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## Capturing Culture:



## Analysis of Stage One

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## Introduction

This research project is designed to explore the state of grassroots and alternative culture in Liverpool, with some reference to the surrounding Merseyside area, in the context of the city's regeneration programme in the run up to the European Capital of Culture 2008. This initial research is conceived as part of a three-stage research programme and is designed to give a baseline of the current extent of 'grassroots' cultural activity. The project was funded by a grant from the University of Liverpool Research Development Fund. This research will, in the long term, form part of a wider body of evidence that can be used to chart the impact of the redevelopment of Liverpool and the build up to the hosting of European Capital of Culture 2008.

The impact of the build up to 2008 and the regeneration in Liverpool is a topic that has received much attention in the press, following the high profile closure of the Picket, and the proposed eviction of the Quiggins centre. In addition the subject has received academic attention, most notably in the work of Jones & Wilks-Heeg (2004). In light of these concerns, the overall aim of this project is to construct a qualitative baseline of cultural facilities and infrastructure in Liverpool for mid-2005, against which future change can be assessed. The construction of this baseline, and subsequent updates, proposed during the 2008 celebration and then during 2010/11, to assess the legacy of the Capital of Culture, will enable us to ascertain what changes take place, the dynamics driving these changes and their consequences for local social relations and local cultural production. In contrast to formal evaluation studies, this project focuses on mapping 'grassroots' cultural provision associated with the voluntary sector, community arts groups, micro-businesses and the underground arts scene.

In order to carry this out the research fell into four tasks:

- The construction of a comprehensive database of grassroots cultural activity in Liverpool. The research built up a database of grassroots cultural activity in Liverpool using local directories, websites, interviews and field visits to identify as many examples as possible of such provision.
- The compilation of a photographic record of key cultural facilities and sites. The researchers took photographs of as extensive a sample as possible of the examples of grassroots cultural facilities and activity identified.
- Case studies of grassroots cultural facilities and organisations. This involved the construction of brief case studies, via in depth interviews drawn from the database.
- The construction of a map, detailing the locations of cultural facilities, acting as a visual record to compliment the photographs.

This research has identified six key current issues of concern for the grassroots sector, 30 months before the beginning of the 2008 celebrations. This analysis will present the six issues raised in the case studies and questionnaire responses from the sector. The six areas of concern identified were:

- Venues and Space
- Property and Location
- Funding
- Consultation
- Access
- The Legacy of Cultural Regeneration

The six areas all overlap to a certain extent, and none can be understood in a vacuum. By exploring these issues it is hoped that the concerns of the grassroots cultural community can be understood as the pace of change in Liverpool accelerates in the build up to 2008. It is also hoped that the areas of concern raised by this research will tie into future research and analysis of the impact of both regeneration in Liverpool and the city's cultural programme, giving some guidance as to the major issues faced by the grassroots sector, as such this research is intended as a resource for researchers and practitioners alike.

## Research Methods

### Constructing the Database

The initial task for the research was to construct a database of grassroots cultural activity. Data was gathered from four main sources. First, the Liverpool Council for Voluntary Services helpfully provided information on the arts and culture community organisations. Second, Liverpool City Council publishes a 'Culture Directory', detailing an extensive amount of cultural activity in the city and the wider Merseyside area. This was used to note smaller and less mainstream organisations. Third, extensive Internet searches, using local directory sites such as Outlar.com and The Itchy guide, augmented by the FA grassroots football page. Fourth, additional sites suggested by work in the field, including recommendations and signposting from the case study interviews.

The database was set up in Microsoft Access, and designed to store the names, locations, contact details and explanatory information for each entry. In addition the photographic records and maps of selected sites are embedded into the database, giving access to the all of the primary data in one location. Photographs were taken of all 'public' facilities and sites. During the course of the research it became clear that much grassroots activity is administered, and in some cases conducted, from private premises, but it was felt inappropriate to photograph these locations.

The design of the database provides easy access to the range of grassroots cultural activity, which spans 382 groups and organisations across 11 categories

- Community Arts
- Community Groups
- Informal Leisure Pursuits
- Literature/Literary Culture
- Media/Film
- Museums and Heritage
- Music
- Performing Arts/Visual Arts
- Religious Culture
- Sport
- Venues

In the course of the research the wide definition of the subject was refined to include those aspects of culture seen to have a productive dimension, whether tangible or intangible. For instance, religious culture was not defined as places to worship, but was restricted to those groups involved in the promotion and dissemination of their religious culture via the production of art, literature, music or film, as it was felt an examination of the extent of organised religious worship in the city was outside the boundaries of an examination of 'grassroots culture' in the city.

### Questionnaires

More information was sought to compliment the database and to obtain a sense of the extent of participation in grassroots activity. This was achieved via the designing of a questionnaire. Over 400 questionnaires were sent out to all of the entries in the database, with a covering letter attached explaining the nature of this aspect of the research. 115 replies were returned in total, with 108 from members of the grassroots cultural sector, the remainder from churches and organisations which had shut down. The responses reflect a little over a quarter of the 382 entries in the final version of the database.

## Case Studies

The questionnaires were designed to give a broad sense of the issues facing the sector, but in order to explore both the kinds of activities present within the grassroots community, and the issues suggested by the responses to the questionnaires, case study interviews were conducted with 13 organisations, venues and individuals from across the range of activities identified in the database. The input of the Liverpool Culture Company was also sought, in order to identify the way in which their programme ties in with, and reflects, the constitution and concerns of the grassroots cultural sector in the city.

The case studies followed the pattern of a standard interview, which varied only to reflect the particular experiences of the interviewee.

## Visual Records

As a final aspect of the research the photographic records were taken by both researchers using two digital cameras, and added to the database. In addition to the photographs a series of detailed maps to match the photographed locations were constructed. Finally, an overall map of Liverpool city centre and its outlying areas was created using maps available from the Ordnance Survey, via The University of Edinburgh. This overall map (Appendix 1) provides visual representation of the 'clusters' of grassroots culture, highlighted in red, which exist within, and around the edges of, the city centre.

## Describing Grassroots Culture

During the preliminary discussions for this research the difficulty of establishing a definition of ‘grassroots culture’ became apparent. There are two connected concepts culture, and grassroots culture itself.

