

**When the circus leaves town: The legacy of Art of Regeneration**

**A follow-up report for the Arts Council**

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Barnardo's 2006**



## Introduction

*Art of Regeneration was all light and energy, it dazzled. It reminded me of the circus coming to town when I was a child. Of course when that decamped all that was left was a trampled, muddy recreation ground where you couldn't even play football until the grass had re-grown. [But] AoR left the 'Big Top' behind. The Albany is a fantastic resource for a place like Deptford, and the lights haven't gone out.*

This observation, from a local community member, sums up one of the main findings from this follow-up evaluation of the Art of Regeneration. There is no doubt that the rejuvenation of the Albany is a lasting benefit for Deptford. In addition, other respondents pointed out that AoR also left a highly regarded new 'ringmaster' in charge at the Albany, in the shape of new Chief Executive Gavin Barlow, as well as hundreds of local people who as, participants and audiences, had gained a great deal from AoR at the Albany.

These two legacies of 'place' and 'people' were the most consistently identified features of the long term inheritance of AoR identified in this follow up to the evaluation conducted by Barnardo's between 2001 and 2005.

However, the ambitions of AoR went beyond these two things. When it was set up, AoR's initial vision was for the arts-based initiative to act as a vehicle for a much broader set of regeneration goals. The extent to which it has succeeded in these objectives is inevitably less clear. On the one hand, a number of strands of AoR's programme of work have continued beyond the lifetime of the project, and will no doubt continue to impact on individuals and the community. These include the successful Head for Business which became a self-sustaining initiative at an early stage; the Summer Arts Colleges, introducing young people to a range of creative training, which have continued to be run with a range of local partners and the involvement of local artists as tutors; the Digital Studio, providing training, support and facilities for local artists and young people – as well as operating as a commercial studio; and the MA in Cross-Sectoral and Community Arts at Goldsmiths. On the other hand, whilst respondents who had been participants in AoR programmes were overwhelmingly positive about what they had gained as individuals, those responding primarily from a local or South London regional perspective were much less certain of the overall sustainable gains at a community level. Questions remain as to whether such gains were ever fully achievable.

As one AoR Board member commented:

*The AoR at the Albany has been a worthwhile venture... if there is a lesson here it might be that projects like this should be funded for what they are, projects to regenerate the arts in these areas, and not as remedies for social ills they are never likely to be able to cure.*

This report, the last in a series of three evaluations of the Art of Regeneration conducted by Barnardo's since 2001, explores these issues in more depth<sup>1</sup>. It addresses the question of what is the lasting impact of the AoR on Deptford and what implications does this have for future art based regeneration initiatives.

## The Art of Regeneration Initiative

The Art of Regeneration (AoR) was an arts based community development and educational initiative which ran from 2000-04. It was led by the National Theatre's Education and Training Department and existed in partnership between the London Boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich, Goldsmiths College, Lewisham College and The Albany Arts and Community Centre in Deptford. The programme was primarily funded through a four-year Single Regeneration Budget 6 (SRB). The main long term aims of the initiative, as identified through the SRB criteria, were to:

- Enhance the employment prospects, education and skills of local people;
- Address social exclusion and entrance opportunities for the disadvantaged;
- Promote sustainable regeneration.

AoR focused on children and young people aged 7-26, and adults working with or supporting young people, either as artists, teachers or parents. The initiative provided a variety of opportunities for creative activity. Such activity was considered as a potential catalyst for individual achievement and community regeneration.

The programme comprised five strands, each of which stood alone, but were also interrelated

- **In-school programme:** A programme of creative workshops and performances in Primary and Secondary schools<sup>3</sup>
- **Out-of-school programme:** Workshops and performances based at the Albany targeting children and young people
- **The people infrastructure:** Training opportunities for young adults and professional support for small creative businesses
- **The arts infrastructure:** Refurbishment of the Albany as a multi-purpose venue and develop a creative programme targeting a local audience
- **Digital Arts and Media:** Specialist skills training and technical support to the community and to all other strands.

### *The Albany*

AoR activity centred upon the Albany, a community arts centre in Deptford. The Albany has a long history as a focal point for community activity going back to its establishment by the Deptford Fund in 1899. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Albany was a thriving community venue and a development and action centre. This period is often highlighted

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Ludvigsen & Sara Scott, Art of Regeneration: Evaluating the impact of the arts in a disadvantaged community Barnardo's 2005

by local community members as the heyday of the Albany, a period that ended abruptly when the building was gutted by a fire in 1978. Although the Albany was rebuilt on its present site in Douglas Way, it struggled to regain its central position as a centre of creativity and action, as the organisation experienced rising debts and internal battles over the Albany's future direction.

AoR provided a financial, practical and philosophical intervention to this situation. The first phase of the AoR-led refurbishment began in 2000, and the Albany now houses a state of the art theatre, studio, digital suite, and a café with which the Albany is developing an audience and community base. At the end of the SRB funded period the Albany - as a building and as a community arts centre – was again a potential focal point for its community, with an increasing human and spatial capacity to develop this position. Since the end of the AoR initiative in March 2004 some strands of AoR have become self-sustaining, some have discontinued, whilst others have had to obtain funding through the Albany to continue and develop.

### **The SRB evaluation**

Barnardo's have been the evaluators of AoR since the beginning of the original initiative. The evaluation was based on the 'theory of change' model (Connell and Kubisch, 1997<sup>2</sup>). The theory of change approach gives due weight to process and outcome when evaluating the impact of complex community development initiatives. As the basis of this approach, researchers worked with stakeholders to clarify how the initiatives initial activities would lead to outcomes by identifying a series of steps over time for the evaluation to assess. (Connell and Kubisch, 1997). The agreed outcomes were as follows:

#### **Long-term outcomes**

- To enhance the employment prospects, education and skills of local people
- To decrease social exclusion and increase entrance opportunities for the disadvantaged to the arts
- To promote sustainable regeneration

#### **Penultimate outcomes**

- Community-run creative facilities and programmes
- Self-sustaining creative businesses

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<sup>2</sup> Connell J. and Kubisch A. 1997 Applying a theory of change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives. Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families. Washington, D C

- Pathways of creative participation leading to education and employment for local people– including the most disadvantaged group

### Intermediate outcomes

- Participation of local people in developing facilities and programmes
- Local use of editing and broadcast facilities
- Completion of training in arts administration and editing/broadcast skills and employment arising from these
- Audiences representative of local community – including most disadvantaged
- Young people increasing involvement from schools and Summer Arts College into ongoing classes and performance
- Young people’s development of ‘higher level’ creative skills

### Early outcomes

- Increase in young people’s access, confidence and basic creative skills
- Involvement of local people in AOR forums
- Recruitment to arts administration training

### Initial activities

- Establishment of creative workshops programme (in and out of school)
- Establishment of arts administration training
- Establishment of business start-up
- Refurbishment of the Albany
- Development of programming at the Albany

Two previous research reports were produced in 2003 and 2005. The former focuses on the researchers’ work with the initiative stakeholders to clarify the steps for the evaluation, and the latter focuses on the penultimate outcomes of the initiative from data gathered up to the end of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funded initiative in March 2004. This report concluded:

There is good evidence that AoR has achieved many of the early and interim outcomes it sought to achieve. The Albany has been regenerated and there is now a busy arts centre at the heart of Deptford. A local audience for a wide range of productions and events has been established and maintained. This is a significant achievement which, if sustained, will have a long-term beneficial impact on the community.

Approximately 10% of the young people who have had contact with AoR have taken significant steps along the progression route: developing confidence, artistic skill, aesthetic appreciation and their sense of a creative community to which they

are active contributors. It is not however surprising that most of these young people were not the *most* disadvantaged, disengaged and disenchanted of the deprived boroughs in which they lived. For individuals to achieve so much in a couple of years they had to be highly personally motivated, with reasonable self-esteem and most had supportive families. Motivating and involving young people with poorer personal resources, educational attainment and assurance is a much slower and more uncertain business. AoR certainly provided a safe space for many such young people to experience and enjoy creative activities, but the leap from 'consuming' to 'participating/producing' is one that the *most* disadvantaged young people are least likely to make.

