Residents Association which is a privately run nursing home (Waterford News, 2019). International communities such as Polish and Sudanese may benefit from collective community bonding processes however this also suggests that other international communities have been left out in the process. Upon research, I found out that non-Irish nationalities make up for 8.3% of Waterfords population, Polish, however, were the largest portion (CSO, 2020).

2.2 Urban regeneration

This section will discuss the concept of urban regeneration in both the housing and public space domain. Both are relevant to discuss due to the transformative nature of urban regeneration schemes. Urban regeneration is transformative in the sense that it is the process of attempting to improve the public space of run-down areas (Inroy, 2000). ‘Urban regeneration’ is a somewhat contested phrase; this conflict has grown from numerous unsuccessful attempts at improving neighbourhoods through demolishing existing housing to make way for modernist apartment blocks (Gibbons et al. 2018). This in turn has created extreme forms of gentrification due to house prices skyrocketing from capital investments in the area (Inroy, 2000). First, it is important to define what gentrification is in order to anchor this debate, Kennedy & Leonard define it as *‘the process by which higher income households displace lower income [households] of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood’* (Gibbons et al.

15

2018). This section will delve into why urban regeneration programmes generally take place in low income areas and what implications this has for the future of the area. A downfall of the concept is that it can be misunderstood due to different definitions and understandings however the associated terms are interchangeable in this research as they all concern the process of improving urban areas in one way or another.

Urban renewal began in the 1950s in America and became associated with the ‘clearing out’ and demolition of slum-like conditions to make room for attractive developments and homeowners (Caro, 1975). However, as a concept it backfired and essentially created ‘poverty pockets’ as vulnerable people were grouped together with improper infrastructure (ibid). Urban revitalization on the other hand concerns the reorganizing of a city's infrastructure in the aim of making it more socially and economically prosperous (Inter American Development Bank, 2017). The Inter American Development Bank created a report on Urban Revitalization assessment methodologies and discussed various findings through a literature review, see fig (1). They found that land and housing price increases were a natural outcome of urban revitalization programmes. Therefore, it is expected when employing an urban revitalization/regeneration programme that property prices will increase due to the area being updated in one way or another. This can become problematic as older inhabitants can be forced to move due to rent increases in the area. The area in question then attracts people of a certain demographic, for

example middle/higher class groups and the area then becomes gentrified (Caro, 1975).

Table 1: Studies on urban revitalization interventions in develop countries.

Authors	Country	Period	Intervention	Data sources	Outcomes	Method	Findings
Rossi-Hansberg, Sarte, and Owens (2010)	Richmond, VA, United States	1999-2004	Neighborhood-in-Bloom program (\$14 million) Acquisition, demolition, rehabilitation, and new construction of housing	Geocoded data of intervened areas Geocoded data of all properties sold between 1993-2004	Land prices	Semi-parametric hedonic price equation: four treated neighborhoods vs. one very similar non-treated neighborhood	Land prices increased by 2-5% per year in the four treated neighborhoods Effect decreases by one half every 1,000 feet
Autor, Palmot, and Pathak (2016)	Cambridge, MA, United States	1995-2005	(Unespected) removal of a rent control law in Cambridge, MA	Administrative data on assessed residential value, house prices on residential transactions between 1988-2005, with exact location	Property prices	Difference-in-difference: treated properties more exposed to nearby de-controlled properties vs. properties less exposed to decontrolled-units	Prices of never-controlled properties increased more when surrounded by more de-controlled properties Evidence on housing externalities
Ahlfeldt, Maennig, and Richter (2016)	Berlin, Germany	1993-2012	Renovation of private housing stock in many areas of East Berlin; €1.94 billions spent since reunification until 2012	Geocoded transactions of built-up land between Jan 1990 and Aug 2012 GIS information about local amenities	Property prices Buildings condition	Difference-in-difference: 22 treated areas vs. 39 control areas, intended to be treated, but left untreated	Odds of buildings in good condition increased 0.8-2.6% per year and house prices increased 0.4-2% per year No evidence on housing externalities

Figure (1): Demonstrates a variety of urban revitalisation projects whereby they led to an increase in land and property prices. Source:(Inter American Development Bank, 2017).

Urban regeneration, the second concept this thesis will explore, concerns the attempt of a government to reverse social and physical decline in urban areas by both improving the physical structure and the economy of those areas (Weaver, 2001). Urban regeneration and its related terms such as urban renewal and urban revitalisation concern more or less the same definition; an

attempt to reverse social decline in deprived areas. However, this thesis focuses on urban regeneration as the City of Waterford is currently undergoing an urban regeneration scheme to which *Murals for Communities: The Walls Project Waterford* plays a key role. Many countries in Ireland are still recovering from the economic turmoil caused by the recession of 2008 whereby unemployment skyrocketed. This caused austerity and a great deal of distrust towards the Irish government (Kuhling, 2014). Urban regeneration is increasingly being applied to various disadvantaged areas across Ireland to diffuse social deprivation caused by the economic crash. It has been demonstrated that urban regeneration programmes tend to generally take place in inner cities whereby poverty is a pressing issue (Inroy, 2000). Attempting to fix ‘troubled’ neighbourhoods and ease inequalities felt by people is an issue spatial planners have tried to deal with since the 1950s. One could say that it is a ‘wicked problem’ with no definitive formula (Rittel, 1973). However, one way of understanding the concept better is looking at case studies which will be explored in the following paragraphs. Exploring their results and the mechanisms

17

needed for a successful application of urban regeneration allows for a greater understanding of the specific variables needed to apply the arts as a form of urban regeneration. Omar et al. (2014) stated that mural art can induce urban regeneration due to the process of improving the look of degradation buildings. However, gentrification is also a consequence of urban regeneration which is explored below.

2.2.1 Housing regeneration

Urban regeneration in both the public and housing domain are relevant to study in the content of this thesis due to the impact these programmes can have on certain communities. Various case studies will be explored below in the context of housing regeneration. Urban regeneration, simply refers to the demolition of houses and apartments in decaying housing estates (Houterman et al. 2006). These projects are a set of plans initiated by the government to address neighbourhoods that are in a state of decay (Roberts et al, 2000). Therefore the question must be asked; what constitutes an area to be regenerated? Speaking from a U.K context, Cameron (2003) analysed the city-wide regeneration strategy known as ‘*Going for Growth*’ from the year 2000. It specified the large-scale redevelopment of low-income, low-demand housing

neighbourhoods and the introduction of a more affluent population to these areas. Literature has suggested that it is 'problematic' neighbourhoods which receive funding for urban regeneration schemes (Cameron et al. 2003).

These urban regeneration schemes also purposefully include an element of 'socially engineered gentrification' in an aim to 'rebalance' the population of disadvantaged and stigmatised neighbourhoods (Cameron, 2003, p.2367). The implications of 'socially engineered gentrification' is studied by Uitermark et al. (2007) in depth. In the neighbourhood of Hoogvliet, Rotterdam the implications of gentrification as a government strategy were studied. They found that gentrification was 'superficial' in the sense that neighbourhoods were physically integrated with low, middle and higher income households however social cohesion between these was not achieved (Uitermark et al. 2007). Dutch social housing policy is often used as a case study for the application of 'socially engineered gentrification' (ibid). However, also speaking from a Dutch background, Musterd & Ostendorf (2008) dispute the benefits of socially engineered gentrification. They highlighted the importance of including a social mix policy to these schemes

18

which can act as a solution for a lack of social cohesion within neighbourhoods. They claim they do this through diversifying levels of income and social class. This was introduced in Dutch neighbourhoods through *Big City policies* which aimed to increase social cohesion and diminish poverty. They maintained that concentrated poverty intensifies social exclusion. However, *Big City Policies* also have their weaknesses as integrating the disadvantaged and the advantaged has its problems. This is because advantaged inhabitants tend to leave the neighbourhood when they can afford to (Musterd & Ostendorf, 2008).

The long term implications of this include weakened local social support infrastructure which in turn negatively impacts the health of the inhabitants (Gibbons et al. 2018). Fender (2020) reported on a study carried out by Stanford sociologists Hwang and co-author Lei Ding which maintained a strong link between the negative effects of gentrification and minority groups. The results of the study showcased that predominantly black neighbourhoods in Philadelphia in the U.S had fewer options to move somewhere suitable in the face of gentrification compared to predominantly white neighbourhoods. They found that low income and disadvantaged inhabitants who did not move from predominantly black neighbourhoods were able to move to advantaged neighbourhoods however the same was not noted for mostly

black neighbourhoods (Fender, 2020). Therefore, gentrification and even ‘socially engineered gentrification’ negatively impact minority groups as they tend to experience housing disadvantages throughout their whole lives. In Philadelphia’s case, it is where you come from which impacts where you can move to and whether it is possible to then move to advantaged neighbourhoods (Fender, 2020).

However, there are many forces at work which affect gentrification and the fluctuation of house prices such as a lack of regulation or where it has become ‘trendy’ to live. In Newcastle, stigmatization occurred in the early 2000s in housing estates whereby people flocked to certain high-status areas to feel safe which in turn led to an extreme polarization of house prices (Cameron, 2003). It could be argued that areas which are labeled ‘troubled’ and ideal for urban regeneration schemes are then subject to gentrification. For example Brooklyn, New York is one of the most well known cases of extreme gentrification as it has increased in popularity since the 1990s. It attracted new inhabitants and drove out the old whilst increasing house prices in the process (Lees, 2003). Lees (2003) maintained that Brooklyn can be categorised as a form of ‘*super gentrification*’ as its demographic moved from middle/high income to the extremely rich.

19

This is down to the fact that Brooklyn became the focus of ‘intense investments’ by developers (Lees, 2003, p.2487). Lees (2003) illustrated how Brooklyn became a case of ‘*super gentrification*’ by interviewing homeowners of a brownstone property in the neighbourhood. Bought by a young Lawyer in 1962 for the modest price of \$28,000 it was later to be bought by a Wall Street stock broker for \$595,000 in 1995 only to be sold again in 2002 for \$1.75 million (Lees, 2003, p.2490). This illustrates the fast pace at which Brooklyn became unaffordable and more ‘*concerned with capitalist production rather than social reproduction*’ (Lees, 2003, p.2490). The necessary mechanisms to avoid similar cases of ‘*super gentrification*’ will be explored below.

‘*Going for Growth*’ aimed to tackle rundown neighbourhoods through a multidisciplinary approach which focused on economic development, urban renaissance and the retention and growth of population within the city (Cameron, 2003). Urban regeneration should be multi-sectoral including an economic, physical and social pillar in order to avoid extreme cases of gentrification (Musterd & Wim Ostendorf, 2008). This means that the area as a whole is regenerated, not just the degrading houses. This in turn encourages investments in each of these

pillars which provide extra benefits and more opportunities for success in each of the separate policy fields: they all have knock-on effects to each other (ibid). It is the case where some urban regeneration projects only focus on the physical aspects of urban decay whereas urban regeneration is as much to do with the surrounding area and providing services as it is with creating houses (Houterman et al, 2006). With these attributes in mind; it is clear that urban regeneration even in a strict housing sense should be multi-sectoral.

2.2.2 Urban Governance Regeneration

As discussed above, urban regeneration and its negative consequences such as gentrification are generally out of the control of local citizens. This section discussed how urban regeneration can involve citizens in the process of change through the concept of *urban governance regeneration* (Xie et al, 2021). Urban governance can be understood as an approach to deal with various urban affairs, including providing services to citizens, attracting investment and creating jobs through blending a variety of stakeholders in decision making processes (Xie et al, 2021). Xie et al.