With regard to culture, in this instance, it is proposed that the broadest possible definition of cultural activity is used. One suggested by Miles and Miles (2004) might be useful, in terms of setting up a wide-ranging idea, which is culture as ‘a way of life’. One can connect this concept to Mitchell’s (2000) attempt to define culture as both way of life and ‘works of art, musical productions, the stuff that gets put in museums and concert halls- or in its popular version the things shown on TV and in cinemas, that occur in clubs and stadiums, that appear advertised and displayed in glossy magazines and cheaply produced ‘zines’ (Mitchell 2000, p13). Following these ideas culture seems to be that which allows the expression of identity, a sense of self, the ‘level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life’ (ibid p63), as well as the artefacts produced from these patterns of life- the music, the concerts, the plays, sculptures, etc.

The term grassroots culture seemed much more problematic, as it is difficult to see exactly what this refers to. It is here that the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Evidence Toolkit may come in useful. The DCMS picture cultural activity as a continuum, from the ‘DIY’ to the more organised cultural sector of the economy: ‘Cultural activities such as voluntary participation in organised arts and culture, and forms of everyday culture such as DIY, are integral to the continuum of activities within the cultural sector; not least as they are often the first step on the ladder towards a more professional/commercial involvement in cultural activity.’ (DCMS 2004, p37). This concept of a continuum was used to exclude things which seem to lack any formal structure, e.g. a space used by children to skate may give one boundary for the definition, whereas a multi-national chain store, such as HMV, or a government funded cultural venue, such as the Liverpool World Museum may provide the other. Within these twin poles a range of semi-formal and formal groups were identified.

In an attempt to gain a clearer picture of the meaning of the term those organisations and groups identified as potentially ‘grassroots’ were solicited for their opinions of the meaning of the term. In addition, the more in-depth interviews carried out with a number of case study groups and organisations were also used to explore the meaning of the term ‘grassroots culture’.

The most striking thing to come out of the research was the sheer variety of those groups that identified themselves as grassroots organisations, ranging from football clubs, bars and music venues, to museums and heritage organisations and record labels. It is interesting to note that of the 115 questionnaire respondents 90 explicitly said they were a grassroots organisation, 16 were unsure of the meaning of the definition, and only 6 felt they were explicitly not grassroots in any sense (the remaining 3 did not fill in that section of the questionnaire). There seems to be an understanding of the term, even if it is often vague, as was reflected in the case study interviews. Three interrelated understandings of the term arose from the case studies:

1) A DIY ethic: this idea was closely associated with the term grassroots culture, the understanding being that grassroots meant people ‘going off and doing things for themselves’, outside of governmental and commercial structures. This is reflected in a quotation from a case study interview:

‘Somebody has taken something they believe in and thought I’m going to go out there and do it.’

2) Community: There seemed to be a conception that it was ‘real’ people involved in grassroots culture, and as such there is an authenticity attached to grassroots culture. In addition, control of the activity was central to several of the case studies’ understandings of the term, that it was the people involved making the decisions and in control of the activity, rather than those outside, be that government or private sector bodies. This conception of grassroots culture views it as the basis for more mainstream activity. The grassroots level may be the starting point for cultural activity which may go onto feature on television or in galleries such as the Tate. These ideas are aptly illustrated by two quotations from the case study interviews:

‘The people who actually create the art are getting something out of it, real people that do things that they enjoy.’

‘It’s real people; it’s not the suits.’

3) Funding and Control: it was felt that grassroots culture is often unfunded, or not dependent on funding. Again a case study quotation may show the root concern with independence from funder’s control:

‘It’s about control. Whenever things are imposed from above they don’t work and they don’t encourage vibrancy and talent. It is hard to define.’

These three conceptions are mutually reinforcing of each other, even in cases when external funding is drawn upon, control of the decisions around that money was seen as a key aspect of what it is to be ‘grassroots culture’.

There is, however, a problematic distinction within the term ‘grassroots culture’, between the above understandings and those that seem to indicate that it may be too vague, or merely a ‘buzz’ word. As is shown by the end of the quotation used to illustrate the concern with funding and control, the term can be difficult to pin down. As one questionnaire respondent put it ‘a better phrase may be “indigenous” or “real.”’

It was also felt, by a small number of respondents to the questionnaire and two of the thirteen case studies, that ‘grassroots culture’ may have a potentially pejorative dimension: ‘grassroots’ activity might be dismissed as being less meaningful than mainstream culture. What emerges therefore is the concern that ‘grassroots culture’ is a term that can be used to patronise, as well as praise.

As well as an opportunity to explore the terms ‘grassroots culture’ the research also presented a wealth of information on grassroots culture in Liverpool. Of the 382 entries in the data base 108 returned completed questionnaires, and these gave even more information for this initial analysis. Detailed commentary is difficult, as the research is intended as the initial stage of a longer-term process, but there are a range of preliminary themes to be identified, based on the data.

The entries in the database fall into 11 categories, which all represent a different proportion of the total, shown in figure 1 and represented graphically in figure 2. By far the largest form of grassroots activity concerned the performing and visual arts, along with sport and music (25%, 18% and 14% respectively) suggesting a keen interest in these types of activity in the city.

Figure 1: Entries in the database

	Numbers	%
Community Arts	36	9
Community Groups	29	8
Informal Leisure	3	1
Literature	18	5
Media/Film	25	7
Museums/Heritage	8	2
Music	52	14
Performing and Visual Arts	101	25
Religion	11	3
Sport	68	18
Venues	31	8
Total	382	100