This may be less significant in terms of longer-term community regeneration if other parts of the imputed changes occur. If the relatively more advantaged young people who have travelled furthest on the AoR pathway remain in the area into adulthood one aspect of the 'virtuous circle' will have been achieved. In addition, the development of businesses and community arts initiatives, the attraction of investment to an area with a vibrant 'creative hub', young people growing up and becoming parents more likely to be active in the community than their own parents were, will all have their own trickle down effects.

The Art of Regeneration (Art of Regeneration) was a vision for unlocking the creativity of a community operationalised as a three year experiment in one of the most deprived areas of South London. Its successes are impressive: the Albany theatre is transformed, and, over a three year period, hundreds of children and young people have enjoyed high quality creative arts experiences. Art of Regeneration has reached young people from some of the most materially and culturally under-privileged neighbourhoods in England, while maintaining the highest pedagogic and production standards.

However, no initiative on this scale is without its difficulties and challenges. Winning the trust of local communities and ensuring long term sustainability and participation, is something that takes time and continued effort well beyond a three year project. AoR can pride itself on putting some key building blocks in place. Whether its vision is realised in the longer term is a question to be addressed in the years to come.

### **Aims of the follow-up evaluation**

The steps suggested in the theory of change approach relate to outcomes to be assessed not just during the initiative but over a five year period, including after the end of the SRB funding. This is the focus of this follow-up report. It aims to consider the longer-term legacy of AoR as it appeared in the 18 months following the SRB funding period.

It is important to remember that AoR received SRB funding on the basis of its intended contribution to economic and social regeneration; a contribution that was clearly

intended to extend the value of the initiative well beyond its SRB funding lifetime. The lack of research evidence for the long-term impact of large arts initiatives on communities is clearly identified in the literature (Newman et al, 2003). Despite this, it is extremely rare for evaluations to be extended beyond the immediate funding life of an initiative, or to be funded to look at the long-term impact of an initiative that has essentially 'finished'.

The two previous reports were able to draw on evaluation data generated through a range of methods including observation and participant observation, audience and participant surveys. This report necessarily relies to a greater extent on interviews focusing on individuals' views and perceptions of the legacy of AoR. The focus of this report is primarily on aspects of AoR's People and Arts Infrastructure strands which were concerned with refurbishment and re-programming of the Albany, and with building creative, organisational and entrepreneurial capacity within the community by offering educational and training opportunities in the arts to young adults, artists, teachers and creative businesses.

The design and fieldwork for this follow-up evaluation took place between April 2005 and May 2006. It aimed to gather evidence on the legacy of AoR on the following:

1. The effectiveness of the provision of creative skill opportunities for local people.
2. The evidence of the arts and creativity as catalysts for urban renewal
3. The achievement of sustainable community development and regeneration

## **Methods**

Key research questions and indicators were developed in relation to each of the three main topics of enquiry. From this, a variety of realistic and appropriate methods were established with reference to locally available data. These are outlined in the following tables 1-3:

## 1. The effective provision of creative skills opportunities for local people.

Research Questions	Indicators
<p>What has been the impact of AoR's 'people structure' of training opportunities on the community? In particular the impact for the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skills/training programme participants.</li> <li>- Community's skills (arts and generic).</li> <li>- Local artists and arts organisations.</li> </ul> <p>Have the creative skills opportunities provided by AoR been sustainable following the end of the initiative?</p>	<p>AoR participants trajectories following the end of the initiative</p> <p>Various stakeholders perceptions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local artists' role in community and public infrastructure (e.g. local artistic entrepreneurs, creative community leaders, and organisers.)</li> <li>- Skills of community.</li> <li>- Diversity of community skills.</li> <li>- Support provided by AoR for local creative organisations and individuals.</li> </ul> <p>Continuation of people's infrastructure and Albany's approach to training opportunities.</p> <p>Nature of local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Communities use of art based skills (digital, theatre, music, other).</p>

## 2. The arts and creativity as a catalyst for urban renewal

Research Questions	Indicators
<p>What impact has AoR had on the local communities' access to the arts and the nature of arts provision in the area?</p> <p>Has the arts and creativity been effective as an inclusive medium for urban renewal?</p> <p>What has been AoR's impact on the value and perceptions of the arts and creative activity by the local community?</p>	<p>Various stakeholders perceptions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of partnerships between artists and other local services (education, community groups, council).</li> <li>- Development of local arts organisations and artists since 2000</li> <li>- Arts and non art communities' knowledge and perception of local arts.</li> </ul>

	Wide section of the communities continuing their active involvement (as participants/ audience) with the Albany and local arts. (Age/ ethnicity, class/ income).  Development of local arts infrastructure
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### 3. The achievement of sustainable community development and regeneration

Research Questions	Indicators
What has been AoR's impact on the physical and social regeneration of the area?	Various stakeholders perceptions of local area  The Albany's development post March 2004 including: staffing, production, funding, partnerships, and community participation strategy.
To what extent has the AoR programme been sustainable in the medium term and what has been the impact on the development of the Albany as an arts centre?	
What is the impact of a large funding stream such as SRB coming to an end on community organisations and creative partnerships?	

All data were coded against these indicators as well as in relation to themes arising from the responses of informants which were not covered by our research questions and indicators. For the purposes of this report we have combined and simplified the questions and themes arising and have structured our reporting of the data under the following five questions:

1. How effectively did AoR provide creative skills opportunities for local people?
2. What was the impact of SRB funding ending?
3. To what extent has the AoR programme been sustainable following the end of the funding period?
4. What has been the impact of AoR on securing the future of the Albany?
5. How far has community ownership of the legacy of AoR been established?

#### Access to informants

In the spirit of the overall evaluation of AoR, this follow-up study remained involved with developments at the Albany beyond the life of SRB funding, and consulted with stakeholders on the best methods for accessing informants. Research plans were shared with the Albany staff team, and a number of key stakeholders at the Albany and in the

AoR team were consulted in the development of the objectives and indicators. The ongoing process of engagement with relevant Albany and AoR events included visits to community participation events such as The Albany Community Open Forum, a film evening of work produced by individuals from the local community using The Albany's digital studio facilities, and the 'Made in Deptford' Festival Head for Business celebration evening.

Through this process, a number of potential networks was identified to access research participants including; The Albany members' monthly newsletter, the AoR database of artists and workshop facilitators and programme participants, Creative Lewisham database of local arts and creative businesses, Local Authority database of local non arts community groups and young people services. Activities to generate research participants focused on contacting those known to be intensely involved in the initiative as participants, freelance tutors, Albany staff and members. The majority of contacts were gathered through the AoR database (EDNA) which holds details of all those involved in the initiative. Contact was made mainly by letter with a stamped addressed envelope to return contact details. Young people involved as participants and those who were still based in the Albany were contacted in person or by telephone.

The main interview schedules used for interviews with CASE students, community members and artists were piloted with a number of interviewees and developed accordingly (see Appendices).

### **Research participants**

The perspectives of a range of stakeholders were considered relevant to this undertaking and informants included:

- Participants who were involved in an AoR skills/ training programme, including: the CASE business administration course trainees; local artists enrolled on the Cross Sectorial and Community Arts MA, Goldsmiths; the peer mentors involved with the annual Summer Arts Colleges.
- Individuals involved in the delivery of AoR initiative, including artists, tutors, steering board members, and the key partnership organisations.
- Albany staff members and resident associations.
- Local artists and creative organisations.
- Residents of the local community.
- Individuals from the local authorities' cultural development and regeneration departments.

In total, 47 people were directly involved as participants in this research through face to face interview (20), by telephone interview (20) or by completing a questionnaire (7).

