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**Local festivals, social capital and sustainable destination  
development: experiences in East London  
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# **Nancy Stevenson Local festivals, social capital and sustainable destination development: Experiences in East London.**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the nature of social capital arising from engagement in local festivals and the implications of this for the social sustainability of an emerging destination. Two case studies are developed from a longitudinal research project which investigates local festivals staged in the Hackney Wick and Fish Island area adjacent to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London, UK between 2008 and 2014. This area has been directly affected by extensive development and regeneration efforts associated with the staging of the London 2012 Olympic Games. The two festivals considered here respond to the challenges and opportunities arising for local people as the area changes. One festival aims to foster a sense of community by creating shared experiences and improving communication across diverse groups. The other draws together the cultural community, links them to the opportunities arising as the area emerges as a destination, and attracts visitors. These festivals increase social capital in the area, but its distribution is very uneven. The accrual of social capital exacerbates existing inequalities within the host community, favouring the “haves” at the expense of the “have nots”. There are tensions between the development of social capital and social sustainability in this emerging destination.

Keywords: Festivals, social capital, social sustainability, inequality, destination development

## **Introduction**

This paper presents two case studies to explore the nature of social capital development through local festivals and its contribution to the social sustainability of an emerging destination. It considers two annual festivals developed in 2008 in an area just outside the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (hereafter called the Park) in East London, UK. One of the festivals is primarily focussed on developing shared experiences, improving communication

and developing networks across the community, including diverse and socially excluded groups. The other draws together and celebrates the cultural community, presenting and sharing cultural production and practice. It develops shared experiences, practices and networks within the cultural community and it also attracts visitors into the area.

These studies are situated within the context of a growing body of literature exploring the potential of events to develop social capital (e.g. Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Pernecky, 2013; Schulenkorf, Thomson and Schlenker, 2011), social capital within a tourism development context (Macbeth, Carson and Northcote, 2008) and social capital accrual within a host community (Ooi, Laing and Mair, 2014). Developed from a longitudinal study, this discussion extends the literature using social capital to frame an investigation of the links and networks that are formed by people as they create festivals in an emerging destination. It explores the perspectives of people who have participated in or had some involvement in a local festival and considers the following questions:

- What type of social capital is developed by people in the area who engage in these festivals, and who accrues it?
- What are the implications of this social capital development for the social sustainability of the emerging destination?

Inequality and social exclusion are recurring themes throughout this research, which is located in London, a city which is diverse and unequal. Social and economic inequalities between East London and other parts of the City were clearly articulated in Booth's (1889) map of poverty and are still apparent today (SRF, 2011). Concerns about uneven development and its implications have underpinned a longstanding and multi-faceted project to regenerate the East of London. A plethora of initiatives have been launched and enacted over the past 30 years (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009) attempting to develop solutions to linked economic, environmental and social problems. As the regeneration project has progressed, priorities and approaches have been constantly renegotiated and there is ongoing

political debate about the appropriate balance between the social, environmental and economic aspirations for the area (Cochrane, 2009; Davis and Thornley, 2010; Stevenson, 2013). Over the past decade this regeneration project has encompassed a mega-event – the London 2012 Olympic Games (hereafter called the Games). The development of the Park and staging of the Games has refocused the wider project, shifting its emphasis away from local/sub-regional housing and employment needs towards the strategic role of East London in a rapidly expanding global city (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009; Stevenson, 2013). The area has been reconceived as a destination for visitors and global investment (GLA, 2010; LLDC, 2015), recognising the important contribution of tourism to London's economy and its potential to support the regeneration of the area.

There are tensions between processes associated with staging a mega-event and those related to socially sustainable destination development. A combination of fixed timescales and media interest creates pressures to make decisions quickly, short-circuiting established planning processes, and reduces local accountability (Horne and Whannel, 2012; Marrero-Guillamon, 2012; Poynter, 2009). Inevitably, quick decisions affect the ability of local communities to become involved and decision makers to consider their needs. The diminished role for local communities in the mega-event process sits uneasily with recent government initiatives, which emphasise the capacity of communities to resolve problems (Cameron, 2009; DCLG, 2011; Giddens, 1991).

In the context of the mega-event, local festivals have been developed as a way to try to bring communities together and enable them to collaborate. These festivals react to the challenges and opportunities arising from rapid change in the area and have the potential to enable local communities to respond to change. However, this study indicates that, while these festivals develop social capital within the community, its accrual is uneven, exacerbating existing inequalities and reinforcing processes which re-image the area as a cultural place. It is argued that social capital development undermines the social sustainability of the emerging destination.

## **Social sustainability and destination development**

The literature on social dimensions of sustainable destination development emphasises the needs and priorities of host communities (Ooi et al., 2014), increasing “people’s control over their lives” (Timur and Getz, 2008: 222). The state has an important role to play because it has the authority to redistribute power and to empower communities to make decisions in their local area (Timothy, 2007; Dale and Newman, 2008; Overton, 1999). Approaches vary depending upon the political context of different places, which governs how much power is devolved and how the needs of different interests are accommodated in decision making. Interpretations of sustainability and also associated approaches vary over time and are influenced by party politics and trends in policy making (Stevenson, 2013).