(2021) created a model linking urban regeneration and urban governance

through a Venn diagram to create urban regeneration governance, see fig (2). Governance in this context regards a pattern ruling activities (Xie et al, 2021). Also known as URG it is defined as a ‘*decision-making model, which links stakeholder partnerships and the institutional arrangement for dealing with events of urban regeneration*’ (ibid). Using this model urban governance can be employed alongside urban regeneration in a formal sense.

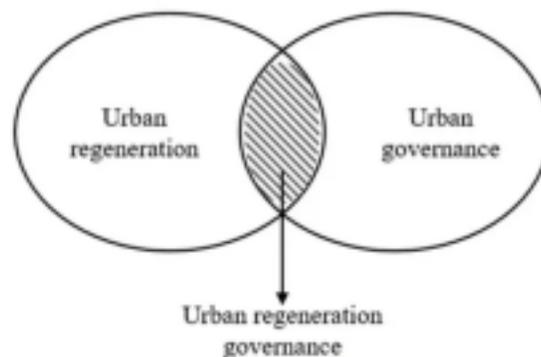


Figure (2): Model showcasing the definition of urban regeneration governance Source: (Xie et al, 2021)

Seen in fig (2), an operationalizing of URG can be understood in both a bottom-up and top-down sense. Fig (3) demonstrates this. Xie at al. (2021) grouped governance into 3 categories; government, entrepreneurial and civic. Bottom-up governance can be applied through civic and entrepreneurial realms which can be actualised through community and resident participation. It is then up to those involved such as local stakeholders how much participation they want to commit to a certain project. This model can be utilized when looking at the role of mural arts in urban regeneration schemes due to the top-down nature of mural art. This also raises a debate surrounding legal versus illegal art which will be explored in the section titled ‘Mural art.’

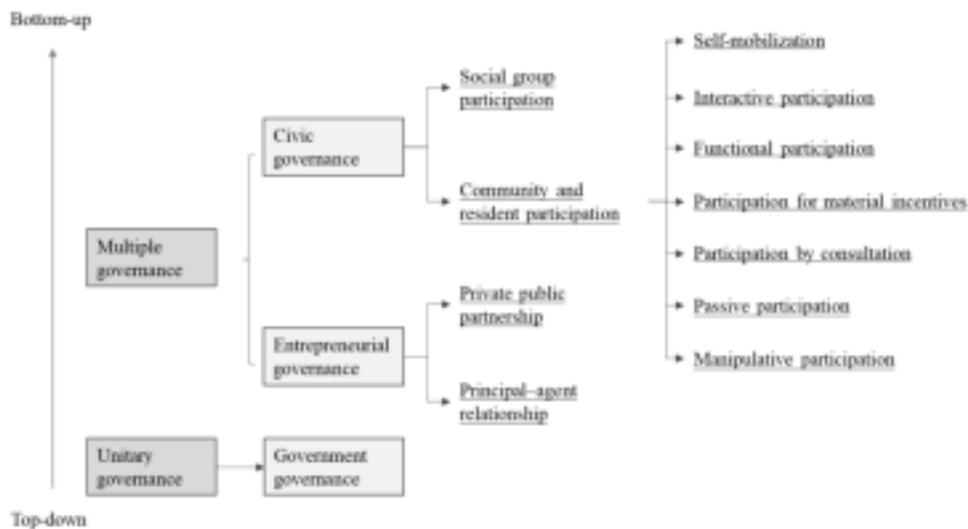


Fig (3): Showcases the different modes of URG which are split up into three main modes: government governance, entrepreneurial governance and civic governance. Source: (Xie et al. 2021).

2.2.3 Public space regeneration

As figure (1) demonstrates, an increase in property and land price are a natural consequence of urban regeneration schemes. This must be considered when discussing public space regeneration and the role of the arts such as murals due to the implications that this entails. Various public space urban regeneration schemes will be discussed along with various outcomes and bottom-up versus top-down applications of the concept.

Public space is context and culturally dependent as it looks and functions differently across the world (Brebbia, 2017). It represents an opportunity for people to socialise and spend recreational time, however it can also be used for compulsory activities such as work (ibid). Urban regeneration in public space can assist in boosting the overall image of an area (Inroy, 2000).

Public space acts as an increasingly important factor in people's daily lives as it serves as a resource that they can tap into (ibid). However, urban regeneration in public space has received criticism in the past as various case studies have showcased that it was deployed primarily for attracting capital investment (Leclerq, 2018). An example of this is an urban regeneration project specific to Glasgow's Garnethill Park which was built during the European City of Culture in

1990. Inroy (2000, p.24) maintained that the use of phrases such as '*partnership, community cooperation and the people*' masked the agenda of the project which was actually to boost capital investment and impress artistic elites.

A variety of buzzwords similar to 'co-creation' were used to gain support of the project but there was no real intention of pursuing co-creation in the form of community cooperation during the project. On further investigation Glasgow's Garnethill Park has not solved any societal issues as Garenthill has reverted back to the 'problematic' area it once was. Located in the City Centre, the area of Garnethill still deals with many social problems such as crime, drug dealing and littering (Glasgow Times, 2015). Even decay within Garnethill Park is widely reported as a local politician stated that 'the vandalism in the park has been a persistent problem over the years' (ibid). A variety of artistic installations were installed in the park during its creation in 1990 such as cube-shaped lights (see fig 4) and a pyramid (see fig 5) have since been destroyed and vandalised. Irony (2003) argued that the failure of this specific public space

regeneration was because it was created without consultation with locals and vital stakeholders in the area. Instead, it was constructed in a top-down sense with the aim of attracting investments in the area. The subject matter, murals, art, installations and layout of a public area should be created in situ with the people who utilise it on a daily basis (Sonn et al. 2017). It is assumed that the vandalism which plagues Garenthill park is a response from local people who were ‘planned at’ and not with. In this sense top-down regeneration can alienate local residents.



Figure (4): Showcases a full view of Garenthill Park, Glasgow. The light boxes are also visible in the picture, Source: (Discover Glasgow, 2021).

23



Fig (5): Garenthill Park 'Pyramid' installation which has since been used for drug dealing and vandalised since its construction in 1990. Source: (Discover Glasgow, 2021).

2.3 Mural Art

Urban regeneration and the arts tend to go hand in hand due to the visual and transformative nature of the arts (Miles, 1995). The ‘arts’ in the context of this thesis relate to mural arts in public spaces which are employed to regenerate an area. Murals can be defined as painted images on a private or public building (Ehret, 2010). Technically murals have been around for centuries, even dating back to the third century B.C. in the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra, India which depict ancient stories (Ehert, 2010). Ehert (2010, p.1) argued that murals can act as an effective way of communicating a message to a large public audience, *‘Public murals create accessible artistic expression for the enjoyment of all classes of people, helping to define urban neighborhoods and offer aesthetic relief from blight and abandonment.’* As previously discussed, urban regeneration programmes which fail to take the culture of the area into account are doomed for failure (Inroy, 2000). Therefore, it could be argued that the context and subject matter of the mural should take both the local area and local people into consideration when being completed (ibid). Murals can be seen as a way of expressing a city's culture and identity through visual imagery (Inroy, 2000). The various implications of using

24

murals as a collaborative process will be explored below such as the exclusive elements of such processes and various controversies that arise from the use of subject matter. Post-Industrial Cities such as London have seen a rise in the use of murals through informal urban regeneration. ‘Informal’ here means that it is not planned by the state but more of a bottom-up application of urban regeneration. However, a conflict arises in the very debate of street art versus graffiti. A bottom-up application of ‘street art’ and ‘murals’ is essentially graffiti which is seen as an illegal act (Mcauliffe, 2016). This debate has been coined by Mcauliffe (2016) as ‘the urban war on graffiti’ which actualises itself through anti-graffiti policies and laws. Graffiti is seen as a risk-laden behaviour therefore it is discouraged, however there is a fine line between graffiti and mural art as they are both technically painted images on public or private property (ibid). Essentially, the main difference is that one is commissioned versus the other. Young (2014) maintained that this is an attempt by the government to exert control over the public. Art that is included in legislation is seen as above the law therefore uncommissioned street art is seen as beneath the law and doesn’t fit into the ideal image of the city (ibid). However, Young’s (2014) work can be criticised as she focused her attention primarily on ideas surrounding control and

regiment whereas legislated art can also inspire creativity and self expression. This contradicts scholars such as Kay (2000) who maintained that art must be legislated in order to have a resounding impact. Instead of discussing power and governance Young (2014) could ask how art can be incorporated into everyday life without crossing lines of legalities. There are other tensions that can arise when trying to create policy surrounding mural arts (Nichols and Schwartz, 2006). This tension presents itself in the debate of private versus public space as they are technically public installations that require a quantity of space on private property.

Mural art can also be controversial in its choice of colours, political figures, cultural meanings and exploration of various themes. Colour association can be understood as colours such as those associated with gay pride or psychedelics carrying certain social and cultural meanings without necessarily meaning it (Bacchetta et al. 2014). Vibrant colours used in public murals such as those associated with gay pride (gay pride rainbow flag) have been known to garner negative attention from locals and the press where it is not culturally acceptable to be gay (ibid). Therefore, cultural contexts should be taken into account when creating a mural.

25

Kay (2000) found that government programmes which included the arts in policies surrounding regeneration had real, tangible benefits. Looking at U.K and Ireland case studies specific to run-down housing estates, Kay (2000) documented the positive results of such programmes. In 1995 the Irish government's department of arts, culture and Gaeltacht made a policy decision to address poverty and area regeneration using the arts. The programme saw real benefits such as participants' change in attitude towards the arts, self-expression, communication, pride and income generation. The arts contribute to area regeneration on a communal level but also on an individual level by fostering numerous skills. They do this through facilitating networking whilst also playing a role in economically, socially, environmentally, or culturally regenerating an area. Foster & Blau (1989) took a sociological look at the arts, maintaining that it does in fact satisfy the human need to create whilst benefiting society at large. However, arts and urban regeneration projects are not implicitly evaluated with the same, clear objectives therefore there is discrepancy on the effectiveness of the role of the arts in urban regeneration (Kay, 2000). These projects should include economic, environment, cultural aims (Kay, 2000).

2.4 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is the final theoretical concept this thesis will discuss. This thesis understands social inclusion to concern the process by which people feel included in their local community. To study social inclusion in tandem with co-creation and mural art within regeneration programmes is necessary due to the fact that minority and low income communities generally suffer from the negative consequences of urban regeneration programmes (Fender, 2020). This section explored how asylum seekers experience social exclusion in Irish society due to the treatment they receive from the Irish government. Often ‘othered’, this thesis found that it is low-income groups which suffer from social exclusion the most. Therefore, it is worthwhile to study how low income and hard to reach communities can be involved in significant changes to their urban environment, fostering a sense of social inclusion.

In order to identify *social inclusion* it is important to first recognize *social exclusion*. Sen (2000) maintained that social exclusion grew from the concept of ‘capability poverty’ and deprivation. Capability poverty also known as ‘poor living’ affects the freedom of people to lead minimally decent lives (ibid). Capability poverty actualises itself in one’s ability to access the

26
market (through legislation) or education through private or public support (ibid). Social exclusion means that people can’t take part in normal activities which affects their quality of life, health and social cohesion of society. However, various disadvantages are also unique to relationships with other people and have cultural contexts which can also lead to exclusion. Ideas surrounding inclusion and exclusion are necessary when discussing ‘co-creation’ due its value on low income communities. It is also applicable to urban regeneration due to the exclusive nature of various urban regeneration schemes. Young (2000, p.22) supplied a definition of social inclusion regarding it as ‘*a democratic decision (being) normatively legitimate only if all those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision-making.*’ This thesis will use this definition as it is about including ‘those affected’ in the processes of certain projects. This further makes it applicable to the case study of this thesis: *Murals for Communities - The Walls Project: Waterford* due to the collaborative and bottom-up nature of its urban regeneration project.