The majority of face to face interviews were carried out at the Albany. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and an hour.

Below is a table of research participants' relationship to the AoR initiative.

<b>Research Participants relationship to AoR initiative</b>	<b>Number of research participants*</b>
Local artist during initiative (inc 2 Albany resident organisations)	15
Albany member of staff**	4
AoR member of staff**	4
Member of Albany	6
Member of Albany board	3
Former AoR steering group board member	1
SRB partnership organisation (London Development Agency)	1
Former/ current AoR tutor/ workshop facilitator	11
Member of Local Authority	1
Member of staff at an Albany resident organisation	3
Former CASE trainee	8
Former MA student	2
Former Summer Arts College Peer Motivator (2004)	5
Former member of parents forum	2
Former member of AoR youth forum	1

\*n.b. a number of research participants appear in more than one category

\*\* At time of interview

### **Limitations of the methodology**

Some of our research questions pertained to the development of wider community capacity and skills. It is always challenging to try to establish what outcomes have been for a community, particularly in a situation where there were no baseline measures of the community before the initiative began. By following up certain groups of participants we can only suggest the kinds of impact that the initiative is believed to have had.

This research process meant that we were more likely to have spoken to those who were directly involved in AoR and the Albany. The strength of such informants lies in their direct knowledge and experience. However, this is also a potential source of bias. Those with only peripheral contact with the initiative might have provided a different perspective, including providing information on why people chose not to become involved, or experienced barriers to involvement.

The outcomes for participants in AoR are largely based on self-reports. Although we asked tutors about young people's development and had feedback from the small number of parents who completed a questionnaire, there was little external data to corroborate the self-reports.

## Summary of Findings

### 1. How effectively did AoR provide creative skills opportunities for local people?

#### The impact of involvement for the 'core' participants

AoR's core 'target group' were young people and AoR provided numerous projects to engage this core group. The most intensive engagement was by those participating in the CASE training programme and by those who worked as peer motivators during the Summer Arts Colleges. In order to explore the impact at an individual level we therefore conducted follow up interviews with:

- Those young people who had successfully completed the CASE trainee programme and were therefore intensely involved with AoR for at least a year.
- Those who were involved as peer motivators in Summer Arts College 04.
- Tutors of AoR programme and lecturers from a local college.

The 'type' of impact AoR was broadly considered as having on local young people was of 'quality not quantity'. Informants believed that a relatively small number of young people (estimates were generally around 15 -20) had achieved 'hard' outcomes such as 'finding employment' and 'getting back into education' because of the AoR initiative. For other young people who had taken part in the programme, some informants suggested there was evidence of 'softer' outcomes, for example, improved social skills, increased confidence, making friends, and having a sense of achievement.

One local tutor described how the positive impact AoR had had on of some of the young people involved fed directly into their re-engagement with education.

*I think it's a great thing I really do because I've seen young people grow up, coming through Art of Regeneration over 5 years for the full sessions and they've come from school, being very shy, coming here to the summer arts college, getting confidence and going back to school in September, deciding what they want to do. Coming back here and then working even harder at it.... I've seen these kids come to enrolment (at local college) with their parents or on their own or with their social worker and say 'this is the course I want to do. There's x (tutors name), she was my tutor, she knows how good I am'. And they start from there and a lot of these are drop-outs from school where they had their own little issues. Freelance tutor with AoR and local college tutor.*

Interviewees from Goldsmiths and Lewisham Colleges both reported a positive impact resulting from students' involvement in an AoR course.

One local arts organisation reported that young people joined their classes in the year following Summer Arts College. However, another local arts organisation didn't feel that AoR passed on young people to them, or gave them the information and

encouragement to move on from SAC into other local activities and groups. This represented part of a broader concern that AoR was not well networked, or sufficiently integrated, with other providers:

*In education and social services we are so concerned with inter-agency working, joined-up provision. I know it's jargon but there was an absence of that sort of thinking. The pathways seemed all internal to AoR rather than continuous with other agencies and opportunities.* Local Authority interviewee

In the previous report we showed that almost half of AoR participants lived within the 11 wards specifically targeted by the initiative; one in three lived in wards that are amongst the 10% most deprived wards in England; and 75% of participants were Black, minority ethnic or dual heritage. However, the typical participant was not at risk of school exclusion or significant under-achievement. Interviewees expressed concern about whether AoR had really focused on reaching those young people from the most deprived backgrounds.

*I don't think they attempted many times to look at the groups that they were working with and say oh I think we need to have some more black people or we need to have a few more, you know, people who are not middle class or, I think it consciously, I don't know if it was a conscious thing or just very, I don't think you tend to label people that much, I think therefore it just benefited the people that, that came along and of course you've got to monitor that, you know, particularly when you're looking at deprivation, it's all about whether these young people that are engaging are from deprived families or not.* Resident organisation interviewee

*I don't feel that a lot of kids that live on my block (estate near the Albany) go in (to the Albany) and that interests me, I'm not quite sure what that's about. I talk to them about it, I think there might be, if it was in the immediate vicinity of the Albany there might be a bit of a slight lack of trust about what the Albany is doing or has done for the local community, and I think that's a little bit historical. It goes back to when the building was dark. I'm probably wrong, there's probably loads and loads of local kids but I've lived here a long time and I don't see any of the kids that live around my way and I'm talking about maybe 60 or 70 kids overall whose faces I'm familiar with. Out of them, I might see 5 or 6 in there, so that interests me. I'm not criticising but it does interest me.* Local artist and freelance tutor with AoR

## **CASE trainees**

CASE trainees received training in arts administration, including computer training, and practical work experience in creative organisation. They undertook work placements with creative organisations in the Albany. The course was accredited with participants obtaining an NVQ level two. The year long course was run twice and targeted 18 -26 years olds. It offered hands-on experience of working in all departments of a busy arts centre. A total of 16 young people enrolled on the programme, eleven of whom completed the course with seven gaining an NVQ.

Eight young people were interviewed (two were not able to be contacted) having previously agreed to be contacted for a follow up study when they completed their traineeship in 2004. Some had continued to be very involved with AoR through their participation in the youth theatre and Summer Arts College, and AoR staff were working to ensure the next steps in the progression of these trainees. Opportunities following the end of the AoR initiative include an exchange trip with a youth theatre in Berlin in 2005.

### What are they doing now?

#### CASE trainees occupations (August – September 05)

Occupations	Number of CASE trainees (total = 8)
Employed in a professional capacity in the arts/ creative sector <sup>2</sup>	8
Has worked post end of SRB funded initiative for AoR/ National Theatre/ Albany resident organisation(s)	6
Those for whom this work is their main income	2
Working in creative arts with young people <sup>3</sup>	6
Earning main income as a professional artist <sup>4</sup>	3
Working for local arts organisation (not an Albany resident)	1
Established own company <sup>5</sup>	2
In further education (University/ college) <sup>6</sup>	3
Undertaking part time work (not in creative sector )	2

All of those interviewed made a direct link made between their current position and having undertaken the CASE traineeship.

*I suppose just that I am grateful. If I wasn't involved in AOR I don't know what I would be doing at this moment. At the moment I am doing something that I enjoy and that is the most important thing to me. CASE Trainee*

As the above table shows, outcomes included direct employment by AoR and other resident organizations at the Albany following the traineeship. This was largely as workshop facilitators on a project by project basis. Two trainees had progressed within the AoR team itself. They were both employed at Summer Arts College to coordinate

peer motivators' involvement in the project. A number of other trainees were involved as tutors on courses.

*Because of the traineeship I have been able to get work. When I'm not performing I've been able to get work. They have always come back to me, they haven't gone elsewhere and I've been rewarded for my time with paid work. CASE trainee*

Trainees developed work related skills and knowledge both in terms of 'vocational training' in arts administration and in gaining 'professionalism', knowledge of the sector, and specific skills in running workshops and event organisation.