Achieving sustainable destination development is challenging due to unequal power relations within host communities (Yang, Ryan and Zhang, 2014), differences in national and local government priorities, and pressures exerted by forces outside the local area, such as potential investor and industry interests (Scheyvens, 2011). The tensions around who holds the power to influence decision makers are exacerbated as destinations develop and as finance and decision-making power shifts outside of the area (Yang et al., 2014). There are inequalities between communities in different places: “people in some places are unable to marshal the necessary resources – material, social and personal – to become self-organising and self-reliant” (Catney et al., 2013:12). There are also disparities within communities: poverty, unemployment and other inequalities that exist within host communities mean that some parts are more able to participate than others (Dugarova and Lavers, 2014) and thus have a voice in development decisions. In the context of these power inequalities, achieving a fair balance is difficult (Scheyvens, 2011) and the notion of what is fair is contested.

## **Social capital**

There are many perspectives of social capital, with different theorists identifying varied explanations, controversies and possibilities (Lin, 1999). In the next section key concepts will be identified, largely drawing from ideas developed by Bourdieu (1997) and Putnam (1995; 2000). Putnam is relevant to this study on the basis that his conceptualisation is heavily drawn upon by policy makers in the UK; and Bourdieu because his work provides explanations for the unequal distribution and accrual of social capital and because it provides a basis from which to critically engage in a discussion about social capital and sustainability.

Bourdieu (1997) defines social capital as:

“the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to... membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word” (1997: 51).

He argues there are three distinct but inseparable forms of capital - economic, cultural and social. Economic capital is quantifiable, can be converted into money, and is at the root of the acquisition of other types of capital. Cultural capital comprises embodied, objectified and institutionalised forms (such as academic qualifications). Social capital is derived from networks of relationships and the membership of groups. Interrelationships between the three forms are complex and not easily observed, accrual of cultural and social capital being characterised by diffused transmission in the public and private spheres over a long period of time.

Putnam (1995, 2000) defines social capital as “features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits” (1995:67). He claims engagement between individuals and groups creates social capital which binds people together as they co-create norms, shared values and obligations which shape their cooperation and action. Thus, social capital creates mutual benefits and is

cumulative, building upon and reinforcing social assets and facilitating collaboration in the future. He identifies two types of connections that underpin the creation of social capital. The first, “bonding”, are tight links within groups which are homogenous or have a sense of common identity; the second, “bridging”, are weaker links between different groups which stretch beyond a sense of common identity. Woolcock (2001) identifies a third type, “linking” social capital - vertical connections between people or groups with different levels of power – for example, the links between a part of the local community and local government which makes decisions in the area.

While there is broad agreement that social capital arises through engagement in social networks, conceptualisations are diverse. Lin (1999) and Arneil (2007) identify two distinct theoretical positions. One, associated with Bourdieu, perceives social capital as an individual asset, the accumulation of which reflects and reinforces privilege and power in society. The other, associated with Putnam, sees social capital as a collective asset which is available to all members of a group.

“Bourdieu’s vision ...is marked by division and contestation, not only against the state ...but within the civic society itself; particularly over the norms and boundaries created by those with cultural and social power...in direct contrast with Putnam’s, as a sphere for ‘coming together’ and unity” (Arneil 2007:201).

Bourdieu (1997) illustrates an unequal society in which groups compete and struggle for power as they vie to secure resources. Groups who have traditionally held power are advantaged as their existing networks, experiences and political literacy enable them to develop connections and access benefits arising from collaborative engagement. Inequalities arise from a variety of factors, including historical power relationships (Bourdieu, 1997), social class (Warde et al., 2003), gender and ethnicity (Arneil, 2007).

### **Social capital and social sustainability**

The social capital concept has become entangled in debates around social sustainability (Macbeth, Carson and Northcote, 2004). Inequality and social exclusion are perceived to arise from “mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream” (Giddens, 1991: 103) and there is “an increased emphasis on social processes, relationships and the organisational capacities of communities” (Coalter, 2007: 538), coupled with the expectations that communities can and should become more responsible for local decision making. In contemporary Britain the “Big Society” (Cameron, 2010) and Localism initiatives (Cameron, 2009; DCLG, 2011) aspire to devolve powers and responsibilities to local communities. These initiatives emphasise the capacities of individuals and groups within the community to engage together to identify issues and solve problems. Putnam’s interpretation of social capital has influenced this discourse (Hibbitt, Jones and Meegan, 2001), particularly his ideas around the role of voluntary associations in the creation of community strength and civic engagement (Coalter, 2007). However many researchers (including Arneil, 2007; Coalter, 2007) are critical that Putnam’s version is over-simplified, underplaying negative aspects, and overemphasising positive outcomes. These divergent views envisage very different relationships between social capital and sustainable development. If social capital accumulation coheres communities, it can be argued that its accrual is likely to support socially sustainable destination development. However, if it exacerbates existing inequalities and disempowers some groups, then it does not.