Figure 2: Entries in the database

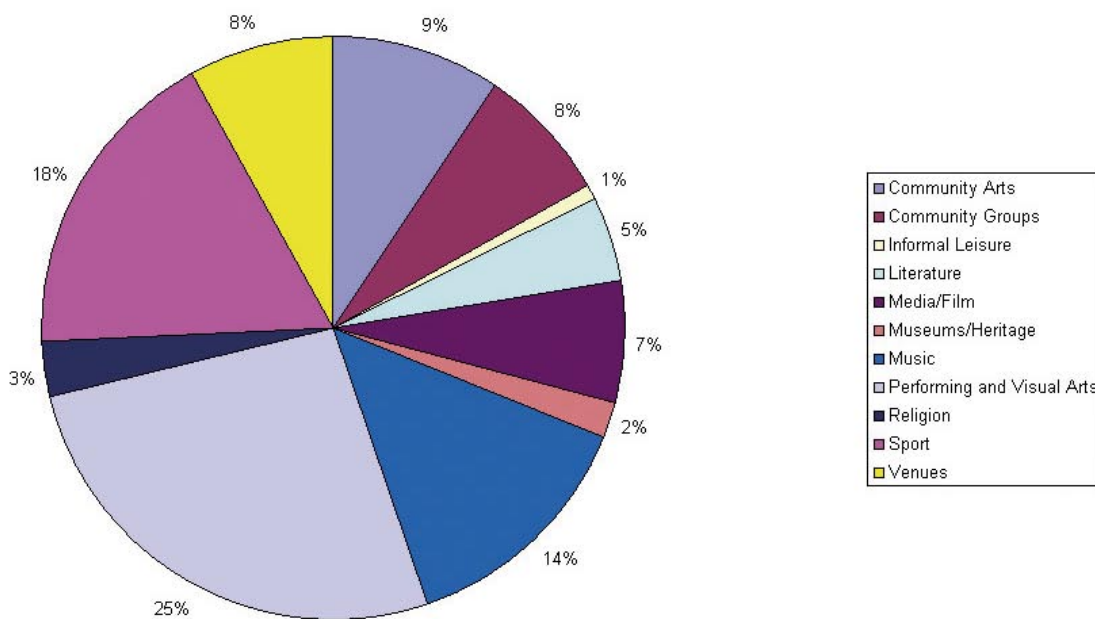
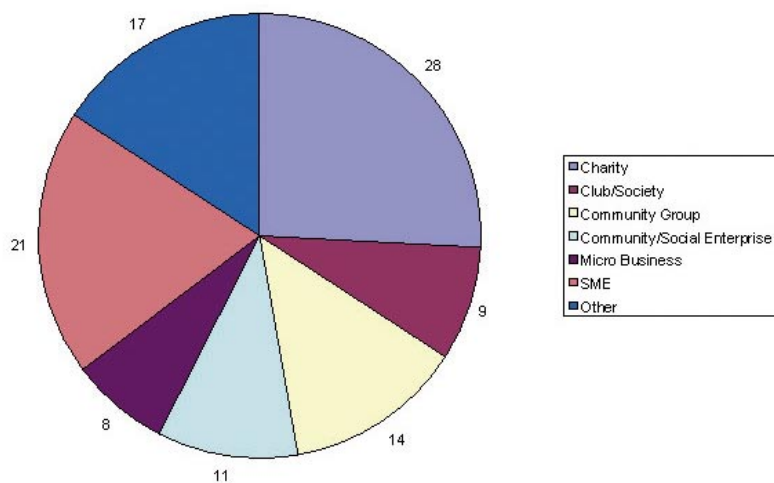


Figure 3 shows the total number of responses, broken down by type. Charities represent the largest type of questionnaire respondent, followed by small and medium enterprises and those defining themselves as other than one of the six types suggested by the questionnaire. This may suggest the charity sector is perhaps more familiar with research questionnaires, as well as the possible limitations of the six types of ‘grassroots culture’ offered by the questionnaire, as suggested by the large number of responses identifying themselves as ‘other’.

Figure 3: Types of respondents



Figures 4 and 5 show the types of respondent relative to the kinds of activities they are involved in. Not all of the categories received enough replies to generate significant comment, although several points can be made. Community arts organisations were either charities or community groups, showing this type of grassroots activity is conducted on a charitable or voluntary basis, which is further reflected in figure 6 (see below). This charitable/voluntary status is also indicated by the community groups that returned questionnaires. Grassroots activity around literature shows a similar pattern, aside from two SME's, both bookshops. Music shows a relatively even distribution, and performing arts/visual arts activity is split between charity organisations and SME's, such as theatre companies. Finally those respondents involved with sport showed a number of 'other' responses (almost all local football leagues).

Figure 4: Types of respondents

	Other	Charity	Club/Society	Community Group	Community/Social Enterprise	Micro Business	Small/Medium Enterprise	Total
Community Arts Organisation	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	6
Community Group	2	7	1	2	0	0	0	12
Informal Leisure Pursuit	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Literature	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	5
Media	3	0	0	1	1	0	2	7
Museums and Heritage	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5
Music	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	15
Performing Arts/Visual Arts	6	11	0	2	3	4	10	36
Religion	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Sport	5	1	4	2	3	0	0	15
Venue	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>108</b>

Figure 5: Types of respondents (total 108)