Social inclusion is generally studied in tandem with justice theories. This is because social inclusion is regarded as a form of social justice. Normatively speaking, social inclusion is concerned with people having equal opportunities to access and take part in a variety of services (Soja, 2012). Sufficiatariasm describes this situation as it is a distributive justice theory which believes that everyone should be well off to a minimum threshold for a minimum quality of life. Infrastructure is then built accordingly however a difficulty arises in how to set the threshold as there can be political, social and cultural constraints which are also subject to market change (Gosseries, 2011). Sen's 'Capability approach' also explains social inclusion as it is a set of freedoms and opportunities available for individuals to choose and act through society how they wish (Sen, 2000). It concerns what people are actually able to do while taking the individual's environment into account. However, theories of social justice can be developed in an isolated sense, removed from reality. In this sense sufficientarianism can be seen as a utopian view of the world as social inclusion is something to strive for, not necessarily something that happens regularly in our society. However, there is also value in this as normative beliefs provide a moral compass to guide people in their lives.

Collins (2003) maintained that social inclusion grew from anti-discriminatory laws which forbid conduct whereby a person on grounds of (or because of) their race, sex, or one of the other protected group classifications are treated unfairly. Social inclusion actualises itself in various

27
employment and anti-discimiation laws. For social inclusion to be achieved their first needs to be a socially inclusive environment (Doyle, 2005). This environment is one where all participate in society and as such society reaps potential benefits (ibid). 'Inclusivity' is best actualised through education as it fosters an accepting understanding of other people in society. As a concept, it began to be taken seriously when the European Commission adopted a social inclusion agenda in 1994 (ibid).

The Europe 2020 strategy aims to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion through increasing the amount of people in employment (European Commission, 2021). This is facilitated through initiatives such as Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs to achieve these targets (ibid). The cost of social exclusion on society ranges from reduced social cohesion, higher crime levels and fear of crime, extra pressure on resources and costs to taxpayers (Doyle, 2005). However, it is not an

easy issue to solve and can often be hard to calculate. A holistic approach is suggested as a way to deal with social exclusion in the aim of encouraging social inclusion. In this sense there needs to be top-down policy implemented in order for social inclusion to be achieved. Young's (2000, p.22) definition of social inclusion regarding it as '*a democratic decision (being) normatively legitimate only if all those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision-making*' allows us to analyse the role of the artistic process in creating an environment that is '*socially inclusive.*'

2.4.1 Social Inclusion and Urban Regeneration

Social Inclusion as a concept, generally does not work well with urban regeneration. This is because it is believed that social inclusion hampers the ability of a city to be competitive in the global market (Sharp et al. 2004). However, inclusion can also be understood as a necessary part of urban growth (ibid). Many studies have demonstrated that strictly urban economic development deepens socioeconomic inequalities (ibid). Therefore urban regeneration schemes should aim to include a variety of people with different backgrounds and skills. It is important to keep in mind who these regeneration schemes benefit and who they leave out in the process. Wilkie et al. (2014, p.189) is critical of these projects claiming that they tend to benefit

28

developers, maintained that urban regeneration can lead to degeneration, causing us to question who benefits from such schemes, '*Although regeneration creates employment, modernises the city, urban and national economic growth, it creates 'degenerative' outcomes for some.*'

They go on to say that urban regeneration programmes benefit the class of estate developers and not the locals. However, their studies were situated in Ghana, Western Africa and not the Global North. Wilkie et al. (2014, p.272) lists the beneficiaries in the context of public-space regeneration, '*Resident engagement in urban regeneration is encouraged because it benefits the project, the individual, and the community. One method of engagement is participative co-production.*' This also helps change what regeneration actually is and involves community members in the process.

Co-creation, in this sense can be employed in public space urban regeneration schemes to

allow people to have a say in how their urban area looks and functions. As explored already, co-creation concerns non-governmental actors having a say in the design or delivery of a service (Verschuere et al ,2012). To operationalise this further it could be said that when co-creation is employed in artistic urban regeneration schemes local residents and stakeholders have a say in what subject matter is to be explored in mural arts. Robinson et al., (1991, p.63) suggested that for urban regeneration to be a success it needs community involvement, *‘not only that the local community benefits from regeneration but that local people have been asked for their views on, and have participated in the process of, regeneration.’*

2.4.2 Fostering social inclusion in urban regeneration

Using the definition of social inclusion supplied by Young (2000, p.22) *‘a democratic decision (being) normatively legitimate only if all those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision-making’* allows us to analyse urban regeneration on how well it facilitates social inclusion. Various urban regeneration projects such as *‘Vision for Plymouth’* often use social inclusion as a tokenistic bribe to pursue capital investments instead of actually taking on board the voices of those affected by new developments. The use of the phrase ‘social inclusion’ has the ability to exploit local people to legitimise the policy process (McWilliams, 2004). The multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion often makes it hard to translate into policy (ibid). Studies have showcased that policy surrounding social inclusion is often made in

29

isolation and without consultation from poorer communities who generally suffer from social exclusion (ibid). The Scottish Office made a point of this after they noticed key stakeholders were not included in the process of discussion and decision making. They published this quote in response *‘the only people who understand all these dimensions are those who experience them – the excluded community. For this reason it is essential that communities are placed at the heart of decision-making about initiatives being designed for their benefit’* (McWilliams, 2004, p.265).

Atkinson (2003) analysed social inclusion in urban regeneration specific to Plymouth, U.K. The year 2000 signaled a change for Plymouth as it geared up to undertake an urban regeneration programme until 2020 called *‘Vision for Plymouth’*. In collaboration with community members, Plymouth City council attempted to create a vision that was *‘derived from*

the views of local people' (Atkinson, 2003, p.110). The 'Social Exclusion Unit' was consulted in the process which was a task force set up by the U.K government to provide strategic advice and policy analysis against social exclusion. Set up in 1997, it has since been abolished (ibid). They defined social exclusion as '*a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown*' (Batty, 2002).

Therefore, it is assumed that areas which qualify for urban regeneration schemes experience a high level of social exclusion. Poor, inner city areas tend to be picked for urban regeneration schemes. To begin with, Plymouth city council asked residents to define where they believed their neighbourhood was located (Atkinson, 2003). This created 'natural neighbourhoods' whereby regeneration schemes could take place. Atkinson (2003) argued that this was an attempt by governmental authorities to understand what people in these areas regard as their needs and prioritises. It seemed, on the surface, to be a bottom-up application of urban regeneration but in fact it was top-down.

The 'inclusive' nature of the project was to involve locals in the process however it was tokenistic in many respects due to the developments which preceded these 'inclusive aims'. One of these developments was 'Drake circus shopping centre' which was awarded Britain's ugliest building in 2006 (Plymouth Live, 2018), see also fig (6). Therefore, it could be argued that the use of the word 'Inclusive' unveiled an alternative motive to enhance the city through capital investment not necessarily to contribute to the culture and lives of the inhabitants. However, a neoliberal viewpoint values economic development as a way to increase social inclusion,

30

'increasing social inclusion is about investing in human capital and improving the skills shortages for the primary purpose of economic growth' (Gidley et al, 2010, p.2). It could be argued that economic growth and development in an area allows people to participate in society, therefore creating a sense of 'social inclusion.' This can be done through creating jobs in the area which allows people to develop skills and positively contribute to society which is especially valuable in low-income/low-demand areas.

Fainstein (2014) maintained that urban redevelopment programmes often overlook the element of social exclusion in favour of the bigger picture. The bigger picture in this sense concerns the power of urban regeneration to facilitate economic growth over local residents *'the*

displacement of residents is justifiable if the majority benefits even marginally, regardless of the serious costs to those displaced and the likelihood that the displaced are already the most disadvantaged? (Fainstein, 2014, p.6). In some respects, social inclusion/exclusion is more of an afterthought to urban regeneration. However, it is worthwhile to investigate whether social exclusion in the spatial planning process is inevitable.



Fig (6): Showcases Plymouths ‘Drake Circus Shopping Mall’ that was a part of the 2020 *Vision for Plymouth* socially inclusive regeneration scheme. Source: (Plymouth Live, 2018).

2.4.3 Social Inclusion in the arts

The artistic process has the power to unlock *‘human potential’* through encouraging participation and working with diverse groups of people (Gidley et al, 2010, p.4). Human beings are multi-dimensional and can provide valuable contributions beyond the political economy of a nation (ibid). Diverse groups in particular have unique knowledge capacities that can be utilized in collaborative artistic projects (ibid). Figure (7) showcases variables that are needed for a successful application of the arts to society. This is important when looking at social inclusion as some people may not have the necessary resources available to them to partake in artistic

activities. These include education and training and artistic institutions which make it possible to participate and create art. Without these, the arts cannot be employed successfully to foster social inclusion and regenerate an area.

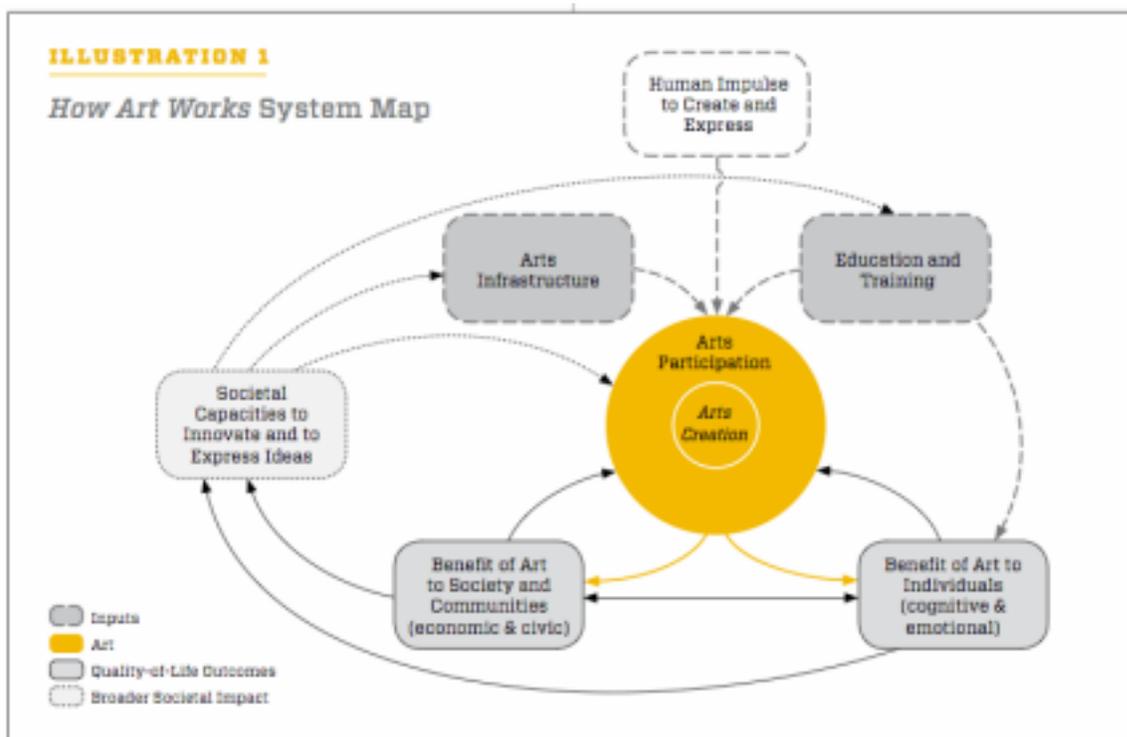
Incorporating mural arts into urban regeneration schemes also raises the question of who gets chosen to participate and what subject matter is explored. Artistic processes can be both binding and dividing due to people being left out in such processes (Vaart et al. 2018). Research has shown that it is generally low income, inner city areas which get chosen for urban regeneration schemes therefore leaving out rural areas in the process which also may be in need of revitalisation. The dividing process of mural arts will be explored further in this section. In the case of *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* various low income and hard to reach communities were chosen over a period of three years. These groups included Aiséirí Céim Éile; an addiction recovery group, Vita community hub, Killure Bridge Nursing Home, Sudanese: Syrian and various multi-cultural communities (Murals for Communities, 2021).