### **Social capital and festivals**

There is a growing body of research around the potential of festivals and events to develop social capital and engender social inclusion. These studies are underpinned by diverse conceptualisations of social action. At one end are those studies which are enacted within a consensual frame and “offered through the lens of a just, equitable, friendly world where events might have a role in bridging social and cultural gaps” (Pernecky 2013:27). At the other end are studies conceptualised through the lens of a world which is inequitable and

competitive, characterised by struggles between people, reflecting the work of Bourdieu (1997) and Arneil (2007).

An example which lies toward the former is a study by Derrett (2003) investigating the extent to which festivals demonstrate “sense of place” and supporting the notion that they can be a mechanism to promote social cohesion. Arcodia and Whitford (2006) claim festival attendance can develop community resources through shared experience and collective knowledge, leading to a shared world view. Shared world understandings are not apparent in the research by Schulenkorf, Thomson and Schlenker (2011), who identify disparate views at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Run for Peace in Sri Lanka. However, they conclude that sports events can be “a booster, and a catalyst for social capital” (2011:117) if integrated with wider reforms.

The notion that festivals create community cohesion is challenged by Moufakkir and Kelly (2013), who identify controversy and cultural dissonance arising as a local street music festival develops into an international festival. Rojek (2013) identifies the “illusory community” (2013:31) created by festivals underpinned by “intimations of equality, shared responsibility, kinship and social inclusion” (2013:100), which enables people to step outside their normal lives to “perform” their sense of community. This performance is located in a bounded time frame and is detached from the realities of their everyday lives. He claims that temporary engagement provides the illusion of action while leaving power structures and inequalities intact. The ideas introduced here around sustainability, social capital and festivals are used to interrogate the case study findings later in this paper.

## **Methodology**

This paper is developed from an on-going, small scale, longitudinal research project which started in 2008. It is informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) and the subsequent refinements and clarifications advocated by Glaser (1978; 1992; 1993; 1998). This approach supports research into the multiple experiences, perspectives and meanings created by people in a locality. It enables

consideration of context and the emergent fluid and evolving nature of experience (Stevenson, Airey and Miller, 2008).

It focuses on two annual festivals in East London: Hackney Wick Festival (hereafter called Wick Festival) and Hackney Wicked. They were selected for consideration in this paper as they yielded particularly rich data, mobilising diverse local communities and creating networks and shared experiences across a range of cultural activities. Both festivals were launched in 2008 at the start of the Cultural Olympiad (a cultural festival which heralded and ran throughout the 2012 London Olympic Games) in an area just outside the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and they were locally conceived. Both respond to opportunities and threats brought about by change in the local area. The research presented here draws from the wider project. It is supported by attendance and observation of these festivals in 2009, 2010 and 2012 and 84 interviews and observations of local community meetings between 2008 and 2014. Snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify key actors, uncovering networks within the local community and enabling the collection of stories from people within those networks. A limitation of this approach was that it focussed on those people who were more active within the community – many of whom had direct involvement in event production and other community initiatives. This study does not explore the differences in social capital development between those parts of the community that engage in festivals and those that do not.

Engagement over an extended period led to the development of shared experience with members of the local community and closer relationships. This process is discussed in more depth in Stevenson (2015). The relevance to this paper is that familiarity led to changes in interview practice as the study progressed. Interviewing became more conversational, empathetic (Fontana and Frey, 2005), “collaborative, reciprocal, trusting and friendly” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: XX). Long-term engagement led to access to privileged information about networks within the community, which had not been visible in the earlier stages of the research. The interviews shown in column 2 and 3 of Table

Exposed more informal networks and highlighted some of the contradictions and tensions arising around the development of social capital which were unseen at the outset.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Table 1 summarises the interviews by type of interviewee using 3 broad categories: local authority, residential community and creative industries. It also provides more information about the interview process. The first column shows the first interviews, the second, follow-up interviews, all of which were all taped and transcribed. The third column shows the informal conversational interviews which were not recorded but where notes were taken during and immediately after.

The research generated a range of data including interview transcriptions and notes, observational notes of meetings and festivals, and research memos. Transcriptions were initially evaluated by hand (using highlighter pens) to experiment with breaking down data into “distinct units of meaning” (Goulding, 2002:74). NVivo software was then used for “open coding” – in order to identify basic concepts (Glaser, 1992). During these processes “constant comparison” (Glaser 1992:38; Goulding, 2002:169), between incidents and concepts, was used to identify connections across the data. The material discussed later in this paper is taken from an open code, named *making connections*, which was broken down into categories to investigate the detail (who, why, what, where and when). These categories were then re-evaluated in the context of memos written during the data collection and analysis process and re-grouped into “higher order” concepts (Strauss & Corbin 1998:95). This enabled the researcher to start to consider the nature of the connections, exploring different aspects of the connection making process.