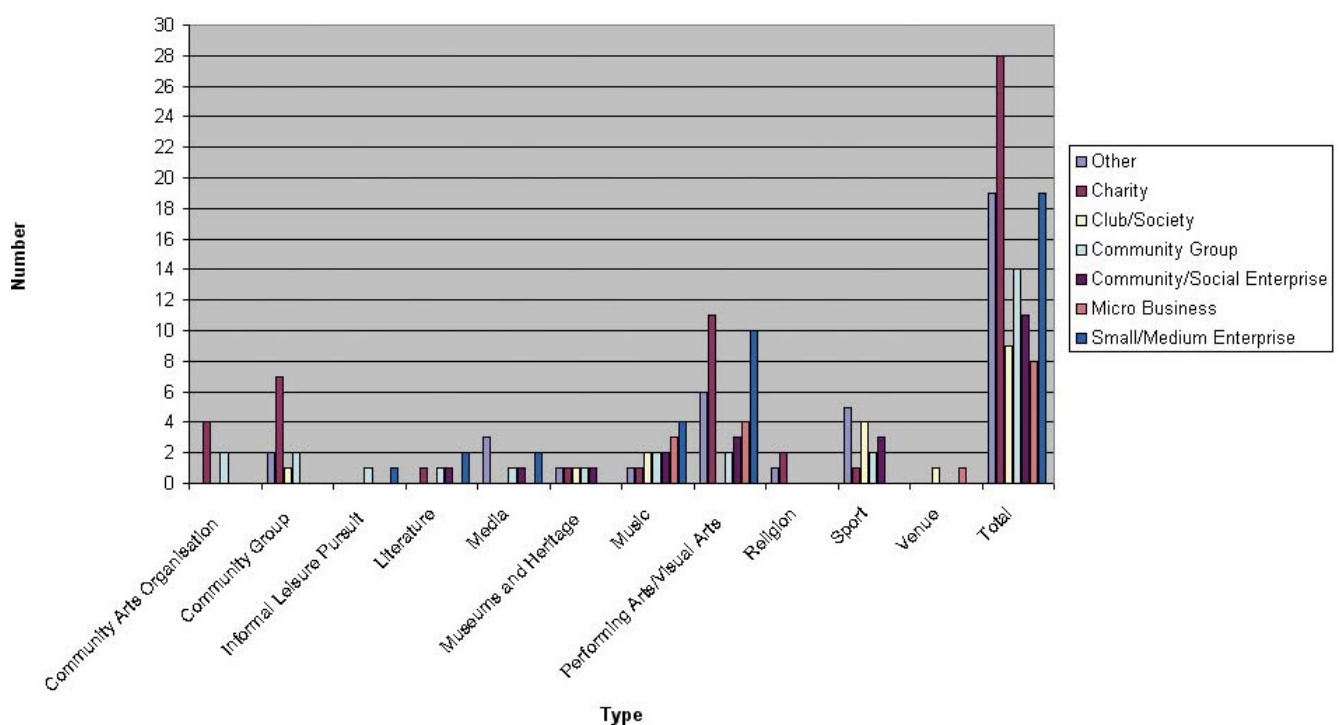
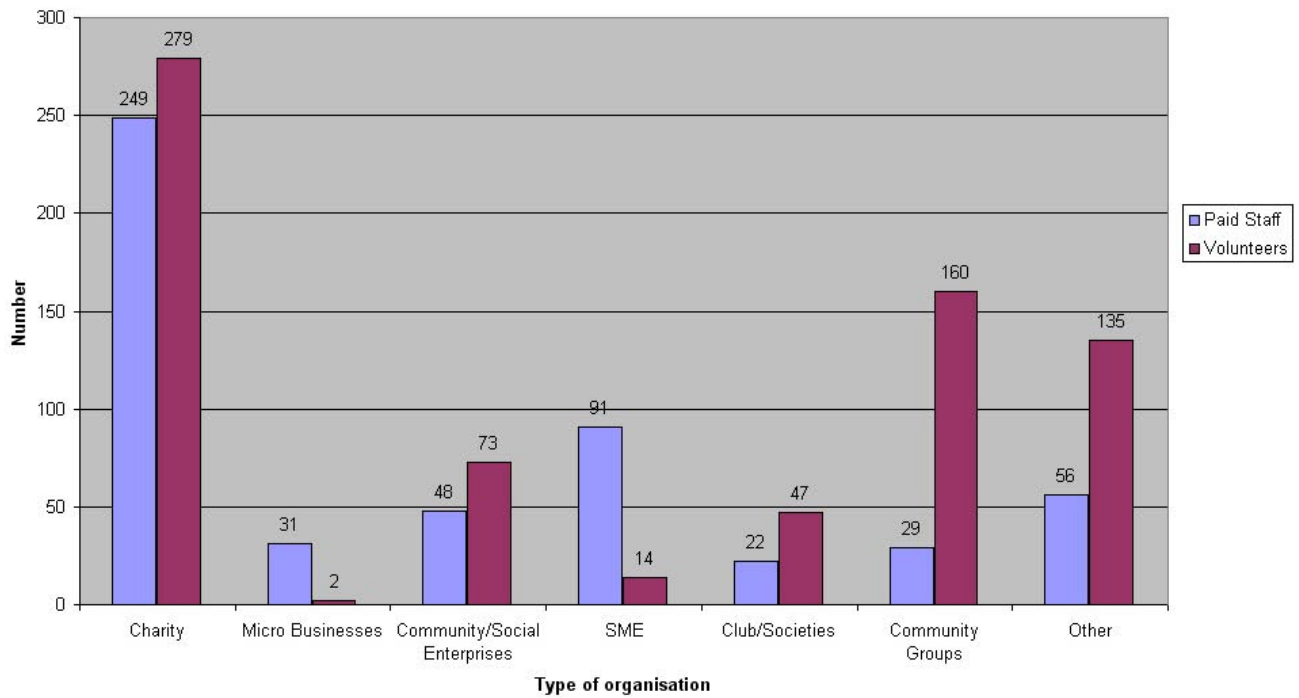


Figure 6 gives a sense of the numbers involved with those who responded to the questionnaires. The patterns reflected in figure 6 suggests a dependence on volunteers to sustain community groups, clubs and societies, community and social enterprises and, to a lesser extent, charities. However it is important to note that the use of volunteers, and the numbers of users (discussed below) may be lower in the summer periods for certain sections, for example performing arts groups such as theatre companies, and higher for those groups involved in providing cultural activities for children, such as community groups.

Figure 6: People Involved

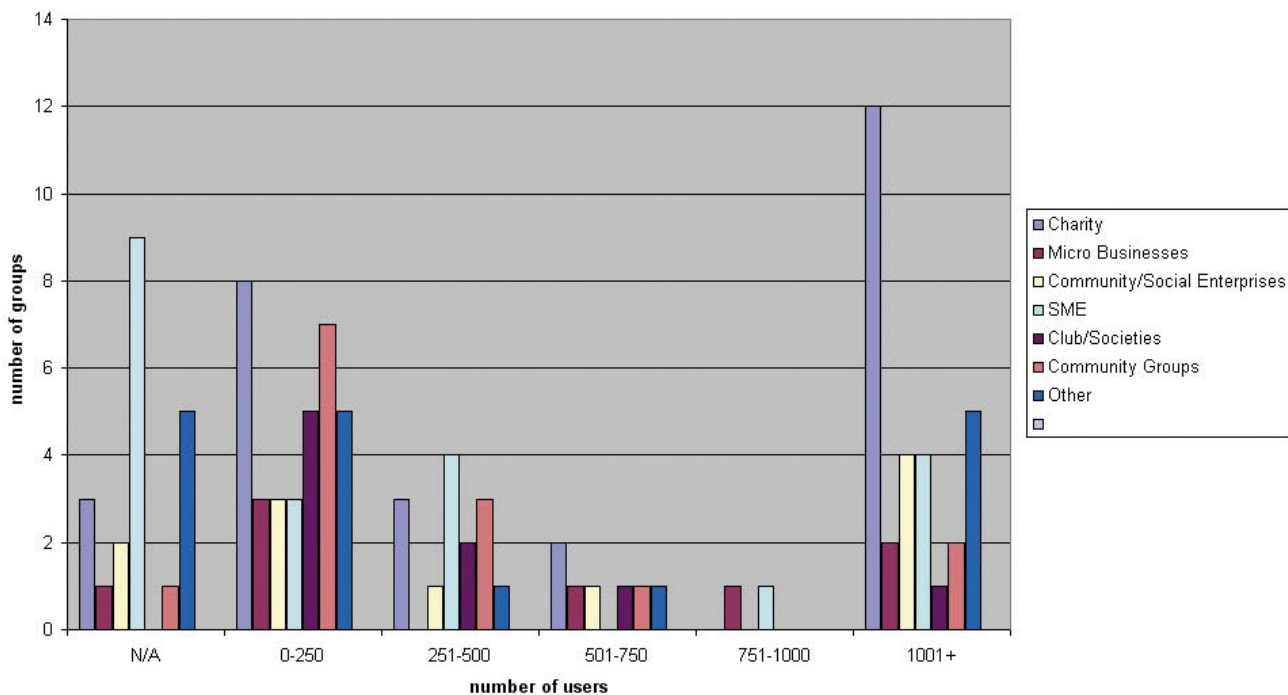


The number of users in the mid-May to mid-June period is summarised by the table below (figure 7) and represented graphically in figure 8. There is a definite range in that respondents either attracted a significant number of users, over 1000, or had a more specialised niche. This is especially true of the charity sector, where 3 groups attracted less than 250 users, and 12 groups (just under 50%) attracted over 1000. This grouping is reversed in community groups, whereby most had attracted less than 250 users.

