



The Orchestra, the Community and Cultural Value

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An interim report on the *In Harmony Liverpool Research Network* led by the Institute of Cultural Capital in association with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

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The In Harmony Liverpool Research Network has brought together an international community of interest to consider and debate the impact and value of the In Harmony Liverpool¹ programme, led by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (RLP). Inspired by the Venezuelan El Sistema initiative, In Harmony Liverpool uses the symphony orchestra as a means of engaging young children (aged 4 years upwards) in music education and performance, adopting the Sistema philosophy of working with children from the most deprived parts of the country. Launched in 2009 and now one of six programmes supported by the charity In Harmony Sistema England, In Harmony Liverpool has become an embedded feature of cultural life in Liverpool's West Everton community.

The network is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK as part of the cross-council Connected Communities² programme. Its formation was prompted and inspired by the commissioned evaluation³ of In Harmony Liverpool (2009-12), which has consistently indicated a range of positive impacts upon participating children, their families and the West Everton community, and made a number of operational and strategic recommendations regarding the programme's on-going effectiveness. The network was convened to begin to consider in more critical depth emerging ideas concerning the potential long-term social and economic value of In Harmony Liverpool, which have been organised using three distinct but inter-related research themes. These include:

- Cultural Capital in the Community
- Healthy Communities
- Music Education and Impact

Between March and May 2013, the network participated in three research workshops (one per theme) to explore and debate both evaluation findings, and related interests within the context of existing interdisciplinary research. Workshop participants included academic colleagues from a range of disciplines, including centres for research on Socio-Cultural Change (University of Manchester); Applied Educational Research (University of Strathclyde); and Health Inequalities (University of Liverpool). Other participants have included Sistema experts from New England Conservatory, Boston and In Harmony Sistema England programmes; local authority and health trusts; and key In Harmony Liverpool representatives including the RLP education team and the programme's independent evaluators.

The report that follows presents a summary of the network's workshop discussions to date, ahead of a final conference planned for Wednesday 17th July 2013 – *The Orchestra, the Community and Cultural Value* – where emerging ideas will be shared with an extended audience. The network has revealed considerable potential for a fascinating, longitudinal programme of research that considers the true, nuanced, causal impact and cultural value of In Harmony Liverpool as the programme progresses. The conference will provide a platform for gauging the validity of and interest in the research opportunities presented, with the ambition of building collaborative research teams to take this important research forward.

¹ For more information on In Harmony Liverpool, please see attached factsheet (appendix 1) or visit:

<http://www.liverpoolphil.com/inharmony>

² For more information on Connected Communities please see: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Pages/Connected-Communities.aspx>

³ Available from: <http://inharmonyresearch.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/In-Harmony-Liverpool-Year-3-Interim-Report-March-2012.pdf>

1 Cultural Capital in the Community

During its first research workshop held in March 2013, the network discussed the theme of cultural capital in the community⁴. Increased access and openness to new cultural activities and opportunities (for the whole community) is described as a positive outcome in the most recent full In Harmony Liverpool (hereafter IHL) evaluation report (Burns and Bewick, 2012). These include for example evidence of increased community participation in events and performances at Philharmonic Hall, indicated by postcode box office data (pp. 59). The report goes on to recommend that consistent effort is made as the programme progresses to improve and enhance community participation, with initiatives and activities including the formation of a community choir. Cultural capital as a desired outcome of IHL was downplayed however in the evaluation team's presentation during the workshop, which prioritised social outcomes and the value of *social* capital. The evaluators explained that IHL is primarily regarded (and subsequently evaluated) as a social programme, and indicated that musical prowess and ability for example are not prioritised as part of the evaluation⁵. The evaluation team helpfully framed this within the context of established theories of cultural capital, including 'dimensions of cultural impact' (Pierre Bourdieu's embodied, objectified and institutionalised dimensions as defined in *The Forms of Capital*, 1986), indicating that these "must be correlated with the social capital (networks, relationships and resources) being developed within the various communities (*fields*) at play".

This creates some epistemological challenges – and therefore research opportunities – linked to the idea and practice of IHL being a social project that uses a cultural intervention as a means rather than an end. This was especially problematic for some participants: it raises questions on the significance of the *cultural* intervention if purely designed to fulfil social objectives, including would any other type of intervention requiring less unique professional commitment have the same impact? There are potentially risks involved and missed learning opportunities if not fully considering the cultural impact – particularly in terms of musical and artistic capacity - of a major strategic music education intervention. Other implications of IHL as a social mission were discussed within the context of previous research on El Sistema, and on cultural capital from sociological and educational perspectives, following three inspiring and provocative presentations from our guest speakers.