A review of relevant literature took place after the first coding phases, as themes started to emerge around social inclusion/exclusion, networks and sustainability. This timing ensured that the paper was grounded in the interviewees’ experiences (Glaser 1998) and required the

themes to have some substance before being compared with other studies and established theory. The literature review enabled comparison and refinement of emerging ideas and concepts, connecting the interviewees' ideas to existing theory in the field. Axial coding was used to develop an understanding of dynamic interrelationships between concepts (Glaser, 1992; Goulding, 2002) and involved "reassembling data that were fractured during open coding" (Strauss & Corbin 1998:123-4). This process united concepts and started to offer explanations which were interrogated and refined further through discussions with research participants and a further review of the research memos. Finally, in order to embed and understand the findings within the local context, policy and other local research documents were considered. This enabled reflection upon the specific local dimensions in the development of social capital and social exclusion.

### **Case study**

The case study area is adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and has been directly affected by the extensive building and regeneration efforts associated with the London 2012 Olympic Games and its legacy. Prior to the announcement of the Games, the area had been largely unaffected by gentrification and encompassed large tracts of social housing and industrial estates. Manufacturing had declined, and a "creative cluster" (DPA, 2008; LDDC, 2013) emerged as many ex-industrial buildings were rented to the creative community.

At the outset of this project there were very few attributes which would attract visitors to the area. Creative activity was largely hidden and there were few "convivial places" (Shaftoe, 2008). Interviewees identified little sense of community - people were "isolated" with few "opportunities to meet and interact" (Councillor, 2008). "There's no places to meet so people tend to socialise around each other's houses or at galleries" (Artist, 2009). As a consequence "a visitor to the area would not know where any of it (creative activity) is, because everything happens behind closed doors. If you're not 'in the know' it looks like nothing is happening" (Studio provider, 2009).

The development of the Park created significant opportunities and challenges for the residents of the area. There were immediate employment and training opportunities and, in the longer term, there was the potential for them to be included in the benefits arising from the regeneration of the area, including through visitors and tourism. The challenges included noise, road closures, compulsory purchase, land speculation and rising rents. They were exacerbated as legacy ambitions for the area shifted from “profound social and economic change *for existing communities*” - “a model of social inclusion” (London 2012, 2004) to “a sport, tourist and visitor destination” (LLDC, 2015:9) encompassing “a vibrant thriving district of *new communities*” (authors’ italics) (LDA, 2009).

While the current plan states its intent to work “with new and existing communities to create stronger neighbourhoods” (LLDC, 2015:9), in practice the creation of these neighbourhoods poses significant threats to parts of the existing community which are being displaced by changes in the area (Watt, 2013). Regeneration has led to buildings being redeveloped, meaning “many of us have lost our studios” (Artist, 2013) and studio and residential rents have increased (Interviews with artists, 2009-2014; CIG meetings, 2012-14). Many interviewees express concerns that large parts of the residential community are disconnected from the growing affluence in the area. In this context it is difficult to envisage socially sustainable destination development. “The dilemma at the moment is who it’s going to be for in the future” (Council official, 2013).

### ***Local festivals***

As the area has changed, so has its events culture. In common with many large partly vacant industrial estates around London, sporadic unlicensed raves (parties) had been staged within the area for many years. Local community events were organised for specific resident and religious groups in the community centre, school and church, and members of the artistic community held events and exhibitions in their studios. Wick Festival and Hackney Wicked

were launched in the summer of 2008, both aiming to bring together local communities in the light of the opportunities and threats arising from the development of the Park.

### *Wick Festival*

In its first year Wick Festival was led by Space Studios, an arts studio provider with a history of developing participatory projects in collaboration with local communities (Studio provider, 2009). A steering committee was created, made up of representatives of the community, including “the local church, the school, the community association and key community groups in the area” (Studio provider, 2010), and they worked together to secure funding and develop the festival.

“We thought, what we really need is something that brings people together.... we realized that a lot of people here, whatever their background... had this yen for a village community... where you could identify yourself, there’s your church, your school, your shop, your village green. Things that locate you and make you feel at home” (Vicar, 2009).

This “village” ethos has social and spatial elements - with open space opposite the Church becoming the “village green”. During the festival most activities are concentrated in this area and it has become a convivial place, where residents encounter their neighbours and share experiences (Vicar, Wick festival organiser and Studio provider, 2009).

The festival is usually staged over a weekend in September and it has retained its focus on the needs and concerns of the varied communities. Its leadership has also evolved, with the studio provider stepping back and some residents taking the lead. The festival is now led by a formally constituted strategic community group which spans the estates in the area and represents wider community interests. This group has won an award from the “Big Lottery Fund” - a public body which is accountable to parliament and distributes funds raised for “good causes” through the National Lottery (Big Lottery, 2014). The community group has

been awarded over £1 million for the Wick Award, which can be used “to provide a mixture of grants, social investments, loans, microfinance and support” over a decade (Wick Award, 2014).

