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In search of the social impact of cultural districts - Emerging principles for social impact evaluation

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IN SEARCH OF



The Social Impact of Cultural Districts

Emerging Principles for Social Impact Evaluation



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GCDN
Global Cultural
Districts Network
An Initiative of AEA Consulting

Executive Summary

Across the globe, the transformative powers of cultural districts have been widely noted, particularly with respect to how they add value to the lives of individuals and to society as a whole. Yet the ways in which cultural districts deliver and evaluate their social impact have yet to be fully explored. Importantly, there is a stark absence of rigorous methodologies and assessment frameworks to assist cultural districts in articulating, planning, delivering, and evaluating their social value proposition.






To help to address this, the Global Cultural Districts Network (GCDN) published a [report](#) in 2019 that outlined the different ways in which cultural districts generate social impact. As a follow-up, GCDN then commissioned a second phase that involved working closely with five cultural districts to develop a practical social impact evaluative framework. Although the Covid-19 pandemic hindered the practice-led research, the process nonetheless illuminated useful findings about the current state of social impact evaluation within cultural districts as well as surfaced key recommendations for next steps.

The key findings include:

- Social impact remains an elusive concept to cultural districts, with no standard operational definition.
- Social impact is nevertheless intrinsic to the multi-dimensional value of cultural districts.
- Social impact evaluation remains as an aspirational goal of cultural districts.
- Social impact evaluation needs to take into account the synergies between the ecology of cultural assets in the cultural district.
- The decision to conduct social impact evaluation should not be made in retrospect.

Based on these key findings, some guiding principles can be derived to assist cultural districts in articulating and evaluating their social value proposition more effectively.

The 5 key guiding principles for social impact evaluation are:

1. **Be Intentional:** Social impact should be intentionally defined and sought after, instead of being an unplanned spillover benefit or an implicit afterthought. 
2. **Start Early:** Social impact evaluation should be included on the onset, and in initial strategic planning and programme design. 
3. **Be Holistic:** Social impact evaluation should take into account the synergies of the cultural assets in the cultural district. 
4. **Think “Multi”:** Have a multi-paradigmatic perspective towards social impact. Social impact should be evaluated as multi-dimensional, multi-value and multi-attribute. 
5. **Be Steadfast:** Social impact evaluation should aim to capture longitudinal outcomes, rather than simply immediate outputs. 

This preliminary report highlights there is much to be learned about the social impact of cultural districts. To advance the social value proposition of cultural districts, GCDN will be developing a shared value framework and impact assessment toolkit that will clarify, map, evaluate and track the multi-dimensional, longitudinal value of cultural districts.

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Introduction

In 2019, GCDN published a report it had commissioned to better understand the ways cultural districts generate social impact. The report by Professor Geoffrey Crossick analyses the different ways in which the social impact of cultural districts can be defined; draws out current good practices as well as challenges, and suggests a framework and principles for future action. A key intent of the report was to function as a first part to a deeper enquiry into the social impact of cultural districts, which will require the development of a shared toolkit of evaluation methods and indicators through pooled resources and a set of committed partners and collaborators.

As a follow-up, a second phase was initiated in early 2020 to enable the development of a useful toolkit for multi-criteria evaluation and reporting of social value and impact. Key to the second phase was collaborative action-learning through the committed participation of cultural districts, which was to ensure that the research study would practically capture the range of thinking on social impact by cultural districts, as well as the diverse contexts and objectives of cultural districts related to social impact.

This second phase therefore also involved the collaborative participation of five GCDN members:

- Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct, Singapore
- City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism (ACT), Providence, Rhode Island
- HOTA, Home of the Arts, Gold Coast, Australia
- Quartier de La Creation (SAMOA), Nantes, France
- Salford Quays, Salford, United Kingdom

The original intention was to also enable the five members to identify, refine and test-pilot their social impact evaluative frameworks on a real-life cultural programme that would take place during the research period. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of most, if not all, cultural districts, institutions and venues worldwide and none of the pilot districts was open throughout the period. Although this prevented the live pilot-testing, the process of working with the five members presented useful findings about the complexity of identifying and evaluating social impact.

In January 2020, GCDN circulated a call to solicit interest amongst its members in committing to participate in an action-learning study that would lead to refining their social impact evaluation methods, as well as contribute to the development of a shared toolkit of social impact evaluation methods.