*The most important things I learnt were working politics, how to deal with your boss, how to deal with your clients, your punters, its all about presentation. Also that you have to have enthusiasm to do something, nothing is handed to you, I learnt basic stuff like self-discipline, time management. I have now brought my own computer because of the traineeship. CASE trainee*

*They brought in young people like x (another CASE trainee) and myself and now we can go away and be employed in a professional capacity, you can't ask for anything more. CASE trainee*

*AoR gave me a chance to get into college, it gave me a boost after my education to get back into school. I didn't do so well to be honest in school before the traineeship. CASE trainee*

CASE interviewees praised the opportunities they had had to work directly with young people, giving them both a new opportunity and new skills. One was hoping to train as a primary school teacher. The majority described trying to establish a creative career. AoR had increased their awareness of the difficulties of doing this, and of the various ways of earning an income in this field (e.g. not just through being an actor but backstage, through community-based work, doing front of house). However, there was anxiety expressed that the opportunities directly provided by AoR (doing workshops in school in an assistant workshop facilitator role) were a potential cul-de-sac that would not really help them in their ambitions to become actors or dancers.

### **Towards a career in the creative industries?**

*Out of the maybe 35 to 40 young people whose faces I've got really used to here, as one artist, I'd say about 10-12 young people are definitely moving into careers in the arts and I think that's great, that's a big percentage of people with others kind of continually coming back and obviously something in the back of their minds or something that they've got a great deal of satisfaction from. Seriously, and people who are seriously writing wanting to get seen and heard. Yeah, quite a big percentage. Local artist and freelance tutor with AoR*

Most CASE trainees had no connection to the Albany prior to their involvement in AoR, beyond knowing that it existed. Now the majority described a strong attachment to the Albany, and described it as a 'hub' for them in terms of contacts and work. The fact that the Albany was still home to a number of resident arts organisations and had taken on the facilitation of the Summer Arts College was crucial to these young people's sense of continued belonging. The majority continued their involvement formally through paid work opportunities, but also informally through popping in to see the AoR team, and keeping an eye out for interesting things that may be coming up. One, in collaboration with a resident organisation, was developing a new initiative of their own.

*AoR was the way in, but the Albany is the place. It's still there and it gives you a base. Like that's where I operate from.*

*I go to the Albany now to say hello, mostly based at (somewhere further away) go there and see what's on, try and work together if can. Work with Drake Music project and AoR, might start a project with a whole night of music called producers night. We do a proposal and get 13 year olds involved, got artists and work together to design theatre and do a bit of drama called a showcase. CASE Trainee*

*I do still go to the Albany. I see events , people, go to work there. Once you've worked there I don't think that you every really leave. CASE Trainee*

### **Important factors in progression**

CASE interviewees emphasised how important AoR had been in enabling them to make contacts, to showcase their work, and become known to local organisations. They also valued the practical computer and administration skills learnt as part of the course. These had enabled one trainee to set up her own dance class.

During the traineeship some young people had clarified their ambitions and inclinations so they were much clearer what they did and didn't want to do. One had switched focus from sound operations to backstage management, while another trainee 'discovered' digital arts through a placement and is now working as a freelance digital artist.

*One of the placements was in the digital department, when I looked round the Albany and saw the digital department everything clicked. The digital department was my last placement as a trainee. After the traineeship I did a bit more free experience at the Albany and some paid work with the digital department. Eventually I was able to give up my job and go full time digital artist. I'm now a fulltime freelance artist. CASE trainee*

All valued the personal (and in the majority of cases ongoing) support from the AoR team. They identified their major gains as in the areas of self-presentation, confidence, time management, interacting with other professionals and working in a team. The actual NVQ qualification was described as more of a 'fallback' - useful to have,

particularly to obtain front of house work or part time office work, but not the main benefit of experience.

The CASE traineeship was well regarded by the Albany who tried to set up an equivalent 'digital traineeship'. (They were not successful in identifying funding for this project.) The traineeship was recognised as having had a significant impact for the young people involved. However, some interviewees had concerns about the progression of the trainees 12-18 months on. Most were still mainly working for AoR or Albany resident organisations. There was a concern that trainees had nowhere to progress to now within the Albany – as there were no job opportunities for which they would be qualified – and no obvious career progression routes except through formal training and higher education which might still be 'one step beyond' what the ex-trainees were ready for. One interviewee questioned whether such a strong attachment to AoR was beneficial to the trainees' development in the creative sector, particularly if they didn't want to be a workshop leader with young people. However, to the evaluators this attachment seemed to suggest both the effectiveness of the CASE programme and the lack of mentoring and support previously received by these young people in other contexts.

### **Head for Business**

*Head for Business*: provides business support, training and micro-loans to adults who wish to start their own creative business. The project targeted those with difficulties accessing mainstream funding or loans. Although Head for Business belonged under the AoR umbrella of programmes, the project was successful in gaining separate funding at an early stage and has continued independently since SRB funding came to an end. In their first 18 months they supported over 200 individuals in establishing or building creative enterprises. They provide networking events, seminars and industry specific mentors. They have gained funding support from The Phoenix Fund, The European Social Fund and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. AoR staff continued to support the enterprise as Head for Business Board Members after they became independent.

### **Summer Arts College Peer Motivators**

All of the peer motivators interviewed considered that the Summer Arts College had been a positive experience for them. However, only one of the five had been involved in other activities with AoR or the Albany since their involvement as a peer motivator. The others felt positively about AoR and the Albany but said they had been 'too busy' to get involved in anything else. Their involvement should be seen principally as a leisure activity at a particular point in time.

Those interviewed felt that the main impact of being a peer motivator had been:

- Confirming their enthusiasm for acting (as a hobby)
- Improving social skills and communication

- Helping one young woman to decide she wanted to work with teenagers. (She had since enrolled on a youth work course at college.)

Most had also found having the volunteer certificate helpful when applying for University or part time jobs.

There was anecdotal evidence from tutors of exceptional cases where people 'found their footing' through an AoR project as an introduction to an area they have since chosen to pursue. One intensively involved participant had gone on to set up 'Talent in da Community' project, an 'open mike' event for local young people to showcase their creative talents. The idea came originally from the youth forum but when the youth and community officer left there was a danger of the project dying. Supported by other AoR and Albany staff, funding was received from the Camelot Fund and the event took place in Spring 04.

**MA in Cross-Sectoral and Community Arts:** this course began in 2003 and continues to offer practising artists the opportunity to develop their practical skills while gaining an educational qualification. The course was developed in partnership between AoR, NT Education and Goldsmith's College and is based within the PACE (Professional and Community Education) at Goldsmith's College. The MA students interviewed were very positive about their MA experience, Goldsmith's and its location in the area, but had no direct contact with AoR or the Albany. None of the local artists we interviewed had considered the MA as a suitable progression route for themselves.

## **2. What is the impact of a large funding stream such as SRB coming to an end on community organisations and creative partnerships?**

The SRB funding for the AoR initiative ended in March 2004. The AoR Board and Creative Directors had always believed the funding period was too short and that the AoR vision made more sense over six years than the three fully operational years for which they had funding. The initiative ended with a strong sense of there being 'more to do'.

AoR obtained funding to remain in the Albany as a smaller resident organisation working alongside the Albany to carry out a number of arts training based projects. Some work continued on a funded project basis, whilst other strands had to be dropped. Summer Arts Zone, Summer Arts College and the Albany Youth Theatre continued from the SRB period. AoR went on to develop three new projects:

- Next Generation - music training project.
- New Londoners - project with refugees living in London (in partnership with the Albany)
- U Create - Online learning course

The Albany took over the management of the digital department and responsibility for programming the theatre. A small number of staff such as digital arts team members transferred from AoR to the Albany.