### *Hackney Wicked*

Hackney Wicked festival runs for a weekend in August and it encourages collaboration between people in the creative community in the area. It includes studio openings, film screenings, tours, theatre, music and activities on the Canal, and it is part of a growing arts and cultural event programme in the area that attracts visitors and tourists from outside the area (Studio provider 2010). “In 2008 it was organised informally by a group of artists” (Hackney Wicked organiser, 2009) and it was located in different venues across the area. Since 2009 it has been run by Hackney Wicked Community Interest Company (CIC) “promoting local culture” and “providing a platform for artists to showcase their work” (Hackney Wicked, 2014). It creates economic benefits for the area (Hackney Wicked CIC, 2015), but it is run by volunteers and is not a profit-making festival.

A combination of a relatively informal structure and lack of funding led to difficulties in developing the infrastructure to support this popular festival. In 2011, it had “grown too big, without the funding to put toilets in place, close roads formally, have stewards, get people to dissipate and go home” (Council official, 2012), becoming a “massive rave” (Local resident, 2012). Interviewees identify tensions between the organisers, the artists’ community and the longer-standing residential community. Some expressed concerns that the festival had lost its focus on promoting artists in the area and improving networks. “The big party was fun, but it didn’t sell any work” (Artist, 2012). Since 2013 a new organising committee has emerged and the festival has been reconfigured around a central hub area and private studios to ensure that it can be managed more effectively, and with the aim to create benefits for the creative community located in the area (Hackney Wicked organiser, 2014).

## **The Hackney experience**

Wick Festival aims to be inclusive, developing networks across different parts of the community, and it draws from notions of community as “a place where people look after one another – a traditional neighbourhood, church, voluntary association” (Reich, 2002:194). Hackney Wicked develops a network of artistic people, revealing the creative parts of the area to a wider audience – fitting well within discourses of creativity and regeneration (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Zukin, 1995) and wider neo-liberal regeneration agendas, which are framed around image, marketing and competition (Peck, 2005).

Observations and material collected through the interviews indicate that both festivals have a role in developing social capital. Both have generated opportunities for people to work together on a variety of projects and encouraged them to engage with one another and explore their areas. Interviewees do not use the term social capital, but share concerns about the relatively weak networks across this diverse community and recognise a need to develop these. This section will explore the Hackney experience further, considering its diverse communities, festivals and community development and the nature of social capital.

### ***Diverse communities***

Interviewees identify four communities; “old Wick” - an established population in social housing, who are both socially and geographically immobile; “new Wick” - a transitory population of migrant families, who are housed in the area before being allocated permanent accommodation elsewhere; “artists’ Wick” - who are both socially and geographically mobile; and “active Wick” - a group which comprises engaged residents and “local statutory influences” (Festival organiser 2010), such as the head teacher of the school, paid community workers and the church. This active group is educated, socially engaged and often employed in the voluntary sector, universities or organisations with a community-based remit within the

area. There is heterogeneity within each of the four communities, as the area is ethnically diverse, and there are distinct identities associated with different housing estates.

The existence of two festivals reflects the different needs and aspirations of the communities. Wick Festival is “community orientated”, reflecting all the above mentioned “diverse groups” (Wick Festival organiser, 2009), and it is “about getting local people involved and having a say” (Host Borough festival organiser, 2010). Hackney Wicked is “about the art” (Hackney Wicked organiser, 2009), with an “emphasis on artists and it being cool” (Host Borough festival organiser, 2010). “It’s about artists who want to showcase their work and create a fabulous arts festival” (Studio provider, 2010).

Interviewees note that the sub-communities have different agendas and operate separately, “picking and choosing what they filter through to their consciousness” (Wick Festival organiser, 2009). Long-standing residents are “very close knit - they know what’s going on in their community, but don’t know what’s going on in the next generation of residential communities” (Curiosity Shop organiser, 2009). There is little “communication between the arts and wider community” (Hackney Wicked organiser, 2009) and “the local community don’t particularly understand the artist community” (Gallery owner, 2012). “If it’s too ‘arty’, the old timers... will have nothing to do with it” (Wick festival organiser, 2009).

### *Community development*

The launch of the two festivals in one year can be largely attributed to the challenges arising from being a neighbour of the Park. Local communities

“didn’t see a lot of funding contribution from the Games for their local area and definitely saw a knock-on effect in terms of dust and noise. So they wanted to tell people the story about what they were doing” (Council official, 2012).

A series of public engagement meetings were set up to discuss the development of the Park, and they contributed to the development of a sense of community.

“Until a few months ago I would not have perceived myself as part of a community. ...The fact that the Olympics has come, and that we have these meetings, even that alone engenders community... because you go there and you meet local councillors...and I’ve never met councillors before..... Suddenly you’re talking to people who are involved in the community. That gives you a sense of community, because there’s an interchange - just knowing what’s going on, knowing the issues gives you a sense of community, however tenuous” (Local resident, 2009).

There was a realisation within the communities that they needed to develop networks in order to enable them to work together for “a voice in some of the bigger plans for physical development in the area” (Council official, 2012). The organisers of the Wick Festival envisaged challenges in developing a sense of community in such a diverse area, and set up an engagement project called the Wick Curiosity Shop (hereafter called Curiosity Shop). This project enhanced existing networks and then established new ones as they shared their stories. It created

“a programme of events leading up to the festival, which involved the public in workshops and interventions”. They collected “oral histories and stories from the ‘old Wick’ community - highlighting what already exists in the community” (Curiosity Shop organiser, 2009).