5 cultural districts were eventually selected:

- **Bras Basah.Bugis precinct**
Singapore
- **City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism (ACT)**
Providence, Rhode Island
- **HOTA, Home of the Arts**
Gold Coast, Australia
- **Quartier de La Creation (SAMOA)**
Nantes, France
- **Salford Quays**
Salford, United Kingdom

The original methodology required the 5 cultural districts to identify, refine and test-pilot their social impact evaluative frameworks on a real-life cultural programme that would take place during the research period. As the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of the cultural districts and the discontinuation of cultural programming, the methodology was adjusted.

The revised process required each cultural district to take the following methodological steps:

- Using the typology outline in the 2019 GCDN report, discern the type of social impact that their cultural district possesses.
- Understand the objectives and desired outcomes of the type of social impact discerned.
- Identify a cultural programme by their cultural district that demonstrated their identified type of social impact.
- Share and review the existing methods of evaluation used to determine the identified social impact of the programme, if any.
- Discuss tangible ways to develop, or improve on, measures and techniques of evaluation that would better capture the social impact.
- Test the new set of evaluation techniques on the programme, if possible.

These steps would ideally lead to the development of a toolkit of usable evaluation methods for cultural districts.

Key Findings

The cultural districts identified the following types of social impact and a corresponding cultural programme for social impact evaluation as in Table One.

Cultural District	Identified Type of Social Impact	Cultural Programme for Social Impact Evaluation
Bras Basah.Bugis Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Vibrancy and the Public Realm • Cultural social impact (aspirational) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore Night Festival
ACT Providence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PVDFest
Salford Quays Manchester, United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Social Interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lowry's Arts for Social Change project
HOTA Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ArtLab and Little ArtLab
Nantes France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Skate Park

Table One: Identification of social impact and corresponding cultural programme by the five participating cultural districts

However, as simple as these five methodological steps might sound, they were in fact challenging for all 5 cultural districts. As a matter of fact, most cultural districts were stuck at step (iii) or (iv) and unable to move on.

Their challenges included:

1. Social impact continues to be an elusive concept that is difficult to define and pin down, despite existing theoretical literature

Although all 5 cultural districts irrevocably identify social impact as a vital part of their mission and vision, they were also unable to clearly define the term “social impact” in relation to their cultural districts and articulate the specific goals in pursuing social impact.

This is understandable as social impact is an imprecise concept, used and understood in varying ways. Despite the recognition of the importance of social value, there is an overall lack of common understanding and shared currency for measurement, especially in relation to cultural districts. Instead, the term has been used ambiguously and as a buzzword for different uses and interests to justify different politics, policies and practices. Additionally, there is (and can be) no agreed-upon taxonomy of the preferred beneficiaries of social impact, preferred outcomes of social impact or preferred techniques to measure social impact.

Essentially, each cultural district is on its own in a disorienting landscape of significant but nebulous expectations of their desired social impact.

To assist the cultural districts, they were asked to refer to the 2019 GCDN report where a typology containing 6 types of social impact were identified:

- Equity and inclusion
- Urban vibrancy and the public realm
- Neighbourhood and community
- Targeted social interventions
- Cultural social impacts
- Innovation impacts

The cultural districts required some assistance in understanding and differentiating between the 6 types of social impact, understandably so, as the 2019 report was meant to be a starting point to enable better understanding of the social impact of cultural districts and the concepts were not operationalised in the initial work.

The one-on-one discussions with the participating cultural districts clarified the following:

- **the need to establish clear baselines by disaggregating the constituent elements and dimensions of social value**

As with cultural value, the social value of cultural districts is also multifaceted. Hence, it is helpful for social value first to be further clearly disaggregated into constituent elements and dimensions.

Correspondingly, each type of social impact should be further broken down into clear and operational components. For instance, if “neighborhood and community” is about social capital, the term “social capital” can be further refined into well-defined and operational indicators and corresponding metrics, preventing the

types from being simply abstract language and phrases empty of specific and applicable meaning.

This might entail identifying social cohesion as a key indicator, with quantifiable metrics such as “number of people who made new friends,” and “number of people involved in projects that bring together people from different backgrounds” as well as qualitative metrics like “perception of trust in other local residents” and “perception of quality of relationships with people from different backgrounds.”

While it is clearly a risk that the use of indicators and metrics might conflate the complex real-world phenomena of cultural districts into a set of abstract, categorical traits, this can be prevented by ensuring the operational validity of the indicators and their contextual relevance to cultural districts. Likewise, quantitative metrics can be embedded in qualitative accounts, where the numbers should be accompanied with an appropriate narrative that explains the context (Meyrick et al, 2018: 124).