Figure 7: Number of Users May 2005

	N/A	0-250	251-500	501-750	751-1000	1001+
Charity	3	8	3	2	0	12
Micro Businesses	1	3	0	1	1	2
Community/Social Enterprises	2	3	1	1	0	4
SME	9	3	4	0	1	4
Club/Societies	0	5	2	1	0	1
Community Groups	1	7	3	1	0	2
Other	5	5	1	1	0	5

Figure 8: Number of Users May 2005



This data represents a benchmark, against which future studies can be assessed, to get a sense of the impact of future changes in the city in terms of numbers and types of respondents, the numbers involved in with running and aiding those respondents and the numbers consuming the cultural activates provided and produced.

## Research Themes

## Venues and Space

Access to venues to show art and perform music, as well as problems of finding spaces for group and community meetings, in the city centre is cited as a long standing problem for several of the case studies. It is also a particular issue for those questionnaire respondents based in the city centre, summed up by this comment made during a case study interview:

‘The problem is there is an increasing lack of exhibition space for artists to exhibit their work in. There is an increasing lack of studio space and there isn’t a resource centre any more.’

As well as the costs of hiring venues for meetings and performances, the problem of the city centre infrastructure was cited on several occasions by a diverse range of groups from the case studies, with parking emerging as a particularly problematic issue.

It is hoped these issues surrounding infrastructure are of a temporary nature, and will be alleviated by the completion of the ‘Big Dig’ programme and the opening of three new car parks as part of the Paradise project. However given the problems of resources amongst all of the groups in the grassroots sector, questions arise as to the affordability of parking spaces in the city centre, both for grassroots activity as part of the night time economy, and especially for those groups who are based in the city centre during weekday office hours. However, it is perhaps the case that these issues were frequently cited because of the timing of the research, as summer 2005 saw large scale roadworks coupled with the City Council’s decision to raise parking prices.

The lack of new smaller spaces in the city centre, to replace venues facing closure, or having recently closed, was an issue raised in the case studies. Two of the case studies explicitly raised the link between redevelopment in the city centre and the loss of spaces for culture that is outside of the mainstream, as represented by the Tate or FACT, both of which show art and culture involving internationally recognisable practitioners and brands. Although the city centre has a fine collection of smaller art galleries, the future of these spaces was questioned during the course of the case study interviews. In addition, it was felt that the loss of grassroots venues and spaces in the city centre, although counteracted by the recent opening of suburban spaces (for example three art galleries on Smithdown Road and one in Garston) would lose the ease of access and centrality offered by the city centre, diminishing public access to grassroots culture.

Following an inspection of the plans for the Paradise Street Development (PSD) (<http://www.liverpoolpsda.co.uk/ProjectDetails>) it is noticeable that the focus is on retail and residential building, so it is difficult to see where replacement spaces will come from. What is most striking is if the research map is compared to the masterplan of the redevelopments around the Paradise Street area of the city centre (Appendix 2), as this neatly illustrates the proximity of those organisations in the Ropewalks and Duke Street area to the ‘regeneration’.

These problems tie into the issues surrounding location and property, which are discussed fully in a later section.



Regenerated public spaces may be created at the cost of venues for grassroots activity.

## Case study: Arena Art and Design

Formed over 20 Years ago the Arena Art and Design Association (formerly the British Art and Design Association) is a registered charity which seeks to promote art in the city, for both artists, by providing both affordable studio space, and the wider public, through exhibitions, lectures and also links with the city's art students.

Situated on Duke Street, located in the Ropewalks area of the city centre, Arena houses 40 artists and an exhibition space. Two paid staff and ten volunteers run Arena, and in mid-May to mid-June 2005 Arena attracted over 300 visitors.



A 'grassroots' function is key to Arena, as they compliment the more mainstream cultural faculties in Liverpool, providing spaces for artists to work and exhibit who may not be as internationally recognised as those appearing in the Tate or the Walker art galleries.

Arena are funded in two main ways: individual artists receive funding from the Culture Company, this year as part of Creative Communities 'Around the City in 80 Days' programme, and Arena as an organization is funded through the Arts Council England, the Culture Company and the sale of art.

The questionnaire and case study interview from Arena identified two key areas of concern for this organisation:

1) The effects of regeneration: On the one hand Arena felt that the influx of investment into the city centre might open up new markets and audiences for art, which would have positive effect for their organisation, especially in its present location. However the regeneration in the city centre may well cost them this location. As a result of the city centre's redevelopment, and the citywide rise in house prices, Arena's building faces an uncertain future. Arena feel it is difficult for them, as an art charity, to compete with the rents expected in the city centre. As such, the organisation may have to find alternative premises in the next twelve months, a location which may not offer the advantages for both the artists and the public afforded by their current building. This would undoubtedly be a loss to the city centre, as it would lose a long-standing grassroots organisation, a part of the city's artistic history, from a central and accessible location. Should Arena be forced to relocate, the organisation's experience would appear to mirror that of the Picket, an organisation that played a similar role in relation to young rock musicians in the city.

2) Funding: Although a longstanding concern in the wider arts sector, it was felt that often specialised skills, particularly those surrounding administration were needed to both identify, and be successful in applying to, funding sources. Arena are fortunate in that its staff, volunteers, and the artists in the building, can share this task. Given their knowledge of the sector Arena feel that individual artists, and less well-established organisations may find attracting funding a much more onerous task. Coupled with the administrative problems associated with funding were the problems of access to government and quasi-government bodies. An excellent example cited by Arena concerns the use of the O8 logo. It was felt it had been time consuming in the past to get permission to use the logo in promotional material, because of difficulties in find the relevant contact able to authorise its use. This much has changed as more of a relationship has been established with the Culture Company.

## Location and Property

The questionnaires and case studies indicated a twin dynamic affecting the access of grassroots cultural groups and organisations to property and location in the city centre: the division between those who own their property and those who hold a lease, and the ‘pushing out’ effect of the rise in property prices in the city centre.