Several interviewees identify extreme geographical immobility which exists within parts of the old and new Wick communities.

“You can still ask people on some very big estates in the area where the Olympic Park is and they won’t really be sure - because they never go to the other side of the motorway” (Council official, 2012.)

“People don’t go to the galleries and studios, even though they are just around the corner... they think there’s nothing there” (Curiosity Shop organiser, 2009).

Wick Festival organisers tried to ameliorate this physical insularity by creating a range of activities near to the “village green” and organising tours to encourage people to explore and discover places and projects around their local area.

The creative community also felt the need to create a network and to work together. Hackney Wicked created a mechanism to do this by providing “a forum, a space for sharing ideas and a voice for the area” (Hackney Wicked organiser, 2009). Developing a festival together strengthened networks:

“...as a result we’ve got more community about us ... We’ve realised that it is important to create a presence here. The area’s changing so quickly...and we want to keep the artists here” (Hackney Wicked organiser, 2009).

### *Social Capital Development*

The continued existence of two local festivals in the area illustrates the varied aspirations of this socially and culturally diverse community. Both have a connective role, creating shared experiences that open up the possibilities for conversations and interaction. People encounter one another, or more actively engage as they are involved in projects and organise stalls, open studios, exhibitions and events. Both festivals create networks of local people, enabling parts of the community to develop projects, bid for funds, and to engage in discussions with policy makers about the future of the area. The notions of bonding, bridging and linking capital (Putman, 2005; Woolcock, 2001) are used to investigate this further.

There is evidence of the creation of bonding social capital in both festivals. Stalls, projects and events are arranged around communities of interest and enable people to interact. Studio openings enable artists to meet one another, the Curiosity Shop creates activities for the “old-Wick” community to work together and communicate their stories to other groups, and a wide range of residents get together to create activities for the festival.

“I’d heard about the festival from neighbour... and I said ‘what can I do for it’ .... He said ‘we’re going to do something in the Square, would you like to do the bookstall’. So we collected a load of unwanted books and set up the bookstall ... After the festival we got together and formed the Lea Bank Square Community Association... Last Sunday we had a Square clean-up followed by a croissant and cake breakfast... We didn’t have anything a year ago, and now we have” (Local resident, 2009).

The festivals have the potential to develop bridging social capital and are “a vehicle for the business, artists and community to engage” (Council official, 2013). While they serve different communities, a number of projects have been developed to create links across traditionally insular groups.

“We’ve been involved in more outreach work since 2010...What we’ve tried to do is link the artist community with the resident community, bringing the two elements together. We’ve had artists working with young people and with older groups and projects which have linked Wicked to the Wick Festival” (Wick Festival organiser, 2012).

One example of this is the Curiosity Shop, which is led by a community art practice, and connects members of old Wick with other communities in the area. Other examples include film workshops in the estates and art workshops in the school.

However, there are some factors in the design of these festivals which inhibit the development of bridging capital. Both encompass multiple activities which occur at different times across diverse locations. This broad structure and timing enables them to appeal to a wide cohort. However, it also enables people to engage selectively. So, while each festival encompasses events which encourage social interaction, participants can pick and choose which activities to engage in and when to engage. This means that interactions tend to be with other people with similar interests. For example, people with young children stand close to a play facility in Wick Festival, young adults sit outside a café, people who attend the church talk to one another outside the church. At Hackney Wicked many visitors to the Open Studios and music events during the day leave well before the “night-owls” engage in the evening and night-time events.

In practice bridging capital has been concentrated with the organisers. Active engagement in developing and staging a festival means that the organisers know one another and have developed increasingly intersecting networks and relationships.

“We meet quite regularly. We talk about how things are going to work, what we can do for each other. We use the same equipment ... it’s very collaborative” (Wick Festival organiser, 2012).

There is some evidence that linking social capital has been created between organisers of both festivals and policy makers in the local councils, the LLDC and funding organisations. The steering group for the Wick Festival has evolved from “an informal committee to become a formally constituted strategic community group...an empowering process” enabling the community to “fundraise for themselves” (Studio provider, 2011). Bidding for and managing the £1 million funding for the Wick Award has created linking capital between the group, funding bodies and policy makers.

Linking capital has also been developed between the organisers of Hackney Wicked and decision makers in the area. One of the Directors of the Hackney Wicked CIC now runs Hackney Wick and Fish Island (HWFI) Cultural Interest Group (hereafter called the CIG), which identifies core principles around “partnership building, resource sharing and collaboration” (HWFI, CIG, 2014). This group promotes the business interests of the local creative community to the LLDC and incoming businesses. It has lobbied to influence development decisions, to secure the commissioning of local work in new projects, recognition of the local creative community in policy documents (LLDC officer, 2013, and CIG members 2012-2014 and notes from CIG meetings).