Interviewees frequently commented on how sudden the end of the AoR programme seemed:

*I think from a lot of young people's perspective there was a lot going on for young people and then suddenly there wasn't, simple as that."* Albany staff

*When AOR was really sort of at its first, the meetings ... were all to do with filling that theatre and making sure that, that interesting stuff was coming in and a lot of the national tours came along and did shows here and they were phenomenal... and then it all completely stopped ... perhaps that it was always going to be that way maybe, that this was going to be extremely vibrant for a period of time and then what was going to happen after that?* Local community member

Concerns were expressed that there was a period of limbo and uncertainty immediately following the end of initiative, and that there was no clear exit strategy:

*My biggest criticism of Art of Regeneration to this date.. is there wasn't an exit strategy, there isn't an exit strategy, there is no concept, it is to Gavin Barlow's and The Albany Board's credit that we are still open post Art of Regeneration. There was frankly in the region of a half a million pound deficit when they stopped, The Albany as a whole suddenly it was missing that much income. Now Art of Regeneration was renting every room in the building perpetually and was making no concessions for the fact that nobody else in the area was ever going to fill that level of use of the building.* AoR/ Albany staff

*If you've got a three year project at least in those three years you've got time to look for extra funding or to maintain that level and I think the drop, because of the significant drop between where the activity was at and where it's at now it's so huge ... there's a sense that it came here, it did all this wonderful stuff and now it's, it's stopped and it shouldn't have.* Resident organisation

AoR had at this point completed a huge three year programme of work. The relatively small core team were focused on delivery of this, and interviewees maintained they didn't have capacity to manage an effective 'hand over' – ensuring management systems were in place for the transition - and a financial exit strategy. As with any programme with a fixed funding period, staff inevitably moved on as the end of the initiative approached. One member of staff suggested that the only way to ensure that this was prioritised might have been having a specific post with this responsibility.

Respondents' most critical comments were focused on the absence of an exit strategy. They were concerned about the detrimental effect this could have had on a venue aiming to regenerate itself. There was some anger about the build up of momentum, and

vast amounts of work that AoR did at the Albany, but that once the ‘AoR project’ was finished Albany staff were fearful of losing their jobs.

There was criticism of the Board and Creative Directors for having ‘their heads in the sand’ and a view that AoR’s approach of ‘carry on and try and get funding to sustain AoR’ had meant a lack of focus on managing the hand over with Albany. It was also felt that AoR had underestimated the importance of capacity building at the Albany, and had been unable to fully envisage a future without themselves ‘at the helm’.

*I think the negativity possibly comes in terms of: ‘you come in, you do the project, you leave’; and I don’t think AOR understood and made a very good impact in terms of its ability to empower the Albany to continue that legacy. I think there could have been a real partnership and a real process there where the NT came in and set it up and made things work, and then everything was slowly handed over. And it’s sad that wasn’t the case. Resident organisation*

*[the ending of such a large programme of work] its not good for the future,... it could have produced a heart attack on the organisation, it’s like if you sprint very quickly without building up properly before hand.” Albany board member*

*There was a real danger at the end of that that would all disappear so there was no necessary follow on, that the regeneration would just fail, but luckily we have managed to kind of save it through that period and start to build on it, so it’s probably fair to say we certainly wouldn’t be in this position now if it hadn’t been for AOR. Albany staff*

AoR was both well-funded and effective, therefore the ‘vacuum’ potentially left at the Albany included:

- Half a million pounds of funding
- A full time theatre programming and marketing team for the venue
- A large programme of youth arts training.
- Their most important ‘client’ in terms of hiring of theatre, workshop rooms, and facilities.
- A committed and focussed staff team.

The Albany was faced with a number of questions:

- How to establish a full time theatre programme?
- How to ‘pick up’ some of the programmes that AoR had run?
- How to engage with young people who had been introduced to the Albany through AoR?
- And not least how to fund the Albany?

These questions were faced by an organisation with a relatively new chief executive (appointed in May 03) and a skeleton staff team. The challenge was not just to maintain the staff employed but to keep the Albany viable at all.

'Survival mode' was the term one respondent used to describe the atmosphere that the Albany was acting in when AoR's funding came to an end. The Albany was described as having to 'make their own plans' regarding managing the end of AoR administration. AoR and the Albany were in direct competition for some funding bids towards the end of AoR initiative. Unsurprisingly this was considered a factor in their lack of success in a number of bids during this time.

The Albany obtained post AoR funding from the Arts Council (£30,000 a year for three years), and one-off grants from Lewisham and the ALG. The dilemma for the Albany was how to run a community arts centre based to a considerable extent on venue hiring. This was particularly acute in relation to the digital facilities, which needed approximately £30k to be generated through the hire of facilities. The tension between the community nature of resource and the need for it to operate as a commercial venue is captured in the following example:

*We have to decide which takes precedence – a teaching week that's set up and then someone wants to use the IT suite for £5k? Albany staff.*

Community members were proud of the digital capacity of the Albany, and welcomed it as a resource, but some were concerned of its ability to be a long-term, sustainable community resource.

There was an immediate drop in activity at the Albany at the end of AoR's SRB funding, particularly in terms of the theatre programme. However, respondents reported a real clarity of focus on programming: scheduling the work of resident organisations and touring companies and hiring the theatre space to other organisations.

Comments suggest that the new Chief Executive was seen as the most important factor in leading the Albany through the transition period. The combination of his marketing knowledge and community focus was regarded as the ideal balance for the job. However, it was acknowledged that the funding and profile AoR had brought to the Albany was a key factor in being able to attract a high standard of applicants. A revitalised management committee was able to support him in his role:

*I would always say it is due to the commitment of the management committee and the members and the people who love this building and not because of AOR because AOR didn't have any long term relationship or journey. If you speak with them now there is no relationship they've not tried to want to work with us and we were trying to have a partnership with them as soon as they came. Albany board member*

## Impact on participants

Interviewees feared the consequences of the end of the AoR programme on those who had been most involved with the programme. They spoke of ‘raised expectations’ leading to ‘disillusionment’, and were concerned that a period of ‘hyperactivity’ followed by a ‘trough of uncertainty’ is not good for building people’s involvement.

*It’s like sending your kids to the grandmother who just gives them sweets all day then sends them home again and you can’t win, you can’t compete, you’ve just spent all this money on the (...) and then walked away and who’s going to sustain it? Albany staff*

The end of the funding period confirmed some people’s cynicism of ‘another’ regeneration effort which would not produce ‘real’ benefits for the local community. Many had always been critical of AoR as an initiative they did not think was sufficiently grounded in its local context. Some spoke of the Albany as ‘empty’ and were fearful of a ‘return of the dark period’.

*They’ve increased the people’s expectations so now we have an increased expectation, you just can’t walk away (...) just like with those little courses you raise someone’s expectation and then we walk away, you can’t do that, we have to give people a bit of continuity. Local artist*

*I think this is a long process (the Albany) have to work through a kind of disillusionment, a feeling that people come and go and that no one really cares for the community, just their funding applications and their salaries. I worked through this bad feeling (...) this feeling that the local community is not really your first concern. Albany staff*

Not all respondents thought this was fair criticism of the initiative itself, but rather that it was an effect of the nature of funding programmes – and therein lay the real problem: the challenge of an initiative with short term funding trying to achieve long term outcomes.

*AoR rescued the fabric of the Albany and gave it a real kick-start. It showed how fantastic and well-used such a resource could be with lots of money to turn good ideas into reality. But to go on year after year such a place has to have secure local government funding – that’s the bottom line. It’s own income generation is always going to be what puts the icing on top – not what ensures there’s cake there to ice. Local artist*

*The funding, having time limited funding has meant losing some staff. It’s a shame it’s a skeleton staff team. It needs long term investment, five to ten years funding as it takes one year to set something up, in the second year you do your work and in the third year you’re looking for money. You need long term investment so you’re not grappling for money and not doing your work, what you are good at. Local artist*

### **3. To what extent has the AoR programme been sustainable following the end of the SRB funded period?**

In the year post-SRB funding, the AoR projects which continued were:

- The Summer Arts Zone and Summer Arts College
- The youth theatre
- Head for Business became self-sustaining during the SRB period and has continued to be a resident organisation at the Albany.