However, other hard to reach and low-income communities who have not been chosen may feel an element of exclusion. Carroll et al .(2014) discussed ‘hard to reach men’ in community based health programmes specific to Waterford, Ireland. ‘Hard to reach men’ presents itself through unemployment, poor income, low education and social isolation who are generally reluctant to use health services and engage in risky behaviour (ibid). In Ireland, Male suicide saw a rise from the years 2009-2015 whereby the high rate of unemployment and economic recession played a large role (ibid). Carroll et al .(2014) found that these ‘hard to reach men’ benefitted from community based programmes which provided incentives, low costs and choosing accessible venues. This thesis argues that this community group would benefit from

32

being involved in *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford*. However, the fact that they were not chosen goes to show how *exclusive* some community based programs can be. The arts, in a top-down sense can transform urban areas, however arts in a bottom-up sense can also change an area's purpose through the phenomenon of artistic communities. The ‘diverse groups’ that this thesis will be looking at are asylum seekers. An asylum seeker is defined ‘*as a person seeking to be granted protection as a refugee outside their country of origin and is awaiting the determination of his/her status*’ (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2021). The arts provide a platform for people to use their voice through a variety of materials. Askins & Pain (2011, p.804)

looked at participatory art projects with young people of African and British heritage in northeast England. The aim of which was to ‘*use participatory art to explore emotional topographies, everyday exclusions, and notions of belonging.*’ The project arose from tension within U.K domestic policy which physically integrated immigrants (refugees and asylum seekers) into a community whereas little attention was given to how the community itself integrates with its new inhabitants. They go on to argue that communities can be physically integrated however racism and Islamophobia exist (ibid).



33

Fig (7): Illustrates a system map showcasing the major components of the arts ecosystem as “nodes” connected by arrows representing the relationships between those nodes. Various inputs are visible such as Arts Infrastructure through policy and education and training. It is visible then to see how these have ‘quality of life outcomes’ which affect communities. Source: (Create Equity, 2021).

Sales (2002) maintained that policy surrounding the integration of refugees and asylum seekers actively promotes social exclusion. This is in part due to the long process of achieving ‘refugee status’ in a given country. In Ireland, there is currently a minimum waiting period of 6

months before receiving refugee status (Department of Justice, 2021). This facilitates a sense of ‘otherness’ as Asylum seekers do not have the same rights as Irish citizens. This sense of social exclusion is further exacerbated by spatial segregation within Direct provision centres themselves, see fig (8) for context. This specific Direct Provision centre called ‘Athlone accommodation centre’ is located near a busy road over 3km from the town centre which is not well connected by public transport. Fig (9) also demonstrates the temporality and bad quality of this specific accommodation which create social exclusion for asylum seekers in Ireland.

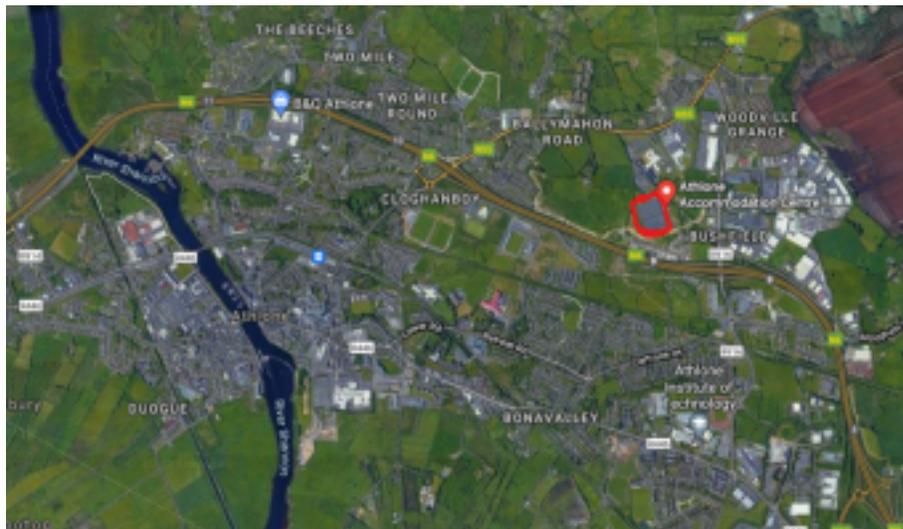


Fig (8): Athlone accommodation centre (highlighted in red) for asylum seekers with its location next to a busy road over 3km from the town centre not well connected by public transport. (Google Maps, 2021).



Fig (9): The accommodation provided in Athlones accommodation centre. (Independent

Westmeath, 2020).

It is clear that in order to overcome the socio-spatial exclusion currently experienced by asylum seekers in Ireland requires a multilateral approach with top-down legislation; however, this thesis focuses its attention on the role of art in fostering social inclusion. Gidley et al (2010) maintained that the sense of social exclusion experienced by refugees and asylum seekers is down to various welfare systems providing them with ‘tokens’ and ‘vouchers’ to receive food and amenities which in turn fuels public perceptions of them as a ‘burden’. It could be argued that fostering a sense of social inclusion is directly linked to how various groups are treated by the government. In order to overcome segregation and create a sense of social inclusion for all, various U.K based arts programmes were evaluated on their effectiveness (Askins & Pain, 2011). The first one concerned African Community Advice North East (ACANE) in Newcastle which is a refugee led community organisation which aims to support African asylum seekers and refugees through a philosophy of whole-community integration. 21 participants came together to develop ideas through diagramming, discussion, cartoons, and then final pieces using acrylics. The aim was to present positive images and paintings of the African community in Newcastle. Various positive outcomes were identified such as people realising they shared similar issues which created a space for conversation and allowed relationships to develop. Speaking from an educational context, Karkou & Glasman (2004) maintained that the arts foster personal wellbeing and a sense of social inclusion. The U.K government’s National Advisory

35

Committee on Creative and Cultural Education in 1999 documented the link between the arts, education, and increased cultural diversity whilst also improving the economy. The Arts Council of England stated that *‘being involved with the arts can have a lasting and transforming effect on many aspects of people’s lives. This is true not just for individuals, but also for neighbourhoods, communities, regions and entire generations, whose sense of identity and purpose can be changed through art’* (Karkou & Glasman, 2004, p.59). The arts contribute to individuals by fostering skills and facilitating a space for creativity but are also vital for creating relationships which in turn strengthens communities (Karkou & Glasman, 2004). As discussed in the context of *urban regeneration*, poor inner city areas suffer from a disconnect between citizens which leads to a sense of social isolation. The arts can be seen as a way to improve this disconnect and

foster a sense of social inclusion.

In the Newcastle case study the project was made into a report available for policy makers. However, conflicting views and tensions also arose in the group. It did have positive influences in changing opinions about race as people who were inherently racist at the beginning began to change their views. Interestingly, when an artist was brought on board participation dwindled due to people feeling as though they were being told what to do. Jermyn (2004) discussed the difficulty of analysing artistic projects and their ability to target 'social inclusion' as it has different meanings in different contexts. On the one hand it concerns people who are vulnerable to bad health, education, employment and crime and on the other hand it concerns people feeling socially excluded from a typically 'deprived' community. However, in the context of this thesis using Young's (2000) definition of social inclusion concerns using the people who will be affected by various developments in the decision making process, i.e locals and those who experience issues that come with living in Inner city areas.

This form of creative, social inclusion facilitated the creation of new relationships, and offered a learning experience about people's cultures (Gidley et al, 2010). For groups such as asylum seekers, having a sense of agency in their life is extremely important. Arts projects that value the voices of the participants and see them as equal stakeholders and allows them to express themselves. Learning from this case study, similar processes can be applied to help with community cohesion to '*enable agents to repeatedly mobilise them to enact their empowerment elsewhere*' (Askins & Pain, 2011, p.816).

36

2.5 Benefit of Art to Society

Various policies surrounding social inclusion and the arts will be evaluated on their effectiveness. Literature has suggested that top-down policy including social inclusion is needed for real tangible benefits; especially surrounding the integration of asylum seekers into society. The arts allow people to contribute something that is 'valuable' to society (Askins & Pain, 2011). This value actualises itself in terms of culture and is particularly useful for fostering a sense of social inclusion as it allows people to feel a sense of belonging; however, there are variables needed in order for this sense of belonging to be fostered correctly. Fig (10) created by the *National*

Endowment for the Arts demonstrates the various benefits of the arts as a multi-level measurement structure. The benefits of the arts for fostering a sense of social inclusion can be seen in the model as spanning cultural, social and political spheres whereby a greater sense of community pride is developed, strengthened community cohesiveness, increased tolerance and so on. This model showcases that the arts contribute more than just aesthetic values but can play a vital role in creating a socially inclusive environment. Therefore, this research focuses on the variables needed for a socially inclusive mural art programme.

ILLUSTRATION 10

Example of Benefit of Art to Society and Communities as a Multi-Level Measurement Structure

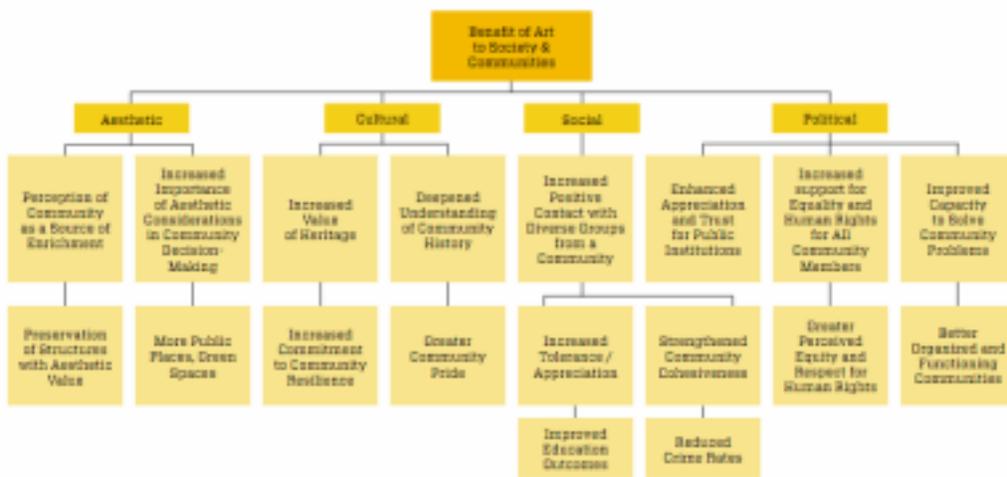


Fig (10): Looks at the benefit of art to society and communities as a multi-level measurement structure. Categorized into aesthetic, cultural, social and political values allows its benefits to be analysed in a multi-sectoral way. Source: (Create Equity, 2021).