## **Implications**

The previous section illustrates that social capital is developed through these festivals, and some examples are provided to illustrate the development of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. The implications of the development of these different types of social capital in terms of community involvement in decision making, and on the sustainable development of the emerging destination, are now considered. This discussion is organised around three themes: inequality, destination image, and social sustainability.

### ***Theme One: Social capital development exacerbates existing inequalities***

The development of bridging and linking social capital through these festivals has been uneven and reflects wider inequalities within the area. These findings resonate with Bourdieu's (1997) claims around the advantages afforded to groups who have traditionally held power through their existing networks, experiences and political literacy. Observation of meetings and interviews indicate that the artistic/creative community had more social capital at the outset. A combination of education, experience, responsibilities, aspirations and transitory associations with the area mean that they often have extensive networks both within and outside the area. These existing networks enhance their ability to create bridging and linking social capital. As they develop social capital, they are able to access networks and resources which are intended to ameliorate the disadvantage and deprivation experienced by the communities living in the social housing estates. For example, "there is no shortage of creative people bidding for funding for the Wick Award. The problem is trying to target and involve people from the estates" (Local resident, 2014). "People have really worked hard to involve the estate communities, but it is incredibly difficult to engage people who don't know about the money or don't really understand it" (Council official, 2012). A number of interviewees express concerns about these inequalities. For example:

"I feel some disquiet that quite often events or discussions are dominated by a large number of young white artists who have come out of art college and have recently moved here" (Council official, 2013).

Variations in the accumulation of social capital also arise from the different levels of engagement in the organisation of the festivals. Those involved in their planning and production develop more social capital than those who participate on the day. "I feel engaged, but that is because I am involved. I don't think my neighbours do" (Wick Festival organiser, 2013). Interviewees identify barriers faced by parts of the residential community who live in the social housing estates who are isolated from social, employment, and educational opportunities, and lack the resources to become involved. They claim many

residents lack either the confidence to become engaged or the optimism that engagement may lead to benefits for them. Gentrification of the area excludes people:

“Most of my neighbours won’t go to the new cafes, they won’t go to the restaurants... Some of them feel that it is not for them, some can’t afford it and some don’t get it”  
(Wick Festival organiser, 2013).

New social spaces, such as cafes and bars, are perceived as “intimidating spaces” frequented by strangers, where locals “can’t afford a cup of coffee...” (Wick Festival organiser, 2012). Parts of the wider community feel excluded from their own neighbourhood, and this makes it more difficult to engage them in the festivals or decision-making in the developing destination.

“People who are engaged understand why people want to come to their area, but other residents don’t. They don’t understand because they don’t know about it themselves”  
(Wick Festival organiser, 2012).

Although the organisational arrangements associated with each festival differ, a common feature is that both are run by volunteers. This reliance on volunteerism fits well with notions of the “Big Society” and localism around community involvement. However, volunteerism in HWFI reflects wider inequalities and is concentrated among those people who have the capability, time and wider remit to become involved. Local cultural businesses and artists volunteer in the organisation of Hackney Wicked as a way of providing a platform and supporting their own work and also developing networks within the area. Their volunteerism reflects their business and social interests. Organisers of the Wick Festival have included the vicar, head-teacher, a charity worker, a lecturer in youth work, the leader of a local community centre and the head of collaborative engagement for a local studio provider. In these cases there are synergies between their volunteering and employment. Volunteers know how to bid for resources, develop a formal committee structure, and engage with their wider communities.

***Theme Two: Social capital development reinforces processes which re-image the emerging destination as a cultural place***

The accumulation of social capital through these local festivals privileges the voices of the creative community. In particular, Hackney Wicked is part of a process of network creation, discussion and lobbying which performs, illustrates and articulates the existence and needs of the arts and cultural community in this developing destination. It is “public-facing...it’s beginning to create an image and that’s why people visit at the weekend” (Council official, 2012). It feeds into a portrayal of HWFI as “a destination... a dynamic place with a flourishing and constantly evolving creative scene” and what is “believed to be the highest density of artists’ studios in Europe” (LDDC, 2013: 16). The conceptualisation of the area as a creative “hotspot” (LDDC, 2013: 16) is attractive to politicians, policy makers, investors and potential new residents, but is a partial truth which privileges the interests of the artists and new business. The creative community dominates the imaginations and discourses about the area and its image becomes less nuanced and more marketable as other community voices become marginalised.

Cultural clusters have been identified as “a prescription for gentrification and displacement” notable for “creating spaces of middle class consumption and enclaves of exclusivity” (Stevenson, 2004:122). These concerns are reflected in the work of Peck (2005), Porter (2009), and Poynter (2009), who draw attention to the implications of an urban elite of “creatives” with the skills and abilities to network and lobby to preserve their interests for those “non-creatives”, who might be marginalised and displaced during the regeneration process. Peck (2005) identifies a scenario in which creative individuals are the “drivers”, while “the lumpen two-thirds are merely passengers” (2005:757) – a scenario which resonates with the HWFI experience, sitting uneasily alongside wider concerns about poverty and exclusion.