- **the need to avoid optimism bias and further differentiate between intended, actual, and perceived social value**

There needs to be a practical understanding that allows each cultural district to differentiate between their aspirational goals, their high expectations of social impact, and existing realities. In particular, actual and perceived value might also differ, especially with the lack of appropriate evidence-based evaluations. Indeed, because social impact has become an important aspiration for cultural districts, it has become a contested term where there can be tension between what it actually is, and what it should be and do.

For instance, although Providence intended to demonstrate how the value of PVDfest lies within their ability to encourage intercultural and intergenerational audience participation, their actual collected data demonstrated that this intercultural and intergenerational participation was more evident amongst the participating artists instead. Because evaluating social impact in terms of intercultural and intergenerational participation was never planned, it was then difficult to determine from the audience survey data collected from PVDfest, whether this intended value was simply aspirational or actual. The actual social impact evaluated from the existing data was also overlooked by Providence because it was not identified as an aspirational goal from the start.

Overall, nuanced clarity with respect to what social impact entails, will increase the likelihood of cultural districts delivering social impact evaluation and achieving desired outcomes.

2. Social impact is intrinsic to the ever-accruing multi-dimensional value of cultural districts, and not just as a utilitarian instrumental benefit

It is understandably difficult for cultural districts to specify their social impact, because of the multi-dimensional nature of their overall cultural value.¹

¹ For more on the multidimensional nature of cultural value, see Throsby (2001, 2003, 2010), Holden (2009) and Meyrick et al (2018).

Each cultural district struggled to identify and narrow down to one specific type of social impact, because their social impact was intrinsically tied to the other aspects of their overall cultural value, which includes artistic value, urban and environmental values, educational value, and economic value. For instance, it was difficult for cultural districts to differentiate and decide between “cultural social impact” and “urban vibrancy and the public realm,” especially for cultural districts located in central urban areas with significant amounts of public space. This was fathomable, as the urban nature of cultural districts is intrinsic to their overall value. This also underscores how social value cannot be considered in isolation of the other values generated by cultural districts.

Additionally, the cultural districts found it difficult to narrow down and specify a specific programme and time period of value creation. This is understandable as social value is ever-evolving, and there are different time periods in value creation, especially the short term and long term. Again, this difficulty is understandable as social impact evaluation should not just be concerned with short-term effects and outputs, but also the longer-term trajectories and outcomes.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic further affirms that value accruing regardless of use should also be taken into account. For example, although Covid-19 prevented precinct-wide festivals like the Singapore Night Festival and PVDfest from taking place, these programmes have accruing, long-term social outcomes, such as life-long learning. The cumulative and extended social impact of these festivals should be acknowledged and continue to be tracked and evaluated. Moving forward, social impact evaluation should acknowledge

the full array of impacts, as well as overall cumulative impact. A useful model would be the break down and tracking of the progressive stages of the impact of arts and cultural participation. The impact of cultural experiences can occur in a progression of three stages:

- **concurrent impact** – which refers to the many ways in which individuals respond to a cultural programme without being consciously aware of their responses.
- **experienced impact** – which refers to a conscious experience and perception of the impact of the cultural programme on the individual.
- **extended impact** – which refers to longer-term outcomes of the cultural programme on the remainder of the individual's lifetime, and can only be tracked through a longitudinal period.

For cultural districts, the long tails of extended impact of multiple cultural experiences within the district should also be recognised.

However, understanding the concurrent, experienced and extended impact of arts participation will require cultural districts to have on-going and long-term commitment to social impact evaluation as well as a high degree of financial resources. Nonetheless, demonstrating the long-term social benefits to communities and society will allow cultural districts to also justify their sustained investment in the arts and culture.

3. Social impact evaluation remains as an ambiguous aspirational goal of cultural districts

Although all 5 cultural districts recognise the importance of social impact, social impact evaluation remains as an ambiguous aspirational goal. While some of the cultural districts might include social impact in their mission and vision, none pre-planned and pre-identified social impact evaluation, especially in their strategic planning and implementation processes.

Due to this lack of early inclusion of social impact evaluation in strategic planning and programme delivery, the participating cultural districts did not actually possess existing data collection and evaluation methods that were specific to tracing and assessing social impact. This meant that it was not possible to ground the evaluation in empirical evidence (instead of just opinion or anecdote or hypothesis).