It is striking that nine of the thirteen case studies drew attention to the rise in property prices; both across the city generally and in the city centre itself, including those case study organisations that owned their buildings. Whilst those who owned their property were to some extent insulated from the effects of rent rises in the city, those leasing property, particularly in the city centre, face an uncertain future. Rent rises in the city mean that it is difficult for those groups providing spaces for art and music, and meeting spaces and venues, to compete with the returns possible from property speculation and larger retail ventures. Indeed one case study indicated a minor miracle is necessary for them to survive at their present location:

‘We will definitely have to move, without doubt it will have to move. We’d have to be seriously loaded, we’d have to have a couple of hit singles... that’s our only way of making enough money to make an offer to buy this land.’

This is particularly worrying in the medium term, and the impact will only become clear as leases held by those who are part of grassroots culture come up for renewal.

A key issue for grassroots organisations is security of tenure. Long-term security for grassroots groups allows for their expansion, and often major capital project funders, such as the National Lottery, require longer-term leases. This problem of the long term status of smaller groups in the sector raises questions about the ability of new groups to move into the city centre, and take advantage of the range of opportunities offered by the influx of visitors, both shoppers and tourists, expected in 2008. Moreover, it also has implications for the long-term health of grassroots culture in the city, which will have a knock on effect for more mainstream establishments. One of the ways grassroots culture is understood is as a starting point for more mainstream culture to begin, that it is its roots. In the longer term, a lack of established and permanent venues for grassroots culture may have a negative effect on the overall cultural health of the city.



Developments like Manolis Yard in the Ropewalks district may be in competition with grassroots culture wishing to use the same areas.

A final point to be raised, related to the issues surrounding venues and spaces, is infrastructure, especially house prices across the city. The ability of grassroots culture to sustain itself may be threatened by a lack of access to affordable housing. Whilst one can find some examples of affordable housing and mixed tenure, especially by housing associations such as Maritime, the question of how to provide housing for low earning members of the community in general is one which vexes national and international policy-makers, and it is no surprise that this issue persists in Liverpool. The tensions present in regeneration are neatly illustrated by a comment from a case study

interview:

‘If you want to bring in what people euphemistically call ‘a better class of people’, if you want to take Duke Street and the people who have been there for a long time, discover that their rents are multiplied two or three or four times, and other people turn up who can afford it and are probably well known ‘names’ and you build housing the local people couldn’t afford, you could certainly regenerate. But I don’t know of an example of regeneration, from New York in America, to cities in this country, that have regenerated except, in some significant measure, at the expense of the residents.’

It may be the case that those sites on the current periphery of the city centre (illustrated by Appendix 4), will simply move further out as the city centre expands. For example those situated in the Ropewalks may move out to the proposed ‘independent district’, around the Jamaica St/Parliament St. area. However, this project seems to have stalled since the beginning of 2005, and this may prove a difficult issue for those groups who do not aspire to a suburban relocation. Additionally it may prove difficult to attract a section of the large numbers of visitors expected during 2008 to venues situated in supposedly ‘problem’ suburban areas where more affordable property exists.

Connected to this is one of the problems cited by two case studies: the current vogue for city centre living is in direct competition with grassroots art galleries, recording studios and venue spaces, as those buildings ripe for ‘regeneration’ into luxury flats are often those which perfectly cater to the needs of these groups.

Despite some of these issues, the PSD plans do include provision for smaller and specialised retail space, but the proposed rent for these spaces is at this point unknown.

## Case Study: The Kif Gallery and Studio

Set up just under 2 years ago, the Kif is a micro business comprising an art gallery, recording studio and practice space on Parr Street, in the Ropewalks district of the city centre. It is run by two staff, along with a network of informal volunteers.

Set up with funds from the Scarman Trust, the Kif's costs are paid from a small rent for some of the studio space and charges for the use of the practice space and recording studio. The Kif also received a small grant from Music Bias to build new studio space at the beginning of 2005.



The Kif plays a varied role in the life of Liverpool's grassroots culture. As well as exhibiting the work of artists, most recently photography from Kashmir, the Kif was one of the sites for Liverpool's 2004 Biennial. In addition to this it provides practice space for bands in the area, as well as being an affordable recording studio.

The Kif also hosts events in aid of charities, the most recent being July 2005, for Water Aid. As well as these functions the Kif provides a meeting place for the grassroots community in the city centre. Its role as a meeting place is aided by the fact that it is unlike a large number of other meeting places in the city, as it is neither a bar nor pub, so it attracts a wide variety of ages.

The Kif has an educational role, as it uses local teenagers on work experience placements, allowing them to get a sense of the demands of running a gallery and studio, as well as the practical process of recording music.

The Kif attracts a wide spectrum of users, and this wide mix of social and ethnic groups is encouraged by the friendly and communal ethic that is at the core of the Kif's philosophy.

The questionnaire and case study interview from The Kif suggested five key areas of concern for this organisation.

- 1) Set up issues: The Kif identified some of the difficulties in setting up a space in the city centre, especially for those with little experience of starting a business. The Kif feel that it is difficult for those wishing to start up cultural enterprises, as identification of potential property and the creation of a business plan often do not prepare people for the practical process of dealing with solicitors and potential landlords. The Kif identified the support of the Scarman Trust as crucial to its existence.
- 2) Commitment: The interview suggested that the level of commitment necessary to sustain a venture like the Kif is often underestimated, by both those who use the Kif and the wider public. Both the interview and the questionnaire indicated that the running of the Kif is very much a way of life.
- 3) Consultation: despite being involved, as a gallery, in the Liverpool Biennial 2004, the Kif have not, as of July 2005, had any consultation or contact with the Culture Company concerning the build up to the Capital of Culture celebrations in 2008.
- 4) Funding: The Kif feel that it is often difficult to get an extensive grasp of the range of funding sources. Funding would be more problematic without the aid of the Scarman Trust. However they do feel it is good to be independent.
- 5) The effects of regeneration: The regeneration and redevelopment in the Ropewalks area may potentially force them to find an alternative location, as the income they generate from their involvement in grassroots culture is insufficient for them to compete with residential or retail redevelopment of their location. As such it is unknown how long the Kif will be able to remain on Parr Street, they hope to be able to keep the building for as long as possible. The Kif was aware of the planned independent district, but have not had any further details of this proposed project since a part of the Biennial was located there in 2004.

## Funding

The issue of cultural funding has always been problematic, and this is doubly so within the grassroots sector. Long term funding seems to be the biggest issue for grassroots organisations, especially over a 20-year period, if any of them are resilient enough to survive for that length of time. This issue also has links to the previous section, whereby funding is difficult to access without security of tenure. Funding was a major issue for the future in most of the questionnaire and case studies, and there did seem to be division between what might loosely be termed 'insider' and 'outsider' groups. This is not to suggest preferential relationships; more that established groups may have developed the knowledge necessary to access funds, in what is a very competitive area.