2.6 Conclusion of Theoretical Framework

To conclude the theoretical framework of this thesis the various learning outcomes will be explored along with the introduction of a conceptual model based on these findings. The basis of the theoretical framework is to understand how each concept works in real life contexts and the various consequences this has on communities and space.

Murals and artistic projects that have been employed by governmental institutions have been criticized in the past for creating gentrification, however this is a possible and sometimes necessary consequence of the activity of improving public spaces (Caro, 1975). Inner city areas

where it is predominantly made up of low income communities are generally chosen for urban regeneration schemes, literature has shown that it is these communities which suffer from a sense of social exclusion (Inroy, 2000). Social inclusion then, directly relates to how low income and minority groups are treated in society (Fainstein, 2014). This thesis has found through the literature review that asylum seekers experience social exclusion as they are placed in low quality housing on the outskirts of towns and cities in Ireland. This creates social exclusion as they are both physically and socially disconnected from their community.

This thesis has found that a necessary mechanism when employing co-creation is stakeholder mapping and service prototyping (Farr, 2017). These ensure that power structures are understood and respected whilst the ‘service’ is test run to ensure a smooth undertaking of the concept. Clear explanation of concepts that are then made aware to participants is also important to avoid confusion (Farr, 2017). To conclude, research has showcased that low-income communities suffer from social exclusion therefore co-creation within urban regeneration projects is valuable for people to feel a sense of social inclusion. Co-creation concerns the process by which urban regeneration programmes involve participants. The conceptual model will be explored below which goes further in depth into how these concepts are operationalised and how they relate to each other.

2.7 Conceptual Model based on Theoretical Framework

Based on the theoretical framework and various learning outcomes achieved from the literature review, a conceptual model was created with the main concepts in mind; co-creation, urban regeneration and social inclusion. The meanings and linkages between concepts is the basis of this section. To begin with all concepts have various attributes in common; such as the ability to work well with low-income and hard to reach communities. To illustrate, literature has suggested that when co-creation is employed within low-income communities it sees the best results (Watson, 2014). This is due to the fact that it allows people to have a say in how certain services are run and delivered (ibid). In the context of this thesis, co-creation was employed due to its central role within *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* as a way to involve participants in the process of mural creation.

Low income communities also play a central role in urban regeneration schemes as they are the ones who receive funding for these projects (Cameron et al. 2003). Urban regeneration concerns the process of updating run-down areas (ibid). Urban regeneration was chosen as a central concept due to the fact that Waterford is currently undergoing an urban regeneration scheme. Seen in fig (11) the model begins with co-creation and the mechanisms needed to make it work; employed in low income communities, defined power structures in the sense that participants are aware of who to go to for queries and testing of the project beforehand to iron out any issues. When it is employed in mural art regeneration it has two outcomes; improving public space and the possibility of gentrification. When co-creation is employed in mural art regeneration it fosters social inclusion through allowing people to have a visual impact on their community, fostering a sense of acceptance for both the community and minority groups and creating a socially inclusive environment through art by creating a safe space, allowing people to speak on certain issues.

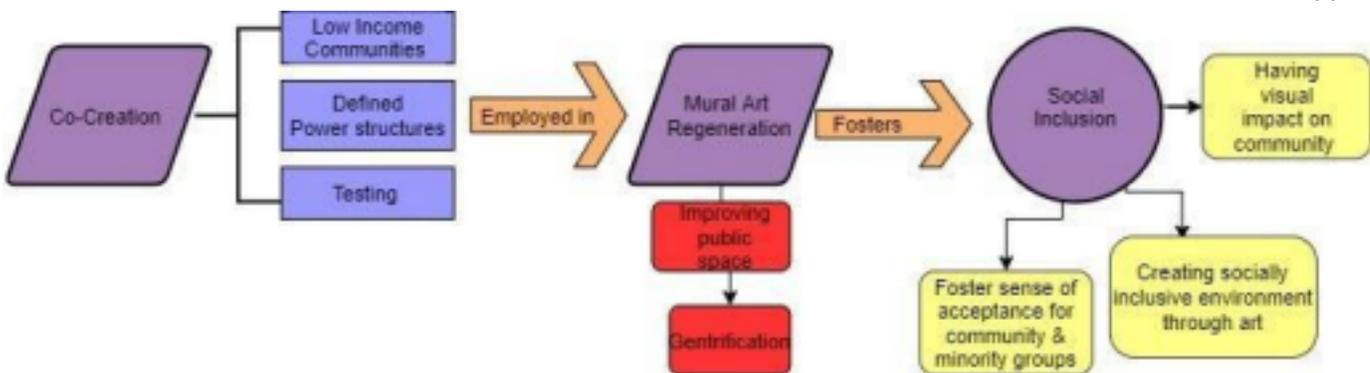


Fig (11): Conceptual Model based on Theoretical Framework. Co-creation, regeneration and social inclusion are seen in purple while the mechanisms needed for a successful undertaking of co-creation are seen in blue. The red boxes outline effects of mural art regeneration such as the act of improving public space which can lead to gentrification. When co-creation is employed in mural art regeneration it fosters social inclusion through allowing community members to have a visual impact on their community whilst fostering a sense of acceptance and creating a socially inclusive environment through art. Created using Diagram.net.

3.0 Methodology

Qualitative Research

This section discusses the process of data collection that was explored in this thesis by outlining who was chosen to be interviewed and various secondary sources that contributed to the data collection. This thesis uses qualitative data, which, in essence, helps researchers to explain and understand certain phenomena (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Qualitative data is

40

used in my research due to the fact that it focuses on ‘*people’s lived experiences*’ (ibid). This in turn provides rich insights into how mural arts can be successfully employed through interviewing various stakeholders which were involved in the process (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p.559). Analysing the data is then a key step in the research process, it provides a way to process qualitative data so that various learning outcomes can be communicated with others (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p.564).

In terms of analysing the data, I used the method of *constant comparison analysis*, also known as coding, whereby codes were identified prior to analysis and then looked for in the data (ibid). The codes were created after transcribing the interviews and reading secondary data sources due to the exploration of similar themes in each source. This made it possible to reveal themes, mechanisms, relationships and theories which contributed to concrete learning outcomes. I then used Atlas ti which is an online coding platform to highlight the codes in the transcripts along with using the same codes in the secondary data sources; the panel presentation, *Murals for Communities* own methodology and a local newspaper article. The concepts and codes are explored in the table below.

3.1.1 Table translating concepts into codes

Table 1 - detailing codes, their meanings and how many times they came up in the data analysis

Code	Concept/meaning Number of Times used
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Co-creation	Co-creation as the process by which Murals for Communities involved participants 31
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Power Power structures within the 10 project

Testing Testing of project 3

41

Social inclusion	Social inclusion whether a socially inclusive environment is created 15
Social exclusion	Did people experience social exclusion 2
Urban regeneration	Process of improving public space of run-down areas 16
Process Local	Technicality of the project Use of local people, amenities, authorities 22

Cultural controversies	Cultural contexts and meanings	12
Gentrification	Negative consequence of urban regeneration	2
Community	Those involved; locals, hard to reach and low income communities	44
Miscommunication	Confusion on definition of concepts	4
Top/down	The project being implemented in a top/down sense with funding from governmental agencies	2

42

Refugee	New community members in the form of refugees/asylum seekers who were involved in the project	14
Results	End result of project whether it is positive or negative	15

3.2.2 Limitations to Research

Limits to the research include being unable to acquire interviews with participants involved in the project. I contacted all avenues in the organisation to involve participants in interviews, however, due to GDPR restrictions and busy schedules this was not possible. GDPR, also known as General Data Protection Regulation, meant that project managers were not allowed to pass on personal data such as an email address to me. This restricts the scope of my data collection, however, secondary data sources are very valuable in this case such as the *Murals for Communities* Online Panel Presentation which included numerous stakeholders in the organisation such as community leaders which provided numerous insights into how participants experienced the project.

3.2.3 Interview Recruitment

The process of interview recruitment is explored below. I found the contact information for each interviewee through the *Murals for Communities* website. I then emailed them acquiring written consent. The interview was done through zoom and recorded on my phone via the voice recording app which was later transcribed.

3.2.4 Primary data sources

Table 2 - detailing primary data sources

Interviewee Name	Role Date of Interview Contribution to thesis
------------------	---

Katherine Collins	Project Manager 14/06/2021 Assisted in supplying definitions of concepts & semiotic approach
Christina Campiolonge	Liaison Officer 21/06/21 Logistics of finding walls for the murals, participant selection process, giving eye witness accounts of how participants experienced the process
Shane O' Driscoll	Artist for The Walls Project Waterford 14/07/21 Insights into what the artist could/couldn't explore in the murals, learning experiences that came about

3.2.5 Secondary data sources

These sources were chosen due to the fact that Cristina Campiolonge: Interviewee number two informed me that they might be valuable to this research. She followed up with an email linking each source to which I transcribed and analysed. The online panel presentation involved numerous stakeholders which provided rich insights into the practicality of running the project, learning outcomes and the impact of the murals on communities. The Methodology for Community Engagement showcased *Murals for Communities'* own ideology along with background information, methodology and theoretical concepts. Finally, the newspaper article demonstrated how the local community responded to the murals.

Table 3 - Outlining secondary data sources

Organisation	Type Date Research Question
<p>Murals for Communities.</p> <p>Zoom later uploaded to Facebook</p>	<p>Online Panel</p> <p>29/11/2020</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>involving;</p> <p>Katherine Collins - project manager,</p> <p>Lars Ickenroth</p> <p>Artist/Project Manager (Netherlands),</p> <p>Cristina Ciampaglione - Artist/ Arts Facilitator, Magda Karol -</p> <p>What are the necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation within Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford?</p> <p>How can the findings from Murals for Communities : The Walls Project</p>

	<p>Artist, Niall O Lachlainn - Artist, Dr. Rafael Schacter Lecturer, Bart Zdrojowy - Polish community leader, Mary Bourke - Killurebridge Nursing Home.</p>	<p>Waterford be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland</p>
<p>Murals for Communities & Kaunas University of Technology. Created in partnership with Waterford City & County council, The Walls Project, KTU, Stitching Street Art</p>	<p>Methodology for Community Engagement : Handbook detailing aims and objectives, theoretical background and information for artists</p>	<p>20/09/2020 What are the necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation within Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford?</p>

<p>The Munster Express Newspaper written by Jordan Norris</p>	<p>Newspaper article 18/08/2020 What are the entitled '<i>New murals</i> <i>incorporate messages</i> <i>of community</i> <i>inclusion</i>' necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation within Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford?</p>
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	<p>How can the findings from Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland?</p>
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3.2.6 Sources answering research questions

Table 4 - Showcasing what sources answer the secondary research questions along with the analytical technique, interview questions and codes used.