The rest of the out-of-school work education and training programme did not continue post the SRB period. This includes:

- The CASE traineeships.
- Term time after school/ weekend workshops.

The Albany's development of work with young people was necessarily limited during this period. The Albany partnered Greenwich and Lewisham Youth Theatre (GLYPT) to provide a backstage training course for young people and managed a number of 'showcase' events of young people's creative work. Albany Digital also provided digital traineeships through Big Lottery Funding. A key factor in the ending of some aspects of AoR was the lack of capacity that the Albany had to take on education and training programmes, particularly the level of appropriate staff and funding. Some argued that whilst AoR success had been the wide variety of exciting and innovative programmes of work, perhaps this had been at the expense of building the capacity of the Albany or other local arts organisations to continue at least some aspects of the arts education and training programme.

A number of interviewees pointed out that the Albany had had an education department which closed shortly after AoR arrived. It was argued that AoR could have done more to support this department, or merge with it, to ensure an infrastructure for the Albany post the initiative.

#### **Successful sustainability case study: Summer Arts College**

AoR produced the SAC every year of the initiative. In 2005 AoR obtained funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Connexions, Gifted and Talented, and Lewisham Council to produce SAC. AoR worked in partnership with local arts organisations GLYPT and Midi Music, the Albany, Bonapasters School and Lewisham College. It took place over three weeks in August, was this year extended into Greenwich and Lewisham venues and, as in previous years, most courses were over-subscribed.

There was agreement across all the partner organisations that SAC is a successful model that continues to engage local young people. SAC evaluations conducted by Barnardo's over the three previous years confirm the satisfaction of participants with this provision.

AoR's approach to SAC is an example of successfully achieving sustainability for a project beyond the life of its host initiative. Key factors that have influenced the sustainability of this project are:

- AoR maintained their involvement and were committed to obtaining funding for it to continue
- Evidence from previous SAC's was used to convince partners and funders
- Local networks were used to sustain interest and demand
- AoR undertook a number of transition activities in relation to SAC05
- Established partnerships with local arts organisations and venues to deliver SAC
- Funded a 'how to' video guide for producing SAC
- Made links with the local authority youth agenda that could be a source of ongoing funding
- Established community stakeholders in the project – including employing a previous CASE trainee as a SAC co-ordinator and two others as tutors

*The success of Art of Regeneration in my mind is best defined by Summer Arts College, it is unsurpassed, I really am its biggest fan. I think it's courageous...the array of work they create...an extraordinary example of what I believe in: of the peer motivators bringing young people to help run the process is very astute. Albany staff*

The SAC achieved the AoR hoped for objectives to achieving sustainability of:

- partnership working with local arts organisations
- building capacity of local organisations to continue work post SRB funding
- embedding projects in the local community

#### **4. What has been the impact of AoR on securing the future of the Albany?**

The AoR objective was to transform the Albany from 'a neglected and under utilised community facility into a focal point for community learning, for creative and social activity'. (Delivery Plan 2002/03). Therefore the success of AoR is in part evidenced by the sustained success of the Albany as a community arts venue.

AoR:

- physically regenerated the building
- programmed theatre events to develop new audience and users of Albany during the initiative.

The Albany is up and running as a community arts centre. In the first year post the AoR initiative, the Albany has increased its income from the previous year. The end of the year marked the first time in eight years that the Albany was not carrying forward a deficit, and the first time in five years it has had positive working capital. Starting from a skeleton staff team at the end of the AoR initiative the Albany has added new posts and has secured a number of funding partnerships.

*I think in one way it (AoR) has succeeded because if it hadn't come in I don't know where (the Albany) would be, I think it wouldn't be here at all, I think it would have been bought and turned into a shopping centre... ultimately that's been its legacy is, and that's why it's been successful, it has, it's delivered a three year project...." Local artist and Albany member*

*The Albany has certainly been left in a better physically appointed state. It has been allowed to survive, it probably would have closed before and I don't know if the organisational expertise would have been there to get it re-opened, we will never know that. Local authority respondent*

The investment made into the building cannot be underestimated in terms of its basis for the Albany to continue to exist at all. As the above comment demonstrates, that the Albany still exists can be considered a significant legacy of the AoR initiative. This includes the development of the digital capacity of the building which AoR administered until the end of the SRB. The digital facilities at the Albany and its capacity as a recording venue have made it attractive to a range of users from Goldsmiths College and London Philharmonic Orchestra to Deptford Park School Christmas show.

### **Impact on use of Albany**

During the AoR initiative the Albany was a busy venue with workshops and a full programme of theatre events. This period of intense activity was undoubtedly a marked contrast with the fallow period prior to the AoR initiative when the Albany was not even considered a useable facility by many in the local community. Through this programme of work and the building's refurbishment, local people were introduced or re-introduced to the Albany as a local venue. Clearly this is a vital first step in securing the viability of any community facility.

*When I left school I forgot all about the Albany I must admit. Then it's only when I went into teaching that it came to mind, the Albany is still there. I came here (as a summer arts college tutor) and I saw the difference I thought 'Oh my God! They've done it up'. This is the place to be and it's so central and easy to get to. It's got a nice market which*

*makes a difference because they can go to the market, mingle, do research there, come back in here. It's a great facility and a good area. Local artist*

The café area is often full at lunch- time and in the evening when it isn't open the area is used for its free wireless internet facility.

Young people are generally considered to be high users of the building, something which is directly attributed to AoR's huge programme of work with the 7-25 age group raising awareness and familiarity with the Albany.

*[Young people] often come in after school, even when it's closed because they don't have money to buy from here, they bring their crisps and stuff and they just hang around here and they feel they can come in and hang around here, and in the garden in the summer."*  
Albany member of staff

*Just to see that level of life going on here is great and young people feeling ownership about a building that's in their area. Young people are interested in the arts feeling that they can go somewhere and go 'yeah, I went Albany, yeah, I'm going to the Albany' and they kind of feel like it's theirs. Local artist*

Most community members interviewed were regularly using the Albany to meet up with friends in the café and see what was going on. The anecdotal evidence from those who attended Albany events suggested that the core audience had changed very little from what it was prior to AoR and that the theatre was still not as busy as it could be.

Two AoR events have become ongoing fixtures in the Albany programme, the monthly 'Family Sundays' and the approximately quarterly 'Hubble Bubble Club Nights'. However, AoR's general theatre programme was not considered 'well suited' to the local context but rather that it had focused on 'classical theatre' or 'National Theatre high art'.

*The success of Art of Regeneration was to refurbish a building, was to create new strands of work and was to create a new exciting facility that could go forward after it had been very dark. Unfortunately some of the work they were putting on didn't seem to actually have any correlation with the community as a whole. Albany staff*

In particular it was felt that such a programme had done nothing to increase the Albany's relevance to those who may be most excluded from the arts. As one interviewee pointed out,

*Ask them (market traders) if they come in to use anything other than the toilets... people come in to try on their clothes but whether they come in and do a gig here, and what would the Albany have to do to attract them to come and hang out in here, come and have their lunch in here or whatever, you know. Local artist*

Interviewees pointed out that the Albany may look 'thriving', and certainly has a very popular café used by the community, but the Albany's own capacity to provide community arts was not fundamentally built on by AoR and was not linked in with making the building more sustainable.

Informants believed that AoR had successfully attracted tours and shows to the Albany which otherwise would not have been possible but that this ended with the initiative.