Dr Geoff Baker (Research Associate, Faculty of Music, University of Oxford and Reader in Musicology and Ethnomusicology, Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London) gave an illuminating talk on the culture of El Sistema based solely on his fieldwork in Venezuela. With his research⁶ Geoff calls into critical question some of the cultural assumptions made about Sistema and its social impact, in both socio-political and artistic contexts. Social inclusion is often the political watchword associated with the movement, but this is narrowly defined and is yet to be systematically proven. The political associations and rhetoric around Sistema in Venezuela, led by its founder Jose Antonio Abreu, have seemingly had chameleon-like qualities, starting with strong neo-

⁴ For a full review of the Cultural Capital in the Community research workshop please see: http://inharmonyresearch.net/?page_id=128

⁵ It should be noted that some commentary on musical progression is included in the evaluation report (e.g. the progression of four randomly selected 'case study' children using a measure designed by RLP, pp. 28-30; qualitative evidence on the musical progression and maturity of one member of West Everton Super Strings, pp. 35) To date there has been no correlation between musical progression and other variables used in the evaluation.

⁶ For more information please see: <http://geoffbakermusic.wordpress.com/el-sistema-the-system/>

liberal, right-wing and essentially capitalist connotations to the more socialist utopian ideals associated with the movement today, and appropriated in Venezuela in the Chavez era from 1996 onwards. In an artistic capacity, Baker highlights the tensions between the orchestra as a metaphor in Sistema discourse and as a cultural reality. Drawing upon Max Weber's classical organizational theory and Spitzer and Zaslav's *Birth of the Orchestra* (2005), the orchestra is described as complex, competitive, stratified and dysfunctional; autocratic and elite. Whereas Sistema and now IHL suggest that the 'orchestra as community' model creates an equal and equitable learning environment, traditionally the orchestra has a much more problematic, hierarchical value system. Similarly in Baker's view the Sistema model presents other elitist artistic challenges – its focus on classical (or more accurately orchestral) music excludes other musical forms and traditions which may be of equal or more cultural value to participating children and communities. His suggested approach to researching the 'cultural capital' impacts of IHL subsequently focussed on the role of the orchestra, its comparative value to other musical forms, and implied capitalist ideologies – encouraging 'disciplined and productive subjects' – as compared to the social revolutionary model presented by Sistema. Citing Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), an approach that considers communities' own cultural capital and musical tastes to have the same value was recommended.

Building upon these recommendations, Dr Andy Miles (Reader in Sociology, ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, University of Manchester) discussed his research on existing forms of cultural capital in 'excluded' communities, and within the context of the structural governance of culture. Starting with Bourdieu's premise that cultural tastes are organised by social class (2010), many such assumptions ignore other relevant variables such as age and 'life-course' influences. The concept of 'omnivourness' was introduced to the group as a prominent feature of British cultural capital, reflecting the fact that people have varied cultural tastes, the capacity to sample and enjoy different cultural activities and take equal satisfaction from them. Cultural policy however in recent years has focused on disengagement – or non-participation in organised culture - as a social problem, particularly in relation to New Labour's social inclusion objectives. Referring to research undertaken with communities in Manchester that would be politically defined as culturally excluded, Miles described a number of 'everyday' community-based cultural practices that go beyond the ordinary (e.g. becoming a self-taught, enthusiastic and proficient cook after being inspired by TV cookery programme) and forms of 'ghostly participation' involving self-motivated activities undertaken in own time and outside formal structures.

Miles described "vibrant, vernacular" community-based cultures reminiscent of Raymond Williams' thesis on 'culture as a way of life' (1983). Cultural policy however tends to disregard the 'everyday', focusing instead on psychological barriers to full participation in organised culture (e.g. lack of confidence in formal institutions and perceived 'not for me' attitudinal barriers). Real studies of cultural participation and capital need to be located spatially as well as structurally: this becomes a more challenging social question when cultural capital is continually associated with life improvement, and purposeful interventions seek to extract participation from communities and conform to middle class values. IHL presents an alternative model, in being an immersive community-based intervention using 'legitimate' cultural forms. The network was reminded however that interventions like IHL and El Sistema do not exist in cultural isolation, but rather complement existing forms of community-based cultural capital. Previous discussions between members of the network's Steering Group for example have reflected upon the history of music

making in traditional working class communities such as West Everton, where older generations will have been proficient musicians (e.g. pianists) but rarely classically trained.