For instance, although HOTA would have liked to explore and affirm how their ArtLab programmes enabled “equity and inclusion” as they attracted participants from diverse backgrounds, which in turn enabled their participants to better appreciate the diversity of human experience and cultures and increase their empathy, there was a lack of concrete evidence due to the lack of data collected that specifically tracked the backgrounds of their ArtLab participants.

4. Social impact needs to take into account the ecology of cultural assets in the cultural district, especially for the overall social outcome

Apart from the difficulty of extracting social value from the overall value of cultural districts, cultural districts also struggled to identify whether the social value was a direct or indirect impact of the identified cultural programme, or even just a ripple effect of the overall benefits of creative clustering. As the 2019 report aptly points out, “it is the ecology of cultural assets in a district or neighbourhood that matters for the overall social outcome.”

Social impact evaluation hence needs to be clearer in terms of whether the social value gleaned is a direct result of a specific cultural programme, or the result of the cumulative cultural value of the district as a whole.

Additionally, there is the need to recognise the reporting process and to whom the social impact evaluation is obtained for. This is because cultural districts mean different things to different people and are complex ecologies. This is evident in the value chain of a cultural programme, where there will be a number of people contributing to an artwork and generating its value. This highlights how impact occurs on a continuum of attribution and can be distinguished between upstream and downstream impact. Upstream impact comprises the immediate benefits, and those most directly related to the cultural district’s funding and direct intervention. Downstream impact includes the immediate impact of the funded cultural programme on audiences and communities, but also the related impact from other works of the funded artists and

organisations. The success of cultural districts belongs to many people.

Likewise, cultural districts have always had to meet an array of expectations and fulfil differing agendas for different stakeholders. Different stakeholders will have different priorities and orders of worth. Hence, social impact evaluation needs to consider the reporting process and understand it as the process by which value is conferred.

The reporting personnel's personal position and interest in respect of the evaluated cultural activity should also be accounted for, when understanding how the data is collected, tabulated, and analysed.

For example, for the place managers of the Bras Basah Bugis precinct, their social impact evaluation was focused on their implementation of their yearly night festival and the social impact on audiences. However, for the arts tenants in the precinct, the cultural social impact of the clustering of their arts spaces and the resulting nurturing of vernacular creativity were more valuable.

Looking only at the impact most valuable to the reporting personnel and the stakeholder for whom the report is intended, misses the larger picture and greater understanding that comes from looking at the cultural district as a complex ecosystem.

Consequently, it is important to discern who and what the social impact evaluation is meant for. Different stakeholders might perceive the determinants and benefits of social impact in possibly divergent ways.

5. The decision to conduct social impact evaluation should not be made only in retrospective

Although the cultural districts readily shared their cultural programmes and existing data, it was difficult to capture robust and reliable information about the social impact of cultural programmes that have concluded. This was mainly because of two reasons:

- Lack of actual supporting evidence, because the past cultural programmes were not designed initially for social impact.
- Lack of clear outcomes as social impact evaluation was not a priority during the design and execution of the past cultural programmes.

Including the social impact evaluation early and at the start of the programme formation and development will allow the application of appropriate methods and capturing of relevant data, especially baselines. For instance, it would be difficult to assess a programme for social impact if the programme was never intended to have any effect on the social realm.

The goals of social impact, alongside the evaluative criteria and framework, need to be developed in parallel with initial programme design, and in fact should also inform that design. This will frame the initial conversations about evaluation in terms of the realistic difference it will make, while also ensuring that suitable methods for evaluation can be applied appropriately and rigorously, with the scope, scale and cost tailored to the specific circumstances.

Importantly, this will also allow the cultural districts to identify and set aside the appropriate resources required to conduct the social impact evaluation, including a proper research team, as well as factor in the financial costs. This will also enable the cultural district to have a longitudinal and iterative approach to social impact evaluation that is able to capture and track the long-term outcomes.

To exemplify some of the findings discussed, we turn to a brief illustration of their practical application to one of the cultural districts.

An Application

The Case of Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct, Singapore

The Bras Basah.Bugis precinct is the official arts, heritage and design district in Singapore's civic centre. It is home to the greatest concentration of museums, arts groups, arts schools, heritage buildings, historic monuments, places of worship and lifestyle malls in the city centre.

The place manager is the National Heritage Board (NHB), a government statutory board whose mission is to celebrate the shared heritage of the diverse communities in Singapore.