<p><i>Project Waterford?</i></p>			<p>that might arise?</p> <p>Top/down Results</p> <p>Was it important to you to select people that were locals or would enjoy the murals themselves?</p> <p>What role did the participants play in the process?</p> <p>What were some conflicts that arose?</p> <p>Were there power structures defined to all participants?</p>
<p>What role do the murals created by <i>Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford</i> play</p>	<p>Interviews Online panel session</p>	<p>Interviews: Coding via Atlas.ti Online panel session: Coding via Atlas. ti</p>	<p>What role do the murals' play Waterfords urban regeneration scheme?</p> <p>Urban regeneration Local Community Result Cultural</p>

in Waterfords urban			controversies Did the Gentrification organisation who Top/down
------------------------	--	--	--

<p>regeneration scheme?</p>	<p>Interviews Online panel session Newspaper article</p>	<p>Interviews: Coding via Atlas.ti Online panel session: Coding via Atlas. ti</p>	<p>funded it have any say in how the murals looked or where they were placed? Who decided the subject matter and location of the murals? Did you witness or note Gentrification as a result of the murals?</p>
<p>How can the findings from <i>Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford</i> be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland?</p>			<p>Do you believe that social inclusion and co-creation are valuable for low-income communities? How were</p> <p>Social inclusion Social exclusion Refugee Community Local Result</p>

			participants in the project included in the process of discussion and
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			<p>decision making surrounding either the subject matter of the murals or the placing of them?</p> <p>Did you witness an element of social exclusion in the project?</p>
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3.2.7 Introduction to Case Study

This thesis employed the case study of *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* to understand how co-creation can be used to foster social inclusion and regenerate an area. Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007, p.558) maintained that case studies are a way of *‘understanding issues intrinsic to the person, group or event.’* This specific case study was utilized due to their focus on co-creation as a method to involve participants in the process of mural creation. It directly relates to the research problem of this thesis; *to explore the variables needed for a successful application of co-creation within arts programmes whilst regenerating an area and fostering social inclusion.* The relevance of studying such themes is to understand how those who experience social exclusion i.e. Asylum seekers can feel socially included through the use of mural arts. This specific case study stood out due to their commitment to

regenerating Waterford through murals and involving hard to reach and low income communities in the process (Murals for Communities, 2021). *Murals for Communities* and *The Walls Project Waterford* are two different organisations that paired together for this specific project from the years 2018-2020. The two organizations will be explored below, along with the actual project this thesis focused on. This thesis will then look at Waterford's urban regeneration scheme as necessary background information to the role of murals within Waterford.

50

The Walls Project Waterford

To begin with, *The Walls Project Waterford* will be discussed. Set up in 2015, as an international street art festival they have successfully employed street artists from Ireland and abroad to transform Waterford's urban landscape through the use of murals (The Walls Project Waterford, 2021). They state that their mission is to '*improve the lives of people and connect communities through the festival street art*' (The Walls Project Waterford, 2021). This presents itself through an annual mural festival which usually takes place in mid August, however, coronavirus restrictions have meant that 2020 and 2021's festivals took a different approach. It was hosted through online activities and art tours were actualised in person in small groups to restrict the spread of coronavirus (ibid). Each year, a different theme is addressed. On their website they state that the 2021 festival aims to address the issue of gender balance in street art (The Walls Project Waterford, 2021). Upon further research, it became clear that *The Walls Project Waterford* is well reputed in both the local area and abroad. One newspaper named *The Journal* maintained that the festival attracts over 10,000 visitors each year, positively impacting local business and also creating an appreciation for mural art in the community (Ní Aodha, 2018). Various murals from the project can be seen below. They claim to use the facades of old derelict buildings in and around Waterford City which contribute to the urban regeneration of the city itself (The Waterford Walls Project, 2021).



51

Figure (12): *The Walls Project Waterford's* Murals from various years that the project has taken place 2015-2021. The themes, subject matter and style of the murals differ greatly from year to year. This is due to the fact that a variety of artists are brought on board with different backgrounds who express their own style and subject matter through the mural festivals. However, political commentary is not allowed to be expressed in the murals. (The Walls Project Waterford, 2021).

Murals for Communities

The second organisation this thesis will discuss is *Murals for Communities* which is an international street art organization that takes place in Waterford in Ireland, Herleen in the Netherlands and Kaunas in Lithuania. It is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme within the European Union (Murals for Communities, 2021). They state that their mission is to '*to explore, capture and formalise the potentials of Mural arts as a tool for Community Engagement by creating Mural art works through community involvement and co-creation between community members and Mural artists*' (ibid). By working with local councils, artists and governmental agencies they are able to create murals with various community members through the use of co-creation (ibid).

3.2.8 Setting the scene for urban regeneration within Waterford city

As urban regeneration is a key theoretical concept discussed in this thesis it is important to first

outline what urban regeneration looks like in the city of Waterford. The need for regeneration within Waterford city and across Ireland came from the social deprivation caused by the economic recession of 2008 (Mee, 2014). The country's unemployment rate went from 4.4% in 2006 to 14.7% in 2012 (Kelly et al. 2014). The damage to the labour market for young people was especially severe (ibid). This was not helped by the Irish property collapse whereby housing became increasingly sparse and unaffordable (ibid). An increasing phenomenon of 'ghost estates' which were essentially unfinished housing developments created a sense of carelessness, increased anti-social behaviour and led to a general degeneration of Ireland's urban landscape

52

(ibid). Inner city areas also became depopulated due to the failure of various industries (ibid). This all set the scene for an urban regeneration scheme to alleviate some of these issues caused by the recession.

As discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis, urban regeneration can be understood as an attempt of a government to reverse social and physical decline in urban areas by both improving the physical structure and the economy of those areas (Weaver, 2001). Therefore, the question is being asked: *What does urban regeneration look like within Waterford city?* Waterford City & County Council (2021) state that the urban regeneration scheme was passed in 2015 which correlates with the creation of Waterford Walls and the beginning of the mural festival which will be explored in the discussion section of this thesis. The urban regeneration consists of various changes to the city such as new housing developments and the creation of a reflective canopy ceiling covering an area in the city centre near local bars and nightclubs also known as 'The Covering of the Applemarket', seen in fig (13) (Waterford City & County Council, 2021). The idea behind it was to create an open and sustainable public realm (Dlight, 2021). Urban regeneration also presents itself through pedestrianising over 1km of the city's streets and improving the hard surfaces to Portuguese granite and Leinster limestone (European Commission, 2021). Other regeneration elements include street lighting, street furniture and public art pieces (Waterford City & County Council, 2021).



Fig (13): The Apple Market, Waterford City located at John Street. It is a 1 400 m², 9 m-high, triangular glass and steel canopy structure which was part of Waterfords urban regeneration scheme (Dlight, 2021).

53

3.2.9 Case Study : *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford 2018-2020*

The case study will be explored in this section along with various funding partners that allowed the project to be completed. This thesis focused on the Waterford project however the partnering countries' projects such as The Netherlands and Lithuania are also relevant to introduce due to the exploration of similar themes. The partnership between *The Walls Project* and *Murals for Communities* was made possible through *Murals for Communities* Creative Europe Programme which awarded them €90,000 for the project itself (Haran, 2018). It was also made possible through Waterford City & County Council's development of 'three sisters' European Capital of Culture which saw Mural art as a tool to connect communities and increase the quality of run-down areas (Murals for Communities, 2021).

The partners of the project include *The Walls Project* (Waterford) as a lead partner, *The Street Art Foundation* as a Communications Partner (Heerlen) and *Innovative Creative Projects* (Kaunas) as a Research Partner (Murals for Communities, 2021). Each of these urban areas have various attributes in common that make them ideal to employ a mural programme. To begin with, they are mostly made up of low income and hard to reach communities in the sense that they experience high levels of unemployment and/or are recovering from an economic downturn (Murals for Communities, 2021). *Murals for Communities* state that the murals help alleviate this

sense of disconnect through *'improving the life quality of those living and working in the city through cultural activities'* (Murals for Communities, 2021).

The project and its associated partners claim to provide a scientific approach to mural art through employing established institutions to carry out the murals (Waterford Walls), and backing up theories surrounding community engagement by using academic research (Innovative Creative Projects) within The Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (Murals for Communities, 2021). This academic approach facilitated by The Kaunas University of Technology actualises itself as a document entitled 'Methodology for Community Engagement' which provides interesting insights into how the organisation views their role along with the role of mural arts in these chosen communities. This document will be analysed in the discussion segment of this thesis as a secondary data source.

54

During the years the project was underway, over 150 artists were involved; both Irish and international along with a variety of participation groups (Haran, 2018). Each year also addressed different themes and subject matter based on what participants presented in workshops (ibid). These participant groups included multicultural communities such as Polish, Sudaense and Syrian refugees, Aiséirí Céim Éile: an addiction recovery group, Vita community hub and Killure Bridge Nursing Home (Murals for Communities, 2021). The involvement of Syrian and Sudaense refugees is relevant due to the treatment asylum seekers receive from the government when they enter Ireland. Asylum seekers entering the country are currently placed in direct provision centres whilst waiting for refugee status. 'Direct provision' is defined by the Irish government as 'a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status are being processed rather than through full cash payments' (Department of Justice and Equality, 2020). Direct Provision centres are a form of shared accommodation in disused public buildings however it is privately owned (Department of Justice and Equality, 2020). Numerous families can be placed into one room with little to no living space. These direct provision centres are located on the outskirts of cities and towns which facilitate social exclusion (ibid). The public transport system in rural Ireland is underdeveloped which in turn affects the autonomy of asylum seekers. They then rely on the services and amenities close by which can be sparse especially where these direct provision centres are

located. International communities account for a large portion of Waterford's population, therefore programmes that focus on integration and community cohesion are relevant to discuss (Quinn, 2020).

4.0 Results

This chapter discusses the results that are found during the in-depth interviews as well as the secondary data sources such as the panel discussion, the organisations own handbook and a local newspaper article. The chapter is structured based on the different secondary research questions. Therefore, the questions will be answered in this chapter.

4.1.1 What are the necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation within Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford?

Whilst conducting the interviews, I supplied each interviewee with a definition of co-creation as the *process by which urban regeneration and arts programmes involve participants*. Each interviewee agreed with this definition and went on to tell me how co-creation presented itself in the project. Interviewee number one; Katherine Collins: Project Manager for *Murals for Communities The Walls Project Waterford* explained that co-creation presented itself through the workshops whereby the artist would ask the participation group a series of questions such as *'what does home mean to you'* and they would then put their answers on sticky notes.

Three sketches would be drawn up by the artist based on what the participants had written, the community group would then vote on their favourite. Katherine stated that :

‘The artist would take inspiration from the stories and the memories and the hopes and the wishes and desires of the community living in that particular place for what would represent their cultures in a physical sense on a wall in a place they would be passing’ (line 84-87).

The workshops and probed questions such as *‘what does home mean to you’* facilitated a place where community members could discuss their cultures and personal stories. The artist then takes inspiration from this to draw sketches and the final mural. There is further information on these workshops in their handbook titled *‘Methodology for community engagement’* which provides an information pack for artists on how to handle these workshops. It states that the

56

workshops should create an environment where *‘people can discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere’* (Murals for Communities, 2021). This handbook also gives a rough outline on how to start these workshops which begin with an opening statement, introduction, artist showcases their own work and ideology, open discussion, group decision making and finally involves the artist listening and adjusting his/her work based on feedback (ibid). Interviewee number two; Cristina Ciampaglione: Liaison Manager for *Murals for Communities The Walls Project Waterford* stated that co-creation within the workshops was important because *‘artists were taking input from the community and interpreting them. It was not a commission piece, it was a fluid exchange and the artist was given artistic license to a certain degree’* (line 56-58). This freedom of artistic license was also mirrored in the interview with Shane O’ Driscoll: an artist for *The Walls Project Waterford* who maintained that he had artistic license as he could convey his signature style however he did have to keep away from political messages whilst satisfying various stakeholders. In terms of street art and the negative association that it might carry, Niall O’ Laughlin an artist involved in the project stated that *‘Graffiti still has negative connotations in Ireland but I feel like projects like this help break that stigma.’*

Cristina also stated that co-creation presented itself when artists were working with each other on the project. This is due to the fact that the project involves three artists each year which consists of a local, mentor and travelling artist. According to the interviews this relationship ran

seemingly smoothly as artists were able to offer each other support during the process. Co-creation also gave artists the opportunity to learn from each other and develop both interpersonal and communication skills. An interesting outcome to do with exploring the necessary mechanisms for a successful application of co-creation was in Lithuania's project, Katherine informed me that co-creation was unsuccessful in this project due to the fact that it was not properly explained to the participants in the beginning. The participants were under the impression that they would be drawing and painting the mural in tandem with the artist. When it came to light that this was not the case, people were not happy.