Various sociological challenges in researching cultural capital as an outcome of IHL were discussed; both in its own right and when articulated as enhanced social capital through cultural participation and engagement. These included the conventional relationship between cultural capital, interventions with a social purpose and socio-economic mobility. Alastair Wilson (Senior Research Fellow, Applied Educational Research Centre, University of Strathclyde) gave an example of how cultural capital is being used within a purposeful 'life improvement' context with the Intergenerational Mentoring Programme, led by the University of Strathclyde. The programme raises lots of interesting questions on the ethics of social mobility, cultural capital and educational inequality. The mentoring scheme provides one-to-one guidance from retired, professional university alumni for young people in disadvantaged communities in Glasgow, who show academic promise but have relatively little social and cultural capital, or immediate peer support. The aim is to support identified young people into higher education and improve their chances of entering the professions.

Wilson spoke of the inherent 'Eliza Doolittle' characteristics of the programme and the challenges in creating a level social and cultural playing field between mentees and pupils from achieving schools. Where extra-curricular activities such as volunteer work and Duke of Edinburgh awards may be the norm for the latter, filling such gaps for mentees aiming to become first-generation university students has many cultural implications. Theories of global low self-esteem fail to rationalise cultural and educational deficits amongst the young people involved with the scheme, who are all perfectly confident in their 'own' surroundings. They subsequently have to be re-moulded and 'forced through the doors' of professional career routes. As the original RLP application for pilot project status included 'increases in take up of Further and Higher Education by people from West Everton' as a stated objective (Burns and Bewick, pp. 13), aspirations for the life trajectories of participating children and families need to be carefully considered and managed.

In this context, there is a fundamental question of community cohesion or fragmentation that should be considered in light of a long tradition of 'betterment' and enhanced entitlement within the working classes. Is the overarching ideology of IHL and El Sistema to improve chances for individuals or to improve the 'equality of condition' in communities themselves? If the former, the sociological implications of this should still be considered, i.e. what happens to communities when individual success stories (and cultural capital) leave? What is the wider social research project beyond evaluating IHL on linear input/output terms? The construction of community here is also important – Wilson commented that many of the Strathclyde mentees do not aspire to leave their communities for reasons of personal identity and security. The evaluation team and In Harmony Sistema England colleagues closed the discussion by stating that the programme is not about fuelling individual ambition, but involves a pragmatic approach to cultural capital, that is respectful of ingrained, traditional values but seeks to empower communities to "aspire" beyond current limits.

There is a growing appetite within the cultural policy research community to reframe this particular discourse beyond established, Bourdieuan paradigms of individual cultural capital and socio-economic status, and build a more pertinent understanding of collective, contemporary cultural capital and its relative value. This is driven by a succession of recent cultural policy initiatives in the

UK specifically that were driven by an explicit notion of increased access, inclusion and engagement within the 'legitimate' arts (see 'contemporary cultural value in the UK' chapter below), alongside a desire for a greater acknowledgement and understanding of existing and different forms of community cultural heritage, identities, production and practices. This appetite is represented by projects and initiatives such as the Stratification & Culture Research Network⁷ led by leading sociologists at the London School of Economics, City University London, University of York and University of Manchester. Other examples include major Connected Communities projects considering the relationship between communities and the creative economy, including Understanding Everyday Participation⁸ led by the University of Manchester, and Cultural Intermediation and the Creative Economy⁹ led by the University of Birmingham.

In this context the key cultural capital question may not be what the intervention does for the community, but what the community does for the cultural intervention... This is especially true when seeking to consider the extent to which interventions can be replicated or adapted in different community settings, as in the case of the global Sistema phenomenon and its various incarnations. In which case, a grounded theory approach that considers the complementary value of IHL set within the cultural heritage and existing cultural values of the West Everton community may be most useful and inspiring.

⁷ <http://stratificationandculture.wordpress.com/>

⁸ <http://everydayparticipation.wordpress.com/>

⁹ <https://culturalintermediation.wordpress.com/>

2 Healthy Communities

Evaluation research findings are beginning to indicate an attitudinal shift within West Everton that has implications for the longer-term health, wellbeing and resilience of the community: indicators to date suggest for example a strong attitudinal shift within the community concerning parental responsibility and proactive engagement with health professionals at preventive stages. The RLP team is subsequently keen to develop a longitudinal research programme in association with academic colleagues that tests this tentative hypothesis, and the Healthy Communities research workshop¹⁰ was designed to begin to unpack some of the relative conditions for and suggested approaches to this kind of research. Professor Jude Robinson, Health Anthropologist at the University of Liverpool (and network Co-investigator) opened the discussion, drawing upon her own recent research with the Liverpool-based Reader Organisation¹¹ exploring the health impacts of group reading experiences. Findings resonate strongly with qualitative data from the IHL evaluation, especially concerning ‘motivational’ indicators such as improved confidence and self-esteem.