On the onset, NHB selected urban vibrancy as their type of social impact. They also identified the Singapore Night Festival (SNF) as their focus case study. First started in 2008, SNF is the longest-standing and highly popular late-night public arts festival in Singapore. A highlight of the festival is the interactive light installations titled Night Lights, which produces artworks that dot the district, or turns the facades of buildings in the vicinity into ephemeral works of wonder. Today, it is a vital arts festival that enlivens the Bras Basah.Bugis precinct during the last two weekends of August and captivates at least half a million audiences annually with light projections, public art installations and cross-disciplinary performances.

The Bras Basah.Bugis (BBB) precinct commissioned this author and her group of tertiary students to conduct a review study of SNF, so as to better understand this impact as well as to suggest recommendations for future editions of the festival. Apart from analysing past audience data collected by NHB, this study utilised a multi-method data collection approach, including a quantitative audience survey, stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions.

Audience surveys show social and artistic value are intertwined.

In terms of the audience data (n= 1140), 80% of the local population had been to at least one edition of SNF. Out of this 80%, “being able to spend time with family and friends” was ranked as the second highest motivation (57.3%) in terms of visiting the festival. However, this ability to spend time could not be separated from the artistic value of the festival, as the top reason (83.4%) was to see the light art projections. This population also shared that the purpose of visiting the festival was to experience the light art projections with their friends and family – pointing to the ever-accruing multi-dimensional value of cultural districts.

Social impact is a contributing value of SNF but audiences do not see social impact as SNF’s greatest strength. SNF scored highly in terms of satisfaction with both audiences and stakeholders, and all agreed that it would be a huge loss to Singapore if SNF ceased to exist, the social value of the festival was not within the immediate top reasons. The audience survey also revealed that SNF’s greatest value is in its provision of an accessible entry point into discovering the arts and culture in Singapore, especially since the entry is non-ticketed, and much of the festival takes place within public spaces. When asked about the factors determining their willingness to return for future editions, the top reasons included the “diversity of arts programming” as well as the ability

to “personally encounter and interact with the unique heritage, spaces and stories of the BBB precinct.” Social impact is an intrinsic value of the cultural district. [finding 3]

Similarly, for the stakeholders who are tenants within the district, the most significant value of SNF is its ability to cultivate and engage arts audiences:

“The value of the festival comes down to capturing new demographics, new consumers, who are in the area, but have not really explored the area fairly well. For us it has always been about that. The Night Festival is definitely one that has served us really well in terms of like getting people to visit us to find out more about what we do and of course to try what we have.” – *BBB arts stakeholder*

“I think the festival has been very successful in creating some sort of buzz [...] The testament to that would be the number of people that have come to light shows and all that sort of activity. I think what has been great about the festival is that it has opened up public spaces, also given artist opportunity to perform their craft to audiences they are not able to reach on a regular basis” – *BBB arts stakeholder*

Meanwhile, the stakeholders who are non-tenants of the district appreciated the educational and capacity-building value of SNF. This is because the festival either provided many of them their first opportunity to develop an artwork that would be visited

by mass audiences, or the prospect to participate in a festival alongside other more established and/or international artists:



“The festival has been very willing to adopt new artists like us. They are willing to assist and show artists like us, despite having no prior background at all [...] As an artist, I definitely feel that this festival is very useful for us to be able to step up onto a global stage to meet people like international media artists and light artists from around the world, as well as to have a small seed fund to go ahead with our project.”
– *non-BBB arts stakeholder*

Here, the educational value is also determined by the festival being a meeting point for artists to congregate, showcase their artistic talents and learn from each other.

It is also worth noting these stakeholders have also pointed out that there are diminishing returns to this capacity-building value. While the festival might have been a useful platform for learning when they first participated in the festival, they also noted that the opportunities for learning decreased with continued participation. This highlights that the difference between short-term and extended cultural impact.

Interestingly, many of the stakeholders, especially the district tenants, also highlighted how the district should further leverage on the strengths and capabilities of the existing stakeholders residing and working within the district, to cultivate long-term social impact. Indeed, what is distinctive about the BBB district is that unlike many other cultural districts around the world,

the district enables both cultural production and consumption. Firstly, the district is home to key cultural institutions including the National Design Centre and Stamford Arts Centre, which champion both the need for lively place activations as well as fostering a conducive environment for incubation and innovation. Secondly, the district is also characterised by a diversity of work and rehearsal spaces that are consistently utilised by arts organisations and practitioners for ongoing cultural activity including incubation and the staging of public performances. This includes the cluster of arts organisations along Waterloo Street, such as The Theatre Practice, which is the longest-standing professional bilingual theatre organisation, and Objectifs Centre for Photography and Film, a visual arts space offering year-long exhibitions as well as mentorship and education programmes.