The participants wanted the artist to take their suggestions literal instead of purely inspirational.

They wanted rabbits and clouds represented in the mural however, the artist took the idea of rabbits and clouds as inspiration to create his own piece. In response to this Katherine stated that if the participants were painting the murals '*it would defeat the purpose of having an artist*' (line 82). This correlates with what Cristina stated above surrounding artistic agency. The

57

difficulty of translating policy into real life contexts also became apparent in this instance. Katherine stated :

'It can be written into a policy document as one thing but actually to be able to describe it in a practical sense to a community where there might be language barriers, literacy barriers, cultural barriers, that's a very different thing and great care needs to be taken around that' (line 99-102).

Community leaders and project managers need to clearly communicate with participation groups taking language, literacy and cultural barriers into account. This also means speaking to them in a non-academic sense to portray concepts i.e explaining how co-creation works instead of simply defining it. These acted as learning outcomes otherwise known as 'testing' which manifested itself in the document : '*Methodology for Community Engagement.*' Katherine also stated that this conflict could have been avoided if the workshops were in person but due to coronavirus they had to take place on Zoom. The inability of mural art programmes and especially workshops to be successful online is something that correlated in all the interviews. Cultural controversies also arose within the project to do with colours and subject matter of

murals. Cristina explained a controversy surrounding the addiction recovery group:

‘Art is so subjective that in the first sketch development they saw something that the artist didn't even mean to portray. They saw a reference to 1960s psychedelic through using bright colours. That was one of the difficulties; making people understand the art did not have those meanings behind it’ (line 91-94).

Katherine also noted the subjective nature of art in the Lithuanian project, *‘they rejected the sketches because they thought it was associated with gay pride. Lithuania is not as accepting of queer marriage as Ireland is’ (line 341-343).* To answer this secondary research question,

qualitative data has showcased that the variables needed for a successful application of co-creation within mural art programmes are as such; understanding the subjective nature of art, clear explanation of concepts, understanding of cultural, literacy and language barriers whilst also providing an open and safe space for participants to talk about topics. Co-creation presents

58

itself through the process of working with artists, project managers, community leaders and participants within the organisation through workshops.

4.1.2 What role do the murals created by Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford play in Waterfords urban regeneration scheme?

Mural art is directly linked to urban regeneration as it concerns the attempt of a government to improve the look of run-down buildings. Katherine Collins : Project Manager for *Murals for Communities The Walls Project Waterford* stated that urban regeneration can be primarily associated with demolition, however she states this is not always the case:

‘When they (people) think of the words urban regeneration they’re thinking about knocking down buildings and building buildings and putting in streetscapes and streets and whatever and somewhere down the line they start thinking about the people who are going to use them. We are kind of starting from the complete opposite

what is the use going to be and then what do we need to put in around infrastructure so it's great to see that people like you are studying this and will be writing up academic papers on it so that it becomes more accepted that culture and regeneration go hand in hand actually' (line 188-195).

According to Katherine the murals were created with the purpose and surrounding infrastructure in mind therefore directly contributing to the regeneration of Waterford city. She also highlighted the link between culture and regeneration maintaining that art is valuable within regeneration schemes. Katherine also mentioned that the murals helped make the regeneration about the people of Waterford by including them in the process. Viewing the role of the murals within Waterford's urban regeneration as something beneficial to the area was also mentioned by Cristina who stated, '*The O'Connell Street area was especially regenerated, From turning derelict buildings into art work it changes attitudes and creates a safer place*' (line 126-127). Cristina views the role of the murals as helping to make Waterford safer through improving the look of derelict buildings. When asked about the role of murals within Waterford's regeneration

59

scheme, Shane O'Driscoll : Artist for *The Walls Project Waterford* maintained that they play a huge role :

'They bring a new energy to the city, in Waterford the murals have totally transformed it, brings people to the area regardless of age/gender or background, externals and locals brings them to places they would not have normally gone, murals have been placed outside normal boundaries, brings new footfall and everything' (line 50-52).

The role of the murals surpasses aesthetic value within Waterford as it has had a positive impact on local business through attracting people to the area. Cristina stated '*part of my duties was to compile an economic record to gain numbers to see how many people are drawn to Waterford. Business owners benefited a lot with 80% more footfall so there is huge potential in mural art to bring revenue*' (line 135-137). Cristina also stated that it had a bonding impact on the community creating a sense of community cohesion as one pub on O'Connell Street, who had

just received a mural, held an impromptu street party where people gathered to celebrate. Cristina commented saying that the murals helped create a safer environment, *‘mural art is a great tool for regenerating the city’* (line 130). Similar to the street party, Shane O’ Driscoll noted that the murals became a talking point, *‘When making murals the public would always stop and talk to me about what I was doing and why. Even shops in the area would give me lunch and coffee’* (line 78-79). Therefore, the murals became a talking point for people in the community. The panel presentation also revealed that the process of involving locals in the regeneration scheme allowed participants to become more trusting of governmental institutions, Katherine stated :

‘For local authorities, it can be difficult to engage in communities because you are seen as a government institution. There is planning legislation currently being written for Waterford for the next five years. Developing these methodologies, making this a proven way to have people’s voices and opinions expressed. It’s a creative, non threatening way and it’s a much more comfortable zone for people rather than going straight to the government themselves.’

60

To finalise this research question, the role of murals within Waterford city is to regenerate the run down areas through improving the degradation of buildings through murals whilst improving footfall to local businesses and strengthened community cohesion for example the impromptu street party. It also offers a way that locals can have an impact in urban regeneration schemes through facilitating a space where they can talk with government officials.

4.1.3 How can the findings from Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum Seekers in Ireland?

The final research question of this thesis is to explore how mural art can be used to foster social inclusion for Asylum seekers in Ireland. The project employed international communities such as Polish, Sudanese and Syrian refugees, therefore the learning outcomes of these will be applied to the ability of mural art to foster social inclusion for Asylum seekers.

To begin with, the local newspaper: Munster Express wrote an article entitled *‘New*

murals incorporate messages of community inclusion’ which suggests that the murals help create a sense of ‘inclusion’ for community members. In the article, Norris (2020) discussed the ‘Open The Door’ project which included the participant groups; Vita Community Hub, Killure Bridge nursing home and Aiseiri Addiction Treatment Centre. The article stated that James O’Halloran, who was a manager of the Vita Community Hub stated that it was amazing *‘to see their thoughts represented, to be given a voice and to fulfil their potential is a dream come true for this group’* (Norris, 2020).

Social inclusion was also a topic touched on by Bart Zdrojowy the Polish community leader in the *Murals for Communities* panel discussion. He stated that he witnessed co-creation between the participants and artists. The chosen mural depicted a large tree and a person who landed on it to signify the Polish community landing in Waterford and setting up their roots, see fig (14). He stated that *‘this is one of the ways the Polish community in Ireland can put their mark on their place.’* He also highlighted the socially inclusive nature of the project for the Polish community by stating that *‘It definitely helped them gain a sense of belonging, it allowed a large group of Polish people in the community to gather, sometimes for the first time. Being in the workshops over the 6 days the mural was being painted it brought families in and gave them a reason to talk to each other.’* He also highlighted the importance of the mural being situated in a

61

public building in the centre of the city where people would pass by it regularly cementing their place in the community. Both Katherine and Cristina agreed that displaying the murals in areas which people would see regularly was important. The murals are situated in Waterford city however, Shane O’ Driscoll : Artist for *The Walls Project Waterford* said that rural areas can be left out in the process, *‘it would definitely bring creativity to the countryside’* (line 82).



Fig (14): Mural depicting a large tree and a person who landed on it to signify the Polish community landing in Waterford (Waterford Walls, 2021).

Katherine maintained that the project fostered social inclusion for asylum seekers through allowing them to have the opportunity to talk to government representatives in an informal setting, she stated: *'It's a lot to ask new communities such as Syrian refugees to voice their opinion to a government. This project allowed them to do so in a safe space. It's a great opportunity for local authorities to understand how to engage new communities.'* Lars Ickenroth: Artist/Project Manager for *Murals for Communities* in the Netherlands project echoed this sentiment by stating, *'The murals become a point of action, it's not about the final image but about the process of working with communities.'* When asked whether social inclusion and co-creation were valuable in low-income communities Cristina stated that they are the ones who are *'vulnerable and benefit the most by feeling represented and heard'* (line 152-153).

62

Cristina supplied this thesis with first hand accounts of people feeling socially included through the use of murals. One example of this was a mural created in tandem with a Dutch artist who asked in a workshop *'what would you like to see more in Waterford'* when a 16 year old Syrian refugee stood up and said she would like to see people be more appreciative of the fact that they are from the first world, she then opened up about her journey to Ireland on the boat

(line 76-82). The finished mural included two women, one from the global north and global south. In the online panel presentation, Mary Bourke head of Killure Bridge Nursing Home maintained that it *'initiated a lot of talk amongst residents when they would be passing it, It was a really good opportunity for our residents who could not get visitors to the nursing home.'*

Nursing home residents felt social exclusion during coronavirus as they were not allowed to have visitors, therefore the process of creating murals, although online, helped foster social inclusion. Cristina also maintained that the murals helped the disability group feel socially included in their community, *'It was incredible to see them so happy because during the workshops the main points that we discussed were all related to having an open door within the community to be open to dialoguing with external world'* (line 164-166).

It is this process of giving their thoughts and experiences in workshops and then seeing them represented on a public building which fosters social inclusion due to feeling *represented and heard*.

5.0 Discussion

From the results above, it is clear that there are many variables at work to make these projects a success. The headings below summarise the main findings based on the theoretical

framework and results of the data collected (both primary and secondary) to see what correlates with research already done on the topic. Therefore, this chapter includes interpretations of the results in relation to the conceptual framework and the broader literature.

5.1.1 Co-creation, communication and community

Co-creation presented itself in the project through workshops between artists and participants. Various mechanisms needed for a successful undertaking of co-creation were highlighted in the theoretical framework such as a clear definition of concepts, clear power structures and testing beforehand (Farr, 2017). These mechanisms are also visible in the conceptual model that was created with the concepts in mind, see also fig (11). From the interviews, it became clear that these mechanisms were explored to varying degrees within the project itself. As explored in the results section, a miscommunication of co-creation led to confusion in the Lithuanian project. This brought up tension amongst the participants as they were under the impression that they would be creating the murals themselves instead of solely helping with sketch development. Therefore, the importance of clearly defining concepts for participants is apparent (Farr, 2017).

In each interview, the question was asked whether participants were aware of power structures and who to go to for queries and questions. Each interviewee said that the participants were aware of such ‘power structures.’ However, this could also be down to the nature of the project itself which involved rigorous testing beforehand, which Puereni (2018) noted was key for co-creation. This testing presented itself through the previous projects such as Herleen and Kaunas which allowed Waterford’s project to run seemingly smoothly. The learning outcomes are visible in their handbook, *Methodology for Community Engagement* which outlines the importance of identity within communities, building a level of trust, allowing participation to occur and providing rewards (Murals for Communities, 2020). In this methodology is an ‘Information Package for Artists’ along with one for the mentor artist and creative team in the

64

hosting country which ensures that people are aware of their roles and responsibilities whilst also offering advice on what to do if things do not go as planned.