Virtually all of the case studies (bar two where funding was not relevant) suggested securing funding was difficult due to the specialised knowledge necessary to both track down funding and succeed in the application process. As one interviewee put it,

'You have got to have specialist skills. I never went to college to learn about this, and I haven't had a job that taught me about this, and I'm sure there's other community organisations which struggle. It is a hard process.'

Indeed the complexities of funding could often, it is indicated, interfere with cultural activity, and for smaller, less well resourced members of the grassroots community there seems to be a trade off between following funding and just getting on with their chosen activity. Another quotation shows how it is often hard to discover funding sources:

'If I'm honest I don't think what is available is highlighted well enough, you hear about funds through word of mouth or the odd newsletter. You do have to dig.'

It is perhaps to be regretted that information regarding the opportunities for funding are not easily accessed, as ease of access to funding sources would play a major role in spurring grassroots activity.

This problem is exacerbated when attempts are being made to access substantial resources, as often the requirements for accessing large amounts of funding exempt those groups who have only recently come into existence or lack security of tenure.

A final issue is that of self-exclusion, whereby there is a distrust of funders, which may flow from the DIY attitude held by many in the grassroots sector.

The change over to direct funding by the Culture Company does not seem to have adversely affected the provision of funding to the sector to any great extent, and some case study interviewees indicated there is now a clearer structure for City Council/Culture Company funding. The Culture Company themselves hope that it is easier for smaller community groups to access funds from the Creative Communities programme, and cite the success of the 'Around the City in 80 days' programme in involving both grassroots and larger organisations in Liverpool's Year of the Sea, 2005. In addition the lack of faith in 'the funding bureaucracy' suggested by the smaller grassroots organisations should be alleviated by the arts/culture background of many employees of the Culture Company.

## Consultation

The research indicated that there is a perception that there is a lack of consultation by the Culture Company and the City Council regarding the build up to 2008, an issue that is at its most severe with regard to grassroots sport. Almost universally grassroots sporting organisations cited a lack of consultation of sport, with a common fear that sport in 2008 will simply centre on the major football clubs in the city, Liverpool, Everton and Tranmere Rovers. This may reflect tensions between the EU's understanding of culture, which does not include sport, and the attempt for 2008 to reflect all aspects of the culture of Liverpool. A quotation from one interviewee, when coupled with two typical comments from questionnaire respondents perhaps speaks for grassroots sports in the city:

'I think it's [sport] been made reference to, and lip serviced is being paid to it.'

'The area is buzzing with sporting passion. Okay, the galacticos of Everton FC and Liverpool FC dominate the headlines, but other clubs and other sports receive pathetically little attention.'

'I am not aware of any initiative by the City Council of any plans for sports provision in the city's planned celebration of its capital of culture status.'

As with funding the research suggested an insider/outsider divide, between those familiar with the mechanisms for representing themselves and those who lack the knowledge of who to go to, where to see them and when they are available. In particular, the need for persistence was cited by one case study, which may not be possible for those groups who are less well resourced.

There is a perception that 2008 is actually just about redevelopment of the city centre, and it is interesting to note that this is seen as a real concern for both the grassroots cultural community and the Culture Company. The Culture Company indicated in a research interview that they are working to change this perception, to illustrate how a good deal of the programmes across the city, particularly those in schools, are related to the build up to 2008. They are also developing a series of seminars on relevant topics, such as applying for funding and working with the media. It is hoped these programmes will have a positive impact on the grassroots cultural community, but it is difficult to see how this type of capacity building will allow an input into the major issues raised by the research, and not least those pertaining to property.

## Access

This issue was less frequently cited in the research, but where it was it was seen as a problem, especially when placed in the context of the insider/outsider divide, discussed in the preceding section. Those case studies who were aware of funding sources and of the general governance structure of culture in the city felt those bodies administering funding, such as the Culture Company and the Arts Council England, were difficult to get in touch with, and there seemed to be a particular issue, as was suggested in case study interviews, surrounding the control of the '08 logo'. Getting permission to use the logo was a task best suited to those with the appropriate administrative structures, such as staff who work specifically on administration or offices equipped with telephone and internet access. Indeed telephone and internet access seemed to be crucial to finding information, access which is not universal across the grassroots cultural sector. Smaller groups also raised problems of their visibility in terms of both the local media and the Culture Company. This issue was particularly acute in sport.

It is hoped these issues surrounding access will be addressed by the proposed consultation programmes discussed in the preceding section, and by the rise in staffing levels at Creative Communities. Despite the above difficulties one interviewee summed up the attitude of a vast selection of the sector:

‘You can only be positive because if you’re negative you won’t bring that energy that you need to persuade them.’

## Legacy

The impact and legacy of the 2008 celebrations was cited across the questionnaire responses and the case studies as a major concern for the grassroots sector. It is not just the grassroots sector which has raised these concerns, as the long term impact of the build up to, and celebration of, Capital of Culture 2008 has received attention in the Merseyside press, and in the City Council, from individual councillors and the culture and tourism select committee. There were several points reflecting the apprehensiveness felt by the grassroots sector towards the changes occurring in the City 2008.

It was felt that there is a need to recognise that the legacy of 2008 may be a 20-30 year project, one which can only be sustained in the grassroots sector by taking into account the way the needs of this section of the city may clash with the needs of others. Three notable examples arose from the research: the exclusion of certain youth groups from the city centre, notably those on skateboards; the potential over-focusing on retail and 'up market' residential development at the expense of property which may be put to use by grassroots culture; and the tension between the needs of local bands and artists to make people aware of their activities, via fly posting, and the desire of the City Council to regulate these activities. Whilst progress is being made on this latter issue, the former two illustrate the potential for decision-makers to leave a long-term legacy by conciliating these potential conflicts, and making Liverpool an inclusive city, a philosophy that was at the heart of its bid for 2008.

The needs of local bands and other grassroots activities may clash with programmes supported by other sections of the Liverpool community



One very obvious suggestion is the development of a base as a focal point for grassroots culture, to bring all of the disparate elements together, a cultural centre perhaps. It may be the case that the evolution of the '08 shop', a centre for information surrounding cultural activity in the city, fulfils this role, and it would be a pity to see a potentially significant cultural centre focused solely on tourist information. Any development in this area would need to be accessible as a drop in centre, with information on who to speak to with regards funding, property and venues a must.

The legacy of racism in the city is still problematic and this issue was raised by two of the case studies. It is hoped that more will be done in the build up to 2008 to alleviate any potential alienation from the celebrations felt by ethnic majorities and minorities in the city centre. Liverpool's bid spoke of 'The World In One City.' The run up to 2008 offers a unique opportunity to shape what is meant by that 'world' within that city, as opposed to passively reflecting, and ultimately denying, the less clear cut realities of the present situation.