*It's really frustrating being in the building that has a theatre space like that and it's empty a lot of the time and I realise there must be financial reasons for that, but it is kind of a shame to have that wonderful space through there and, and it not being used, it's probably not used on a daily basis. Albany resident organisation staff*

### **Building the capacity of the Albany**

The investment of SRB funding into AoR was courageous given the state of the building at the time. It is unlikely that other funders would have been prepared to invest such a huge amount of money in such a struggling venue. Given this investment in the infrastructure, AoR has certainly increased other funders' confidence in the venue. In addition, AoR was considered to have raised awareness amongst funders of the Albany as a community resource and of the potential links between creative work and funding agendas regarding issues such as youth engagement and adult education.

*I think they (Lewisham Local Authority) saw the rebirth (of the Albany)... I mean they really saw it as a kind of real mix of arts and community in a way that made sense and they bought that. But obviously it kind of hits on their strategic agendas which are particularly to do with youth, and the community as well. Albany staff*

However, whilst AoR may have made the Albany more fundable, there were concerns that it had not succeeded in making it more self-sustainable. Interviewees were critical of AoR for being too heavily focused on introducing their own specific programme of work at the expense of investing in the long-term capacity of the Albany.

*I believe it can work (creative regeneration initiatives) because I have seen it happen with people who have long term views and a long term plan, a long term strategy as to how to deal with some of the issues that might be in a place like Deptford ... I think it is again another kind of way in which people can behave when they feel they have money (and), power when they feel they have status that they can swoop in, do three years of work, a couple of workshops, do whatever they do and then when it doesn't fulfil all the ticks that they want because they want quick results you know how can we cure all these social problems for these poor people. Albany board member*

*I suppose it is of the nature of something coming in and going like that it's key focus has to be about capacity building for what's there, and you know that obviously wasn't as effective as it could have been. Albany staff*

Funders, Board members and local authority interviewees believed that part of the legacy of AoR to the Albany was its 'glittering' recent past. The 'big top' had been home to an extremely professional 'circus' and something of the reputation of the National theatre was bound to stick. AoR had been able to attract a high calibre of artists and staff, big funding bodies and impressive friends. It was felt that, in some measure, all of these would enhance the reputation of the Albany for some years to come. It is true that funding bodies introduced to Albany through AoR's steering board continued a commitment post the SRB funding period (e.g. LDA funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund).

*It's raised the profile of the Albany hugely. You ring up and people have heard of you...the Arts Council has heard of you, and not just because someone there went to a Rock Against Racism gig in 1976! Albany Staff*

### **Effect of the AoR initiative**

Albany staff and board members described the 'grit in the oyster' effect of AoR. They believed that the arrival of 'outsiders' by whom they felt challenged helped create a focus and passion about The Albany again. To engage with the AoR process and manage fears about AoR taking over the Albany, the board described itself as needing to 'raise its game' and increase its professionalism, and this resulted in changes in the Albany management board. Some interviewees clearly saw themselves as 'rallying' to the cause:

*I'm not saying The Albany wasn't in need of rescuing. It was. But they came in on their white chargers...and you don't get many white horses down Deptford market. There was some pride at stake in us getting our act together. Albany board member*

Concern was expressed that the increased professionalism called for in board members may have made it less open to some members of the local community, but this had to be balanced against the belief that funders were likely to have far more confidence in the current Board.

AoR provided a useful vision in terms of a 'rebirth' of the Albany which was an important factor in attracting funders to the venue who were willing to invest in the AoR vision for the Albany. AoR may have made the Albany more fundable, but this is not the same as making the Albany self-sustaining.

*How can they come into our building and not really be our partner? I used to say 'how can you come into my house, and take over my house, move all my furniture around and not consult with me about how I want my furniture in my house' and that was it really. However, my house got done up which has allowed me to have parties here. Albany board member*

## 5. How far has community ownership been established?

AoR aimed to create sustainability by generating a network of community stakeholders. This included young people who had been participants in the programme becoming programme leaders, building up a body of AoR artists as vital partners in the development of programme, and the generation of arts start-up enterprises developed at the Albany. (AoR delivery plan 2003/04)

The wider issue about how successful AoR was at engaging with the local community, and overcoming initial criticisms about the 'outsider' nature of the initiative, was discussed in the previous evaluation report. Here we consider the specifics of what has been passed on and appears to have a sustainable existence or influence beyond the initiative.

*I think three years is quite a short space of time.. I saw it almost from cradle to grave, it did feel like those three years went very, very quickly .. and one minute it really was sort of bustling, you know .. the place sort of (...) teeming with lots of sort of, lots of people who wanted to make it and then who left. And (I) didn't really feel that there was enough foundation for them, whoever the local community people were actually staying here and working here to kind of take it on and embrace it as their own. Local artist*

### Generating stakeholders amongst the local arts community

Central to AoR's theory of change was the need to empower and build capacity in local arts community and participants. There is no scientific method for generating stakeholders and given the short amount of time between the end of this initiative and this follow up, the long-term outcomes for individuals cannot be known. Some may well be contributing to the creativity and regeneration of Deptford in 10 years time, some may have moved away, changed careers or become absorbed by other things.

*It takes a generation to do it (generate community stakeholders) and it's completely haphazard, you have to sow many many, many seeds and then a few will be aware that they have been sown you know what I mean, ...young people they won't be able to separate AoR from the Albany or you know, they come to this building, they need that the workshop leader to do that sort of piece of work they might come back for another programme maybe in ten years time they come back as an adult they are more aware of it, they bring a child along perhaps to a similar thing to what they did.. In a way you can set up the structure where that might happen but you are not going to see it happen for a generation. Albany board member*

AoR staff described themselves as having had a "Very 'yes, lets!'" policy regarding local artists getting on board. However, this was contested by many local artists and Albany members. AoR does not seem to have overcome initial cynicism from many in the local arts community that AoR was a 'National Theatre local venture' rather than focused on developing the capacity of the local community.

Interviewees continued to believe there had been an ideological conflict between local community arts organisations who considered themselves as trying to be responsive to the local community, and AoR which was seen as an elitist 'we think this is good for you' initiative. Those with years of community arts experience should have been key participants in the AoR initiative. Instead many remained convinced community involvement was tokenistic.

*[What] AOR needed to do is advertise locally for people to come and do the work, but maybe they did but I never saw it. The only reason why I know about jobs going here is because I come in here ... but that's just me going into the office and saying "I'm a workshop leader do you need me?" and them saying "Yes" but that's not because I saw it being advertised anywhere, it's just me being tenacious. Local artist*

In general, the local artists interviewed considered that support to local artists and organisations was an underdeveloped element in AoR's programme of work. Most of the local artists interviewed had been employed at some point by AoR as tutors/workshop facilitators and spoke positively of this experience as an opportunity for (short term) employment and to work with local young people through their art. A number were hopeful that the Summer Arts College could provide regular annual short term employment for local artists in this way. However, they felt they had been involved as employees only, and not as partners who might help carry the work forward through the development of local arts networks and organisations.

*I don't think we as artists have necessarily fed the process in that way. It might have been mentioned but overall it's been a kind of 'we're employing you to do this' and they've looked after us very well, in every respect... [But] I wouldn't say we've been encouraged to go out there and make it happen now, if that's going to happen, if there's going to be meetings, I would definitely attend and if there were things to do with self fundraising for our community, I would be involved in that definitely, but I haven't heard anything and I don't know about the initiatives, maybe I'm talking out of line here but I don't know, I'm not aware of it. Local artist and former AoR tutor*

It was pointed out that no local artists had been employed as members of AoR's core staff team, local artists were only employed as freelancers; that there had been no consultation with local artists in the development of the AoR bid; that the Artist's Forum had not got off the ground because it had not been a priority; that AoR didn't use local expertise enough, and that the AoR /National Theatre commitment to 'high art' or 'certain art forms' was not up for debate.

Some interviewees were passionately committed to developing young people's creativity by 'starting where they're at' and developing 'bottom up' workshops which reflected their 'street' culture. They questioned the local credentials and 'white middle class' staff of AoR. Others were more positive about the AoR team - particularly their will to make it work and their openness to involving the community in the initiative.