Literature suggested that co-creation is especially valuable in low-income communities,

this was also noted in the interviews (Watson, 2014). Scholars such as Lund (2018) maintained that people employed in co-creative projects who use the amenities on a daily basis are important because they engage in the ‘reality’ of the project. However, a debate arises in who decides what ‘reality’ is chosen. In the data collection, the words ‘local’ were highlighted and searched for using Atlas ti. *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* employed local participation groups and placed the murals in central locations within the city.

Horvath et al. (2020) maintained that co-creation within arts projects presents a debate as non-artists feel pressure to create something beautiful. In terms of *Murals for Communities*, the participants do not create the work or help to sketch. They are essentially present to brainstorm and see their ideas represented in a mural instead of reaping the benefits of the process of artistic creation. Instead, the pressure is placed in the hands of a professional instead of non-artists. However, this also ensures that the murals are held to a certain standard as the artists are picked specifically by the organisation. It also means that the artist can express artistic license and convey their personal style.

To conclude various observations were noted based on the use of co-creation within *Murals for Communities*. Interviews and the online panel discussion revealed that it does in fact work best with low income and hard to reach communities, allowing them to share their ideas, thoughts and discuss various topics through workshops. The use of co-creation within *Murals for Communities* contributes to existing literature the fact that communication with participants must be with various language, literacy and cultural considerations in mind. Clear definition and explanations of concepts, however, is necessary in avoiding possible conflicts, such as the Lithuanian example demonstrated. Literature also maintained that there may be pressure on non artists to create something beautiful however, this is not the case for *Murals for Communities* as they do not create the work themselves (Hovarth et al. 2020). It could be argued that this is due to the fact that *Murals for Communities* value artistic license.

Urban regeneration concerns an attempt by governments to reverse physical and social decline in deprived areas (Weaver, 2001). Houterman et al. (2006) maintained that urban regeneration simply refers to the demolition of houses and apartments in decaying housing estates. However, Katherine maintained that urban regeneration is not just about demolition or rebuilding but rather about repurposing a space with local people in mind. The role of murals within Waterford's urban regeneration does in fact seem to be an attempt by the Irish government to reverse physical and social decline in deprived areas which correlates with Weaver's (2001) definition. This is due to the fact that the murals are placed on degradation buildings in tandem with the community.

Theory suggests that locals should be consulted when employing urban regeneration schemes in deprived areas (Inroy, 2000). It could be argued that locals were involved in the murals which makes Waterford's urban regeneration somewhat bottom-up with help and resources from top-down institutions. As outlined in the methodology section of this thesis, Waterford is currently undergoing an urban regeneration scheme which includes the improvisation of public space, hard surfacing and installations such as The Apple Market. Theory suggested that urban regeneration schemes should be multi-sectoral in order to be beneficial to society (Houterman et al. 2006). It could be argued that Waterford's urban regeneration scheme is in fact multi-sectoral as it spans both public space and housing. The urban regeneration scheme correlates with the creation of the *Walls Project Waterford* in 2015 which aimed to improve the look of run-down buildings in the city. Interestingly, Omar et al. (2014) stated that mural art can induce urban regeneration due to the process of improving the look of degraded buildings. However, it cannot be confirmed whether urban regeneration occurred due to the creation of murals in the area or vice versa, but rather it is assumed that the area was in a general process of improvisation in 2015. A consequence of urban regeneration is gentrification however this was not witnessed in this research, this is also visible in the conceptual model which shows that gentrification is a possible consequence of improving public spaces. When asked in the interviews whether the murals produced gentrification each participant said that it did not.

In the interviews and panel presentation, it was observed that the programme facilitated a space to talk to government representatives. This correlates with research on *urban regeneration governance* which sees locals involved in decision making processes within urban regeneration schemes extremely beneficial for giving power back to low income and hard to reach communities (Xie et al, 2021). It can also be understood as a bottom-up interpretation of urban regeneration as locals are involved in changes to how their urban area looks, see fig (3) for the model on the bottom-up and top-down element of urban regeneration. This was also noted in fig (10) by Create Equity which demonstrates the benefits of the arts to society as a multi-level measurement which states under political benefits '*Enhanced appreciation and trust for governmental institutions.*' Within the same model, *community cohesion* is noted under social benefits of art to society. This manifested itself in the interviews as Cristina and Shane gave examples of community bonding experiences through conversing with locals and being rewarded lunch and coffee from nearby cafes.

However, cultural controversies can also arise when exploring possible subject matter with participants as the interview with Cristina and Katherine showcased. The theoretical framework introduced the concept of colour association whereby different colours carry political, social or cultural meanings without necessarily meaning to (Bacchetta et al. 2014). Cristina gave the example of a controversy that arose with the addiction recovery group to do with colour association. Hence, the subjective nature of art makes it unavoidable in some circumstances to cause controversy. Katherine also maintained that there were some cultural controversies surrounding the LGBTQ+ community in the Lithuanian project. This was also noted in the literature review which maintained that murals should take the culture of the area into account (Bacchetta et al. 2014).

Finally, theory has suggested that arts projects are not implicitly evaluated with the same, clear objectives therefore it is hard to evaluate their effectiveness at solving various societal issues (Kay, 2000). However, one of the results is the impact the murals have had on increasing tourism and business within Waterford city, which Cristina highlighted. To conclude, the murals play a key role in urban regeneration within Waterford city as it improves the look of various run-down buildings. As Katherine stated it also provides a way that people can have an impact on their urban environment providing a bottom-up interpretation of the concept. It must be noted,

however, that the participants do not actually create the murals or participate in sketch development therefore it is not a completely bottom-up interpretation of urban regeneration.

5.1.3 Socially inclusive mural art

Social inclusion is studied in this research due to the fact that low-income and hard to reach communities generally suffer from social exclusion (Young, 2000). It is these low income and hard to reach groups that were chosen to participate in *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* therefore a variety of questions to do with social inclusion were probed in the interviews. The interviews and online panel discussion supplied first hand accounts of people feeling ‘included’ in activities which will be illustrated below.

Similar to the secondary research question on urban regeneration, it could be debated how ‘inclusive’ the programme actually is. Young’s (2000) definition of social inclusion as a *‘democratic decision (being) normatively legitimate only if all those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision-making’* could view the programme to indeed be inclusive in nature as the participants are actively involved in choosing the final image that is represented on the mural. Therefore, they are involved in the process of discussion and decision making. During the interviews, the ‘social inclusiveness’ of the programme presents itself as having a space to discuss and become involved in the process of mural creation.

Theory suggested that diverse groups in particular have unique knowledge capacities that can be utilized in collaborative artistic projects (ibid). *Murals for Communities* have employed various diverse groups throughout the years; however this section focuses on the Polish community as Bart: the Polish community leader and Mary Bourke the head of Killure Bridge Nursing Home gave solid examples of social inclusion in the project. Bart highlighted the ability of the murals to foster social inclusion through the workshops and meeting like-minded people by maintaining that it allowed people to gather and talk to each other. It is this ability to have a visual impact on their community which fosters social inclusion (see also conceptual model).

As mentioned already in the results section as a main finding and answer to the third research

question, Cristina gave the example of an 16 year old asylum seeker having her voice and opinion represented on a mural in the centre of Waterford. This directly correlates with the conceptual model of this thesis which demonstrates how co-creation within arts programmes

68

foster a sense of acceptance for community and minority groups (see fig 11). Katherine also maintained that the project fostered social inclusion for asylum seekers through allowing them to have the opportunity to talk to government representatives in an informal setting. This correlates with research on urban governance regeneration whereby locals involved in decision making processes help gain trust of governmental institutions (Xie et al. 2021).

6.0 Conclusion

6.1.1 How does Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford employ co-creation through mural art to foster social inclusion and regenerate Waterford city?

To conclude, the main research question of this thesis will be answered along with limitations and further research that could be completed on the topic. As already mentioned numerous times, *Murals for Communities* employ co-creation as a way to involve participants in the process of mural creation. This actualises itself through workshops where participants, artists and community leaders discuss various topics. In order for planners to successfully utilise the arts literature has suggested that it needs to be implemented through policy in a top-down sense in order to have a resounding social impact (Kay, 2000). This was confirmed in this research due to the top-down nature of *Murals for Communities* themselves. However, a tension does arise in the fact that mural art in particular needs to be implemented in a top-down sense otherwise it is seen as graffiti which is an illegal act (Young, 2014). Therefore, street art and murals are only beneficial to communities if it is something supplied to society via governmental institutions. This was also noted in the model, see fig (7), whereby arts infrastructure directly correlates to arts participation and in turn the creation of art. As mentioned in the results section Niall O'Laughlain stated that *Murals for Communities* are helping to destigmatize the act of street art. Here, Niall is admitting to the fact that there is a fine line between murals and graffiti however he believed that the fact that the murals are implemented in a top-down sense may help break the

stigma of murals as an illegal act.

Literature has also suggested that murals play a large role in urban regeneration (Miles, 1995). This is due to the fact that they repurpose rundown buildings to artistic installations (Mcauliffe, 2016). Therefore, murals play an important role in the general improvement of urban

69

areas. Within *Murals for Communities* locals and participants were involved in the process, therefore contributing to the urban regeneration of Waterford city. Making this process ‘socially inclusive’ is not something that can be guaranteed as some community groups are inevitably left out (Vaart, 2018). However, by involving ‘*new communities*’ through co-creation fosters a sense of social inclusion for those who may not feel connected to place. These *new communities* included the Polish, Sudanese and Syrian refugees who, through the use of mural art were made feel socially included in Waterford’s urban regeneration scheme. A more comprehensive study would also have to be completed on whether or not the murals created gentrification in the area through looking at the housing market and rent prices in the area for the past few years.

This research employed the case study of *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* from the years 2018-2020 to identify the variables needed for a successful application of mural art programmes within low income communities. The aim of this thesis was to understand how co-creation can be employed in mural art programmes to foster social inclusion for asylum seekers. It did this through analysing both primary and secondary qualitative data. Numerous interesting insights were uncovered such as the need to be sensitive to cultural controversies when exploring the use of colours with certain groups that could be associated with LGBTQ+ community or psychedelics. However, the subjective nature of art makes this unavoidable in some circumstances. Clearly explaining concepts to participants is also important to avoid confusion, along with having someone to raise queries to which was observed in the case study, see also conceptual model.

Finally, to answer the research question *Murals for Communities : The Walls Project Waterford* employed co-creation through workshops with ‘new community members’ along with low income and hard to reach community groups. These workshops facilitated a space where people could share their thoughts and feelings which would be represented on a mural in a central location within the city. This in turn has the aim of fostering social inclusion for hard to reach and new community members. This ensures that locals or those who are affected by urban

regeneration are involved in changes to their urban environment. This also ensures that urban regeneration is 'socially inclusive', instead of people being planned 'at', they are planned 'with'.

However, the scope of findings to do with social exclusion in this research is limited. In each interview I asked whether the participants felt an element of social exclusion to which I was told no they did not witness it. If participants were interviewed then there would have been the

70

possibility of exploring whether social exclusion was present in the project. Literature suggests that arts projects can be hard to evaluate (Kay, 2000). However, there is also a practical side to the project that has visible outcomes such as the impact the murals had on local business.

Through the use of co-creation Waterfords degradation buildings were regenerated and given a new lease of life, this was also noted in the data whereby businesses benefited from footfall generated from the mural festival hosted by the Waterford Walls.

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