Robinson stressed that there remains a need however to “move beyond symptom impact” in such studies, in order to fully understand the underlying causes of ‘symptoms’ such as low self-esteem, and truly consider the impact of cultural interventions on ‘root cause’ medical health as well as symptomatic wellbeing. This requires participatory methodologies that reflect the inherent qualities of the community-based interventions being assessed, in order to accurately identify “directly attributable” consistent changes in health values *and* behaviours. Where such ‘cause and effect’ cannot be proven, stakeholders and researchers need to be open to and accepting of such ‘impact limitations’, as there may still be useful learning outcomes for communities involved and health impact research more generally. In this respect, IHL presents a fully immersive intervention, with a number of social and cultural contexts that could facilitate a hugely informative longitudinal study of health and wellbeing.

These research challenges and opportunities were echoed by Justine Karpusheff during a presentation on research exploring the impact of creative approaches in mental health care undertaken on behalf of Mersey Care NHS Trust. Numerous examples of powerful narrative evidence from the recent Shift Happens (Karpusheff, 2011) report were discussed, including the tensions between the persuasiveness of such data that reflects the ‘lived experience’ of individuals compared to the perceived reliability of large-scale statistical studies in the health care sector – a challenge that will be instantly recognisable to researchers in the field and that recurred throughout our discussions. As a counter-balance to this challenge, Anne-Marie Martindale of the Liverpool Health Inequalities Research Institute gave an informative presentation on a systematic review of the literature on participatory arts interventions on health. From a methodological perspective, Martindale described how selection procedures in the review were based on the quality of how the evidence is used and presented in relevant studies (including qualitative and quantitative approaches), rather than the quality of the interventions themselves (the subjects of relevant studies). It was agreed by participants from policy and practice communities that it is equally important to consider the quality of research presented as evidence of impact and effectiveness when making funding decisions and justifying any investment already made.

¹⁰ For the full Healthy Communities workshop review please see: http://inharmonyresearch.net/?page_id=156

¹¹ <http://www.thereader.org.uk/>

The full group discussion that followed presentations reiterated the need for longitudinal approaches that consider the impact of In Harmony Liverpool as a 20-year immersive programme, set within the numerous situated contexts that apply, particularly within a community that has inadvertently become a 'go-to' regeneration neighbourhood, with a legacy of both infrastructural investment and short-term project-based interventions (a feature shared by other In Harmony Sistema England initiatives). It is important to acknowledge for example that as the programme becomes more habitual than 'novel', impacts are likely to be less 'big bang' and require more subtle or nuanced evaluation and empirical research techniques. Other changes in the city are causing a demand for high quality evidence and a rigorous re-examination of public spending, including closure of the Primary Care Trust and transfer of public health department to the city council. The relative cost of cultural interventions such as IHL should also be acknowledged, including the scale of "emotional labour" involved, and economic costs compared to other interventions. This is the first intervention in the West Everton community to be assessed on a 'before and after' basis and was commended as a "brave commitment" by all partners. Despite the explicit and frequently cited social and economic characteristics reflected by deprivation and health statistics, other cultural conditions such as the relative stability and sense of loyalty within the West Everton community were discussed.

In seeking to demonstrate therefore the economic value of IHL, the implications and secondary impacts of improved health and wellbeing are important (e.g. reduced crime; improved mental health) in relation to longer-term cost-savings. The expertise of a health economist would be integral to such research, in assessing for example the impact of increased proactive use of primary care resources in a preventive context, rather than reactive over-use of arguably more expensive emergency services. IHL already has a useful infrastructure in relation to its collaborative model and partnerships with key agencies including health care providers, and it is the *added value* in terms of economic implications that needs to be demonstrated to have relevance for health services, e.g. using economic valuation methods such as social return on investment (SROI).

Set against the challenges of health sector restructures, workshop participants discussed the strong culture of arts, health and wellbeing initiatives and research in the city, which has otherwise received little national attention. Any IHL research going forward would be welcomed by regional stakeholders in providing an opportunity to capitalise for example on the momentum generated by the city's 2020 Decade of Health and Wellbeing¹². The active backing of the city's health sector [including match funding in 2011/12 and 2012/13] has been crucial to IHL's profile in the city, with [recent] structural changes informing RLP's current desire to be much more consistent and systematic in evaluating and reporting the health and wellbeing outcomes of IHL:

"The partnership with Liverpool PCT is primarily driven by the Stakeholder Engagement Department and the public health agenda... Given the changes within the National Health Service, which will see the closure of PCTs by April 2013 and the transfer of commissioning responsibilities to GP consortia, and public health responsibilities to local authorities, this relationship is a critical one for the future of the In Harmony programme". (Burns and Bewick 2012, pp. 62).