Additionally, the maker space at National Design Centre, arts schools like School of the Arts and LASALLE College of the Arts, and the newer Arts Resource Hub spaces for arts freelancers contribute to ensuring that the precinct remains accessible and equitable for students as well as emerging and independent practitioners. The students from the arts schools, particularly LASALLE, also partner with the arts groups in the precinct for a range of activities including internships, mentorships, learning journeys and productions. Finally, the dense diversity of stakeholders (including religious, F&B, retail and nature) also provide a conducive urban environment to work, live and play in.

Apart from urban vibrancy, the ongoing cultural production also increases the district's potential for social innovation, and affirms how social value cannot be considered in isolation of the other values generated by cultural districts.

Many of the precinct stakeholders also self-organise arts programmes and cultural events throughout the year, drawing members of the public to the precinct with the overall effect of growing urban vibrancy. Major arts productions and film events take place at public parks within the precinct; cultural institutions large and small organise lifestyle and culture offerings to draw visitors into their spaces; tertiary (arts) schools in the precinct regularly organise student showcases in their city campuses; and the presence of multiple shopping malls (themselves hubs of activity in Singaporean life) and independent businesses offer rich variety of options in terms of commercial culture.

As a result, the district is known as a place for social activity. Based on the audience survey, “social activities with friends or family” is the third highest reason behind their visits to the precinct. This again affirms how the cultural value of the precinct is from the rich ecology of cultural assets.

Conclusion & the way forward

Overall, although cultural districts identify social impact as a vital part of their mission, this study shows that social impact remains a somewhat imprecise, aspirational goal that has yet to be implemented into focused programmes with clear goals and outcomes that can be evidenced and evaluated.

Although the 2019 report usefully proposed a typology containing six types of social impact, the cultural districts all face difficulty in identifying and narrowing down what social impact actually means for their own cultural district. Additionally, cultural districts and their stakeholders had high but sometimes imprecise expectations of social impact, whether at the strategic or operational level. There therefore remains a lack of actual supporting evidence of social impact.

Yet, despite this lack of clear strategic planning and evaluation, social value is intrinsic to cultural districts. All 5 participating cultural districts were able to identify some form of social impact, although they were mainly based on anecdote and opinion. Social impact is evidently an unplanned spillover benefit from the existence of cultural districts and the synergies of their cultural assets, and as such would benefit from clearer articulation and evaluation.

Based on the key findings of this study, key guiding principles can be derived to assist cultural districts in articulating and evaluating their social value proposition more effectively.

The five key guiding principles for social impact evaluation



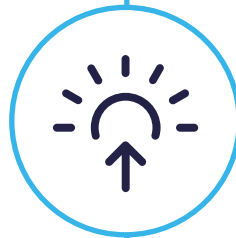
2. **START EARLY**

Social impact evaluation should be included on the onset, and in initial strategic planning and programme design



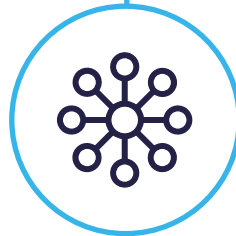
1. **BE INTENTIONAL**

Social impact should be intentionally defined and sought after, instead of being an unplanned spillover benefit or afterthought



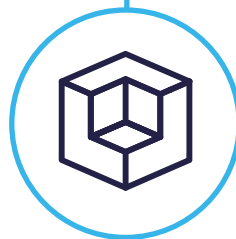
3. **BE HOLISTIC**

Social impact evaluation should take into account the synergies between cultural assets in the cultural district



4. **THINK "MULTI"**

Have a multi-paradigmatic perspective towards social impact. Social impact should be evaluated as multi-dimensional, multi-value and multi-attribute



5. **BE STEADFAST**

Social impact evaluation should aim to capture longitudinal outcomes, rather than simply immediate outputs



Limitations

Due to the small sample size and the lack of completion due to the difficulty faced by the cultural districts during the process, this study should not be considered as a definitive assessment of social impact evaluation by cultural districts. The value of this research is also its contingency approach, where there is no one size fits all; instead effort is made to understand the context-specific and diverse needs of each cultural district.

Finally, this study's focus on a singular cultural programme is not the only way to understand social impact evaluation as it assumes a logic causality model as well as a theory of change approach. While the theory of change can be useful, its logic case and effect model might prevent the unexpectedness of arts, culture and creativity.

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