While the creative community might possess more social capital than the wider communities within which they are located, their power to affect decisions and changes in their neighbourhood is tempered by wider global and economic forces. Studies by Bader and Bialluch (2009), Porter (2009), Roberts (2006) and Shaw and Macleod (2000) identify a pattern where local creative businesses are displaced by the “influx of the global creative class” (Porter, 2009:246), including bigger and more established cultural providers, and wider development interests. In the local area this is evident in the changing nature of the CIG, which has become “a platform for the governing bodies to communicate with Hackney Wick” but is dominated by “the supply chain of the cultural industries” (Council official, 2012), “people that run spaces and organisations, not so much artists themselves (Artist/architect, 2013) and, more recently, “universities and businesses from outside the area” (Artist, 2014). It is these “public facing recent arrivals” whose “activities bring lots of people in” (Council official, 2012): “[t]hey see the business opportunities and move in - and that’s bringing up the rent” (Artist, 2013).

Concerns that the existing creative industries might be displaced as land values increase are reflected in emerging policy “The ambition for Hackney Wick is to ensure sustainable redevelopment where *the very residents who positively contribute to the character and value of the neighbourhood* remain rather than being displaced elsewhere” (Local Plan 2014: 7, authors italics). This framing of sustainable redevelopment privileges the needs of the part of the community that is perceived to contribute most to the character of the rapidly changing area, and favours those that are most educated and articulate.

***Theme Three: Social capital development undermines the social sustainability of the emerging destination.***

These festivals increase social capital, and at one level appear to resonate with notions of social sustainability (Ooi et al, 2014; Timur and Getz, 2008), offering the potential to engage

and empower communities in decisions about change in their local area. However, in practice, uneven accrual of social capital enables parts of the community to dominate. It creates outcomes which exclude longer standing residential communities and privilege the more educated and affluent incomers. One interviewee talks about his frustrations that

“lots of the creative community were asking for help but very few people on estates ... It’s not that they don’t want a voice, but they don’t know how to become engaged”  
(Council official, 2013).

The concerns raised here are reflected within a growing body of research that raises questions about the inequalities associated with social capital and the implications of this (including Arneil, 2007; Bourdieu, 1997; Cento Bull & Jones, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Dillon & Fanning, 2011; Hibbitt et al., 2001; Ooi et al., 2014; Westwood, 2011).

In this study social capital development reflects and reinforces wider power inequalities within a diverse community. By empowering the “haves” it reinforces the disadvantages faced by deprived communities. In this context social capital development cannot be conceived as a positive force which leads to socially inclusive sustainable destination development.

## **Conclusions**

This paper investigates social capital development through engagement in two festivals. Specifically, it considers who accrues social capital in practice and what sort of social capital is developed by different parts of a diverse community. This underpins the discussion about the relationship between the development of social capital and socially sustainable destination development.

The festivals considered here include some elements which appear to support the social sustainability of the emerging destination. They are multifaceted and designed to appeal to a broad range of people on a number of levels, helping to engender a sense of place. They both

have inclusive aspects within this diverse area, providing opportunities for people to meet and share experiences. They improve the social networks of some community members and provide a potentially effective mechanism to engage people in collective action and decision-making in their local areas. However, in practice the extent to which they unite people across diverse communities or empower them is more complex. An investigation into bonding, bridging and linking social capital accrued through these festivals helps to uncover some of these complexities. For example, Wick Festival has a socially inclusive framing, yet social capital accrues to those members of the community who are most engaged in producing the festival, and who have most social capital already. Hackney Wicked reflects the needs of one part of the community and has become part of a process of re-imagining the area as a creative “hotspot”, an image which fits with the wider regeneration agenda for the area and supports the emerging destination, including by attracting visitors from outside the area. The networks developed through this festival privilege the creative community, enabling the development of bridging and linking social capital with developers and decision makers.

In both festivals those who understand the rules of engagement and can clearly articulate their needs are privileged. Large parts of the existing residential community are not included in this process. Social capital development exacerbates existing inequalities by reinforcing existing power disparities between the “haves” and the “have nots” and privileging the former in the debates around the emerging destination. These inequitable consequences of social capital accumulation mean that it creates outcomes which are contrary to socially inclusive interpretations of sustainability. These findings reflect concerns raised by various authors (Arneil, 2007; Bourdieu, 1997; Cento Bull & Jones, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Dillon & Fanning, 2011; Hibbitt et al., 2001; Ooi et al., 2014; Westwood, 2011).

This study suggests that local festivals have some potential to contribute to socially sustainable destination development in that they can help to develop a sense of place and strengthen networks within the community. However, in order to achieve this potential,

further research is required to explore the implications of uneven social capital accrual and to identify whether anything can be done to mitigate the impact of the underlying inequalities in power. The challenge is in finding how to develop a socially inclusive approach to local festival production, and further work is required to identify methods that might lead to more meaningful inclusion of deprived communities and which may enable them to participate in community networks and also empower them to reap more of the rewards arising as the destination emerges, including through visitors and tourists being attracted from outside.

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