Health and wellbeing therefore was considered by workshop participants to be worthy of further scholarly investigation in relation to the on-going impact and value of IHL. A number of conditions

¹² <http://www.2020healthandwellbeing.org.uk/index.php>

and caveats were offered to ensure its validity and reliability. A comparative framework, including baseline indicators, control groups and comparative case studies relating to other forms of intervention and cultural participation, was recommended. Environmental factors are especially important, both metaphorically (e.g. the 'home' metaphor applied to the project) and practically, including the cultural life of the city, its policy frameworks and infrastructural support for initiatives such as IHL. The level of support provided by the PCT, and central commitment to culture following Liverpool 08 (European Capital of Culture status) within the city for example may have been more difficult to secure in other environments. On-going research should be similarly mindful of the wider Sistema phenomenon, and how IHL has been adapted as a 'microcosm of a national model'. In health and wellbeing terms this raises questions of scale and replicability, within the context of the numerous city and community-based conditions already described. As there is little academic research on Sistema, we need to consider what the incentive was in adapting an international initiative. As In Harmony Sistema England has developed, was this essentially 'social project' seen as appealing to liberal left-leaning arts and appealing to the austerity mentality of the UK's Coalition government? Has this in itself encouraged 'buy in' to health and wellbeing implications?

With health and wellbeing research, it is important to avoid stigmatising the West Everton community by presenting another 'academically imposed' research proposal that appears to judge lifestyles and make class-based assumptions. It is similarly important to be sensitive to mental health issues. Framing the study around stress and anxiety, and using impact upon children as the focus, could help to overcome this and was put forward as a proposal that can be developed with immediate effect under Jude Robinson's leadership. Such a project would also facilitate an indirect consideration of related behaviours including smoking, alcohol consumption, nutrition and other public health agendas. In this context it is also vitally important to respect the level of trust established within the community by the RLP and partners, and to ensure that research is co-produced by new members to the research network, existing partners and community members alike.

3 Music Education and Impact

Conversations with key stakeholders during the planning stages of bringing the network together revealed a desire to examine in greater depth the pedagogical characteristics of IHL and their causal relationship with emerging indicators of educational attainment amongst participating children. This included the ‘orchestra as community’ model of learning; the holistic learning environments created between artists [professional musicians] and school teachers; and music education leadership, professional development and practice. The executive summary of the latest published IHL evaluation report lists the following positive educational outcomes:

“Data on educational attainment at Faith Primary School continues to evidence significant quantitative improvements in children’s academic performance and positive impact on the significant number of children with SEN... Data on musical attainment demonstrates quantitative improvements in the musical skills being developed, with Ofsted confirming a high quality music programme... Data gathered from teachers evidences an ongoing improvement within the school community, continuing the notion of a learning community”. (Burns and Bewick 2012, pp. 5)

Peter Garden, Executive Director of Learning at the RLP opened discussion during the Music Education and Impact workshop in May¹³, with a presentation on the IHL programme to date in relation to its operation, impact and learning outcomes for RLP as the lead organisation. Insightful, reflexive ideas on how emerging research questions can also shape the future development of RLP were presented, both as a learning organisation and iconic cultural institution, and how this compares to the orchestra as a learning environment, including its individual and collective sense of achievement. Peter commented for example on the skills required from RLP musicians when working as part of IHL, including the obvious technical mastery of their instruments, combined with the interpersonal, highly empathic skills and characteristics required to motivate and engage participating children. As the success of IHL is based on relationships at several levels – between musicians on a day-to-day basis, and at a more strategic level between collaborating organisations – understanding the learning process is critical to its future development. For RLP as the lead organisation, this includes its own philosophical and practical approach to the future professional development of its musicians and staff, and the professional culture of the organisation as a whole.

Such impact on the learning culture of organisations is also reflected in the experiences of Faith Primary School, where IHL is based. Such is the immersive quality of the programme, the school has now reached a stage where participating teachers are starting to critique IHL practice and put their own ideas forward. Similarly, IHL has always been part of the whole school curriculum and experience for some younger children, and is therefore ‘normal’ to them, prompting changing levels of expectation and engagement. As such, Peter was keen to stress that IHL is “not a static model”, as it needs to be able to respond flexibly. At the same time, there is also a desire to protect the programme due to the level of trust established between RLP and the West Everton community (as inferred in previous health and wellbeing discussions) – IHL is not seen as part of ‘the state’ or the public sector and associated services. In this context, it is important that the programme does not become a “Trojan horse” for other sectors. This raises interesting questions on the educational leadership of RLP as an iconic cultural institution, in relation to the association, respect and trust

¹³ For the full review of the Music Education & Impact workshop please see: http://inharmonyresearch.net/?page_id=187

invested in it from the community. There are implications therefore for the public value of the RLP and the cultural sector as a whole, within and beyond the city.