## Young people becoming programme leaders

The CASE trainee programme made this a reality for some young people, and AoR staff were proud of this fact.

*Some of the people who have started as students are coming back as the tutors on summer arts college or coming back as tutors assistants and really have a sense of developing through and then giving back in that kind of cycle which is think is the most you could hope to ask for. AoR staff*

However, others were more doubtful that this represented any real progression route for these young people:

*I don't really think that progression for that group is a lot about actually, you know, I think there's a real big gap there where they're just kind of coming in and doing a bit of admin in the office and doing a bit of this but they actually, they know it now, they know it like the back of their hands and what they need to be, they kind of need to be challenged and I don't necessarily think once you've been through the process that they've been through three years down the line you're going to feel challenged by anything any more, you know, it's all about that, that unfortunate situation where they don't necessarily have the contacts or the industry knowledge or the confidence to, to, you know, apply for those professional positions. Resident organisation staff*

Post AoR, there was a clear recognition of the level of support required for young people to 'take control' of projects. This was something previous evaluation reports had suggested was lacking in the AoR initiative. Albany staff were thinking about ways of developing young people's participation and leadership – and they were drawing on Gavin Barlow's previous experience at the Contact Theatre to think about this as a very long term development that would be integrated with the development of the Albany as a whole. They were exploring funding opportunities that require young people to be leaders of projects, and the possibility of establishing a professional theatre company at the Albany for young people.

## Conclusion

- **To enhance the employment prospects, education and skills of local people**
- **To decrease social exclusion and increase entrance opportunities for the disadvantaged to the arts**
- **To promote sustainable regeneration**

These were the overarching aims of Art of Regeneration. This report shows how a small number of local people gained considerable skills and enhanced their employment prospects through their involvement as CASE trainees. In addition one of AoR's early successes was the Head for Business project becoming an independent community

based organisation and gaining independent funding. A large number of young people gained valuable experience, confidence, social and communication skills.

As we have discussed in previous reports, there was little evidence of the hoped-for progression route from quality arts experiences for disadvantaged, school-age young people to creative careers that would otherwise have been unavailable to them. In a couple of cases creative leisure opportunities at the Albany did lead directly to creative entrepreneurship, and there was some anecdotal evidence of involvement in AoR impacting on young people's educational choices and confidence.

AoR left behind a completely revitalised community facility, with high levels of community use. The Albany was transformed into a welcoming, safe, well-equipped centre for the arts in Deptford. It was left with a highly respected Chief Executive and a skilled, committed Board – although it is suggested here that the latter was more a result of 'reaction' to AoR than part of its legacy.

AoR had considerable expertise as an arts initiative and achieved outcomes for individuals through its training programme, but it was less successful at involving the community and therefore leaving a legacy potentially capable of achieving the long-term regeneration aims it set out with. In particular, it did not sufficiently prioritise capacity building to ensure sustainability of programmes and methods in local organisations and people. Part of the responsibility for this lies with the SRB funding programme. Money was given for capital expenditure and programme delivery, but it is necessary to attach an appropriate budget for capacity building in order to achieve a sustainable, community-owned programme and facility. Additional youth and community work trained staff able to build capacity in fundraising, partnership working, community empowerment, and with a particular focus on the post-AoR period might well have been required.

The problems AoR has had regarding sustainability demonstrate that large initiatives cannot expect a significant 'ripple effect' of regeneration without ensuring local partnership throughout the process, and working to strengthen local organisations' capacity in terms of resources, physical infrastructure, and appropriate support to empower and develop participants involvement.

Research on the impact of SRB funding reflected on problems that such initiatives have had in achieving long term outcomes. In particular, the weakness of many SRB's in achieving long term change may be due to problems combining physical regeneration with *people* related regeneration. The AoR initiative seems to reflect some of the problems common to SRB initiatives.

*Common problem to presume the changes in physical environment of area will be sufficient to solve the social exclusion problems of local inhabitants – alas it is rarely the case* Urban Research Summary Number 1, DTLR.

*Schemes can also fail to bring about any lasting change in partnership working if during their life there was insufficient attention paid to promoting effective partnership working and the structures that this requires. Urban Research Summary Number 1, DTLR.*

The SRB investment in physical infrastructure had significant impact providing a basis for the Albany to develop itself post the initiative but it did not invest in building capacity, for example by investing in management strategies for the organisation, or establishing education work at Albany.

In strategic terms, the AoR initiative fitted with the proposal for Deptford to be one of four 'Creative Hubs' in London. Creative Hubs are a regeneration scheme established by the Greater London Authority and Creative London whose main aim is to develop the creative economy in certain areas through improved infrastructure.

The Albany is at the centre of the Deptford/Greenwich Hub plans which include increasing the space available for more creative industries to be based around the building. Deptford has a long history of creativity and AoR's role in influencing the choice of Deptford as a proposed area for the scheme can't be absolutely known but the major creative investment that AoR brought to the Albany and the sense of 'rebirth' regenerated from that has certainly helped. Creative Hub status for the area offers a clear future for the development of many of the initiatives and programmes piloted by AoR. Both in rhetoric and local opinion Deptford is 'on the way up' and the arts are an important feature of its self-image:

*Deptford is home to 300 creative businesses, from collective art studios nurturing up and coming talent to Europe's leading institute for Contemporary Dance and nationally renowned musical organizations for musicians and filmmakers... "pay a visit to The Albany – a light , airy and welcoming venue, which will be showcasing some of the community and arts organizations installed in and around this truly unique space.' Press release, A new portrait of London Creativity – Made in Deptford. May 2005*

*Some people say that Deptford is the new Hoxton, an up and coming or trendy area*  
Local community member

*There is clearly more money coming in the area and more housing developments around here.* Albany staff

While, some interviewees expressed concern at the potential gentrification of the area, such developments failing to involve the local community, and Creative Hubs being overly focused on economic indicators of success (which is not the only value of the community arts embraced by the Albany), it was generally considered that these developments represented an appropriate heir to the legacy of AoR.

## Appendix

## **Example interview schedule for members of Albany/ local arts organisations**

Information about research

Consent and confidentiality

### **Personal journey with AoR and the Albany.**

1. Just tell me a little bit about yourself – who you are what you do?
2. How do you know the Albany?
3. How did you know AoR?
4. The Big Question: What Difference Do You Think That AoR Has Made? (will return to)
5. How got involved?
6. Any expectations about the initiative at the outset?
7. Has it had any effect on what you do/ offered any opportunities?
8. (If yes) What do you think has made the difference to achieving this?
9. Who do you think got the most out of AoR?
10. Are there people you feel it didn't reach that it should have?
- (If yes) Why do you think that this has happened?
11. Growing a new generation of 'community stakeholders' ("if all goes to plan AoR will be essentially handed over to the community"). Do you think that this has happened?
12. Young people involved as participants – are they still engaging in the Albany? If so how and who?
13. What kind of support do arts organisation need to involve young people?
14. AoR aimed to help young people progress in arts/ creative careers – any thoughts on whether this was achieved?
15. Have there been any negative consequences of AoR?
16. What mistakes do you feel that AoR might have made?
17. The role of the NT and other partners in AoR – positives and negatives?
18. Your perspective on main priorities and needs of this area in terms of improving its prospects?

## **Use of Albany**

19. Why do you come to the Albany?
20. What do you like about the Albany?
21. Do you feel the same about the Albany and its facilities as before AoR were involved?
22. How do you think the Albany has changed through AoR?
23. Programming now compared to before?
24. Achievement of local audience?
25. Changes in Albany's fortunes?
26. Transitional period
27. Future of the Albany?
28. How would you describe the Albany now?
29. Arts centre or community centre?
30. Links with 'local activists' or those who have known the Albany a long time and who have strong feelings about it – accepting of development?
31. Do you come to performances?
32. What do you think the Albany adds to this place and local community?
33. Does Albany being here make any difference to you now?
34. Is there anything else you wanted to say that you haven't had the opportunity to?