

Publications

A handbook for evaluation in the regeneration industry could prove valuable to community artists, finds Anita Holford

Prove it! Measuring the impact of renewal

Artists and arts organisations aren't alone in wanting better methods of evaluation that will more fully capture the impact they've had on people's lives. In the foreword to *Prove it!*, a handbook published by Groundwork, the environmental regeneration charity, and the think tank New Economics Foundation, Tony Hawkhead, chief

VERDICT

Valuable information for the arts sector on the importance of social capital

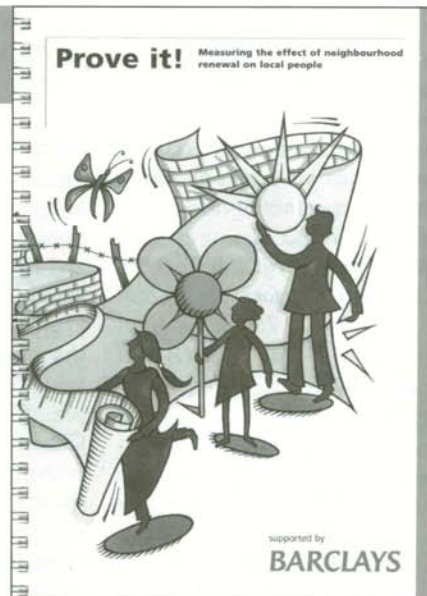
executive of Groundwork, says: "Attempts to improve deprived areas should not be judged just on whether houses are better kept, streets are cleaner and spaces greener, but on how people living in these areas feel and act."

Prove it! proposes a model which has been tested in 16 of the 66 projects which were part of Groundwork's Barclays SiteSavers programme (which involved

local people in transforming derelict land on deprived estates throughout the UK) and is full of real life examples of the theories, definitions and procedures. The model involves local people in choosing indicators as well as collecting data, the idea being that local people understand local circumstances better and understand the significance of what's going on.

The book argues that evaluation should recognise the importance of the less tangible changes, such as building confidence and trust, that often have a more lasting impact on communities. It says that these improvements have an impact on aspects of social life such as networks, norms and trusts (termed 'social capital') which in turn leads to improvements in health, crime, and other such factors. Particularly interesting is the argument that social capital has a greater role to play than 'human capital' (the individualistic aspects such as self-esteem, skills and knowledge which are so often prioritised by arts projects).

It's a useful and informative read, with chapters clearly exploring issues such as why and what you might measure, the benefits and drawbacks of using local people rather than employing 'experts',



and some of the theoretical background, including a guide to social capital, and a description of other approaches to evaluation. There's also plenty of practical information in the form of checklists, descriptive tables, sources of information, advice and further reading, and draft questionnaires and interview scripts.

The book could be a valuable document for the arts sector, not only as a practical resource for evaluation, but also to support its own arguments about evaluation and more widely, about the importance of social capital.

Prove it! Measuring the impact of renewal ISBN: 1 899407 28 6 from Zabaida Bi, Groundwork UK, 85-87 Cornwall Street, Birmingham B3 3BY
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