The network also welcomed Jonathan Govias, a Sistema practitioner and consultant based in Boston, USA for this session. A graduate of the Sistema Fellows programme at New England Conservatory, he developed his own model of Sistema in 2010. Jonathan gave a lively, analytical presentation on his Sistema experiences, and how these have shaped his own interpretation of the phenomenon, which he describes as a 'statement of intention' rather than practice. He has previously written on the five fundamentals of Sistema (Govias, 2011): social change through the pursuit of musical excellence; ensembles; frequency; accessibility; and connectivity – and argues that it is the explicit social change 'intent' that primarily defines the movement, as the other four qualities can be applied to all or any model of music education in the US. The aspirational aspects of the model however can be problematic and misleading – the consistent use of descriptive terms such as 'joy' and 'passion' imply that these are somehow missing from other models of music education. Following on from Peter's presentation, the implications for the professional development of musicians and music educators were also discussed, with the observation that Sistema practitioners must be multi-skilled, multi-faceted, professional musicians, social workers, performers and teachers, potentially leaving many new graduates "behind the curve" in relation to teaching and artistry.

In this context, Jonathan discussed some of the political and social conditions within which Sistema and its professional characteristics have most relevance – its native Venezuela for example does not have access to the same network of health and social care professionals as compared to the western world. As the model is adapted globally, the 'professional composition' of different projects and practitioners may vary considerably. A provocative question was raised as to whether In Harmony is really about the 'control and promotion of western orchestras'? An In Harmony Sistema England colleague responded that there is a 'fine line' between social control and social impact, and that the political conditions behind any adaptation of Sistema/In Harmony are of huge relevance, indicating that the current UK government was mostly privately educated within the centre-right, and that their expectations are very different to that of Hugo Chavez! A quote from journalist Ed Vulliamy included in the IHL evaluation report (pp. 44) illustrates the conservative (albeit 'small c') appeal of the Sistema movement in contemporary cultural Britain:

"It cuts, for all its apparently relaxed joviality, against the zeitgeist of almost every other influence and impact upon these children in a digital, post-modern, post-moral society seeped in celebrity culture and the creatively pointless quest for quick-hit reward – as was fully intended by the Venezuelans who created El Sistema".¹⁴

Continuing on the government policy theme, Dick Hallam MBE gave an informative presentation on how the In Harmony Sistema England programme fits within the trajectory of music education policy from the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. The act included music education for all children aged 5 to 14 but had many limitations in practice, which led to a number of initiatives under New Labour designed to make music education more accessible and inclusive, including Wider Opportunities (2000; 2006) and Music Manifesto (2004; 2007), with the pilot In Harmony programme (Liverpool, Lambeth and Norwich projects) accounting for 1% of the music settlement 2008-2011. Despite a retraction in music funding in recent years, the In Harmony Sistema England

¹⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/oct/03/britain-children-orchestra-sistema>

programme has expanded to 6 projects, funded via Department for Education and Arts Council England, and featuring in the National Plan for Music Education. In Harmony Sistema England has differentiated itself so far by setting out to impact upon the child, the family *and* the community, with a genuine philosophy of equality and equitability. Hallam summarised by observing that UK music education policy and Sistema have a lot to learn from each other in terms of pedagogical practice, as they share many of the same core values in relation to access, aspiration and teamwork.

The debate that followed presentations from invited speakers indicated a desire for pedagogical research that compares IHL with other ensemble forms and examples of group activity, with suggestions including other international models such as Brazil's AfroReggae project. This is especially pertinent when considering the social impact of IHL. Issues on the scalability of different musical forms, including the infrastructure in place and access to repertoire, were considered in great depth. The culture of professional orchestras, including audition processes, professional development opportunities and musicians' contractual obligations were discussed as potential challenges to the role of orchestras as social education reformers. IHL is beginning to transform some of these deep-rooted professional characteristics of RLP – representatives of other In Harmony Sistema England programmes made the same observation: one example that uses a chamber orchestra structure is "beginning to liberate musicians from the toil of orchestral life", enabling the use of skills that usually lie dormant or are only exercised through tuition. Emerging research suggestions and recommendations emulated those made during previous research workshops, including a need for ethnographic, comparative approaches that help to distinguish what is 'uniquely Sistema' about IHL's educational methods, philosophy and impact. When combined it is hoped that the three themes described to this point can create a richer understanding of the holistic cultural value of IHL via such dedicated research programmes.