There is much that has been successful in the build up to 2008. The Liverpool Biennial, for instance, has managed to bring together a diverse range of mainstream and grassroots organisations and has used a diversity of neighbourhoods and areas as venues. It is this form of inclusiveness, recognising the need to branch out, which this research hopes will be addressed by the Culture Company's programmes over the next 3 years, along with their 'Development Support' and 'Expanding the Impact and Reach of Creative Partners' programmes. However if the provision is not made for those groups unable to compete in the property market, the wide net cast by the Biennial may be cut to a significantly smaller size.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

A central idea that emerged from the research was universal agreement on the potential power of culture to transform social situations. Those case studies that explicitly addressed this topic spoke of how it can have a positive input in diverse issues such as lessening the legacy of racism in the city, educating people, as well as leading to economic growth. These concerns are at the heart of the Culture Company's agenda and it is a belief shared by almost all of those who participated in this research. In order to achieve this transformative goal there is still much to be done in the build up to 2008. Only time will tell if the 2008 celebrations have the intended impact, and have a lasting legacy on Liverpool life, in social, economic and cultural terms.

It is hoped this research will tie into 'The Liverpool Model for Measuring the Impacts of European Capital of Culture 2008' recently designed jointly by The University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University in partnership with Liverpool City Council, potentially providing a means by which to assess the impact of the changes in the city upon the grassroots cultural community. As such this research is but the first stage, and so definitive conclusions would, at this stage, be premature. However, interlinked with the apprehensiveness surrounding the impact of 2008 are a range of diverse issues raised by the case studies and the questionnaires associated with venues, property, funding, consultation, access and the legacy of cultural regeneration in Liverpool.

The primary purpose of this first stage of the research is to establish a record of grassroots cultural activity, against which future change can be assessed. The research provides a quantitative and qualitative baseline of grassroots cultural activity in Liverpool in mid 2005, and this summary of the research should serve as a guide to any future work on this area. Future work should revisit the concerns raised by the questionnaires and case studies, so as to explore whether these problems have been alleviated or exacerbated by the changes occurring in the run up to 2008. It is hoped that the needs of this sector will be addressed in the run up to 2008, and that the sector is not entirely reliant on the 'DIY' ethic which nonetheless remains one of its key strengths. There is no doubt that a good deal of those who participated in this research have the will to continue grassroots culture in Liverpool, both in 2008 and long beyond, but there is a real sense of fear that what is a struggle for large parts of the sector may become a struggle too far, at the very time the city is intending to be celebrate the diversity of its culture.

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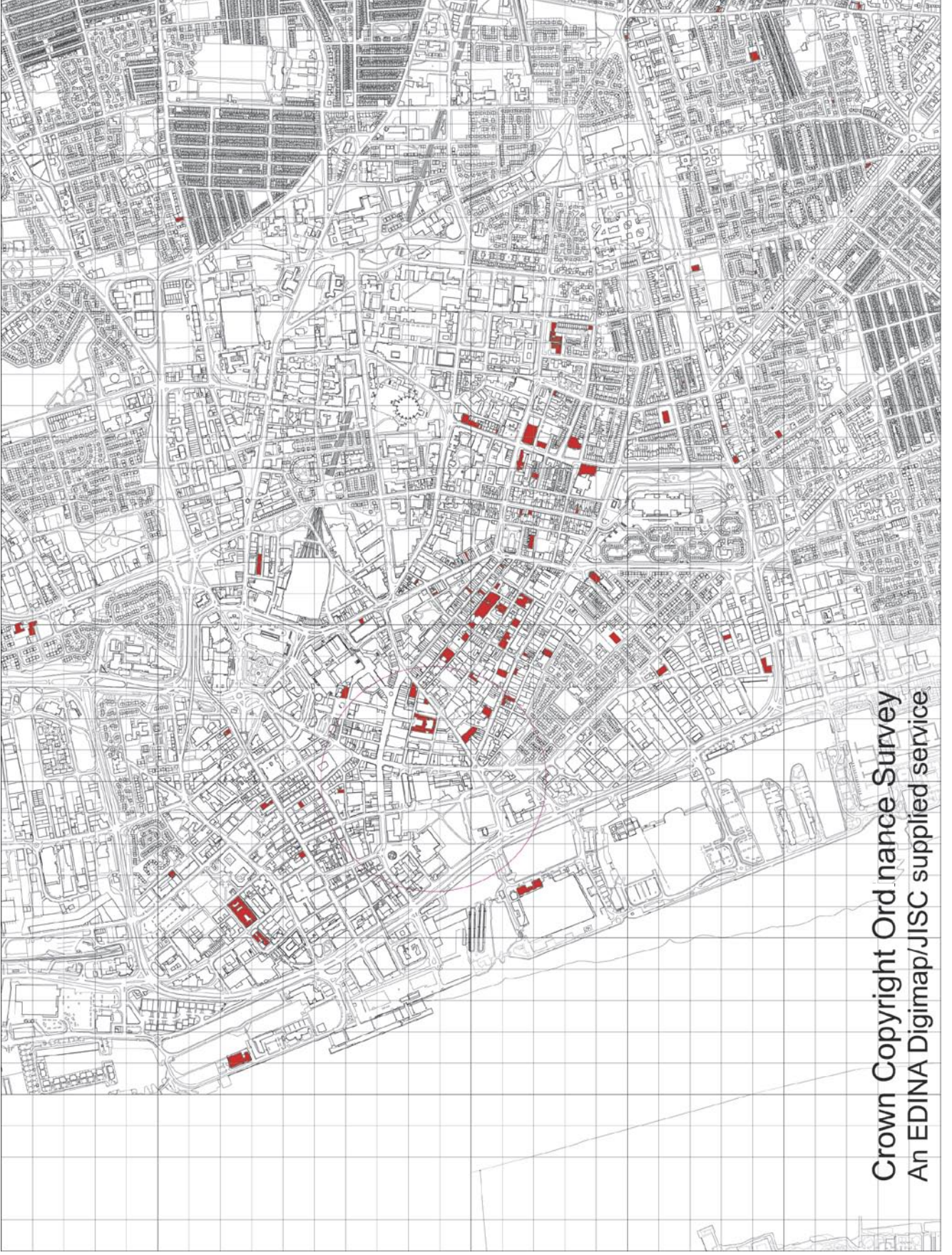
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## Appendix One: Map



Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey  
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## Appendix Two: Paradise Street Redevelopment