4 The contemporary cultural value debate in the UK

In 2010, the UK's Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) published a decisive consideration of how cultural value can be expressed in economic terms similar to other areas of Government spending. *Measuring the Value of Culture* (O'Brien, 2010), profiles the appropriateness of various economic and impact valuation methods in seeking to inform a more rigorous culture of economic evaluation in the subsidised arts and cultural and creative industries. O'Brien concludes by recommending that DCMS "create clear guidelines on measuring cultural value based on the *Green Book*-consistent economic valuation techniques described in this report" (pp. 48). This report was the result of a DCMS fellowship/placement dedicated to informing the cultural value debate, and supported by research councils UK (RCUK). As a further example of the strategic commitment to this cause, a subsequent placement and report was funded to complement O'Brien's economic evaluation recommendations. *A Holistic Approach to Valuing our Culture* (Donovan, 2013) recommends "that DCMS adopt a holistic approach to valuing our culture, recognising a combination of economic and non-economic approaches are valid, depending on context." (pp. 16). This second project also saw the launch of the 'Priceless?'¹⁵ blog, which opened up the debate to a range of interested observers and stakeholders.

The current 'debate' on cultural value is not a new experience for the sector or its critical observers – it simply reflects attempts to re-position an on-going debate in line with current political contexts, expectations and objectives. Under the previous New Labour administration in the UK (1997-2010), a 'third way' rhetoric was created around public service that aimed to fuel a cross-government synthesis of democratic ideals of civil, political and social equality (Levitas, 2005); the result for publicly-funded organisations was one of increased accountability with regards to service standards, performance indicators and the need to prove *social* value and impact (Percy-Smith, 2000). During a large scale public consultation on the value of the arts in England (Keaney et al, 2007), a number of 'obligations' linked to subsidised arts organisations were identified, including:

'the responsibility to ensure that both the art and the organisation are accessible and inclusive; the importance of reaching out to those who would not normally engage with the arts; the importance of ensuring diversity and equality in the kind of work the organisation supports, the types of artists that they work with and the way that they treat staff and the public' (pp. 7).

The public's perceptions of such responsibilities therefore seemingly resonated with political expectations of the arts in relation to public policy, their contribution and *impact* – a (formerly) more frequently used expression than 'value'. It has been argued however that the over 'instrumentalisation' of the arts triggered by the 'third way' hallmark of New Labour objectives caused a counter-reaction and questioning of cultural policy, particularly with regards to perceived limitations of evidence-based policy making in relation to the arts. Belfiore and Bennett (2008) for example point to the myriad of available studies representing the arts as an expanding economy, tourism stimulus, catalyst for urban renewal, social inclusion and community cohesion and improved health. They go on to warn however that policy agendas have blurred the boundaries between advocacy and research, with studies commissioned to 'find' the evidence to support certain claims rather than objectively appraise what is available. Holden (2004) explicitly rejected the political colonisation of the sector, and recommended re-defining cultural *value* to preserve and balance instrumental *and* intrinsic qualities, observing that:

¹⁵ http://blogs.culture.gov.uk/main/2012/01/welcome_to_the_priceless_blog.html

“The cultural aims and practices of organizations have been subverted. Energies have been directed into chasing funding and collecting evidence rather than achieving cultural purposes. In the search for outcomes and ancillary benefits, the essence of culture has been lost.” (pp. 20).

DCMS subsequently made its own attempts to reconcile the tensions between intrinsic and instrumental value of the arts, and in 2007 commissioned an independent review on ‘how the system of public sector support for the arts can encourage excellence, risk-taking and innovation; how artistic excellence can encourage wider and deeper engagement with the arts by audiences; how to establish a light touch and non-bureaucratic method to judge the quality of the arts in the future’. The resulting report, ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgment’ (McMaster, 2008), re-emphasizes quality (‘excellence’) as an intrinsic value that in turn enables instrumental impact of the arts in encouraging participation, engagement and enjoyment. McMaster states that “excellence in culture occurs when an experience affects and changes an individual” (pp. 9). Quite notably, McMaster directly associates excellence with relevance, and notes that a perceived lack of relevance has previously been a significant barrier to engagement with the arts:

“I believe that to be excellent, the arts must be relevant. However I am concerned that there is still a large portion of the population who believe the arts are not for them and that they are neither relevant nor accessible. The ‘it’s not for me’ syndrome, combined with high ticket prices in many cultural organizations has conspired to put off many potential audience members and exclude them from experiences that could transform their lives” (pp. 17).

Despite a series of recommendations designed to ensure excellence and encourage engagement, the report received little practical attention. What it did achieve was to open up the debate on the impact of the arts once more:

“Perhaps, in the end, what really needs to be excellent is the conversation we have about culture and the experiences it offers us, individually and collectively. And a rich, generous and democratic debate about our culture is entirely achievable – if we want it” (Matarasso, 2008).

Undoubtedly the recent DCMS initiatives on measuring cultural value (O’Brien, 2010; Donovan, 2013) have had the same effect in stimulating discussion and debate by front-loading economic impact and value as core government imperatives. This had led to other discussion platforms such as the Cultural Value initiative led by the University of Warwick¹⁶. These discussions and indeed the various elements of cultural value discussed by the In Harmony Liverpool Research Network, all resonate with established and respected taxonomies of cultural value, including the multi-faceted model defined by Throsby (2001), which included aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic and authentic value indicators. The opportunity and challenge now presented to IHL and potential academic partners, is how to effectively use the programme as a test-bed for holistic value measurement, taking into consideration the potential, deeply *situated* economic implications of improved educational attainment, health and wellbeing, cultural and social capital, if indeed these can be directly attributed to the cultural intervention taking place. If not, it is the *added [cultural] value* that interventions such as IHL make within the context of existing social, educational and economic infrastructures, and alongside other interventionist strategies and practices, that should be considered, and would be of real value to the on-going debate on the measurement of impact within the cultural sector as a whole.

¹⁶ <http://culturalvalueinitiative.org/>

5 Cross-cutting themes for future research development

All workshop discussions have pointed to a need for deeply embedded **ethnographic** approaches to future research on IHL and associated programmes, in order to fully consider and understand the situated contexts of participating communities, their cultural identities and heritage; infrastructural conditions and ‘other’ services and interventions to which outcomes may be jointly [or singularly] attributed; and to ensure the support and participation of all relevant community members and stakeholders.

A number of workshop participants across the three themes indicated a preference for **comparative** studies in order to fully articulate the unique and complementary characteristics and values of IHL and the Sistema movement including comparisons for example between other group artistic forms and social interventions.

The notion of **community** offers a potential model for framing IHL research along several dimensions, including: geographical and physical boundaries of participating neighbourhoods; the orchestra as a community model of learning; communities of practice including professional musicians, school teachers and young people; interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborative research communities; and the international Sistema community to provide an underpinning foundation for comprehensive comparative study.

There is an opportunity to systematically **reframe the economic value debate** to move away from nervousness around considering culture solely as ‘a commodity’, but as a form of added economic value to other forms of social, educational and health services, creating a greater degree of synergy between contemporary discussions on cultural value and the preceding proliferation of instrumental policies and directives within the UK’s cultural sector.

Although not explicitly addressed during workshop discussions, there are a number of current **public policy agendas** that are of paramount significance to IHL and can be woven into research proposals and narratives on the impact and value of the programme. These clearly include cultural policy and music education policy, and other associated agendas including preventive public health agendas, debates surrounding localism and the Big Society that call for more holistic, collaborative community approaches across the full range of publicly-funded services and sectors.

Appendix 1 – In Harmony Liverpool factsheet

- Inspired by Venezuela’s El Sistema
- Uses classical music via the symphony orchestra to motivate children, families and communities, to achieve social change through the pursuit of musical excellence:
 - Improved educational achievement and attendance at Faith Primary School where the programme is based
 - Improved child self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing
 - Improved family and community wellbeing
 - Community that feels ‘music is a normal part of life’
 - Sustained programme leading to generational change
- Originally one of 3 national In Harmony Sistema England (IHSE) pilots; now one of 6 regional IHSE projects <http://www.ihse.org.uk/>
- Located in West Everton community, working with children aged 3-14 years and range of partners including Faith Primary School; West Everton Community Council; Liverpool Hope University; Liverpool Music Support Service
- 193 children currently participating (283 since 2009)
- In Faith School: 4.5 hours of curriculum time given to music with some children participating up to 10 hours per week
- Ensemble structure including West Everton Children’s Orchestra and West Everton Super Strings
- Regular performances for all groups, including parents, public and for peers (particularly at younger age range). Includes community based performances, and high profile events at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, St George’s Hall Concert Room, Southbank, Derry UK City of Culture, alongside RLPO at BBC Proms September 2013
- Supported by Arts Council England; Department for Education; Liverpool NHS Primary Care Trust and range of charitable foundations/trusts
- <http://www.liverpoolphil.com/193/in-harmony/changing-communities-through-music.html>

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