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Planning for Creative Effects: Glenorchy and the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona)

Abstract

Much has been made of the potential social and economic benefits of incorporating arts and culture into urban planning frameworks. Here, we report on the impact on the local community of the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona). Mona is located within the municipality of Glenorchy, adjacent to the island state of Tasmania’s capital city Hobart. It’s opening in 2011 and subsequent social and economic effects were, by and large, unplanned. Unlike the Bilbao Guggenheim, Mona was not positioned within a broader strategy of regional renewal but was brainchild of its multi-millionaire founder and owner. Its social and economic impact are significant, though unevenly distributed between places and different sections of the community. It is the City of Hobart that appears to be reaping most of the benefits, with Glenorchy – the 8th most disadvantaged municipality in Tasmania – experiencing little social, cultural and economic renewal. In this paper, we present findings of two surveys conducted with Glenorchy residents and discuss these in relation aspirations for creative effect. We emphasise that while Glenorchy appears to be missing out on the ‘Mona Effect’, there are signs of change that support the need for strategic planning interventions for a more even distribution of Mona’s success. These signs include the positive impact of Mona on local place perceptions, and the popular and inclusive nature of local arts initiatives such as the Moonah Arts Centre. Considering both arts and cultural consumption and production appear paramount.

Keywords

Mona, Glenorchy, urban regeneration, community arts, Bilbao Effect, planning
Introduction

Much has been made of the potential social and economic benefits of incorporating arts and culture into urban planning frameworks (e.g. Jensen, 2009; McMahon, 2005; Colman, 2010; Boer, 2005). The perceived power of creativity to change communities and places, as embodied within the work of Florida (2002) and Landry (2000), remains a driving force in cultural policy and on-the-ground initiatives.

The social and economic dividends of such initiatives, however, have frequently not meet expectations, and researchers have drawn attention to unexamined and problematic assumptions inherent within these expectations that render the hoped for ‘creative effect’ more aspirational than real. The connection between arts-led regeneration projects – often under the rubric of the ‘Bilbao Effect’ – and gentrification is now well established (Oakley and O’Connor 2015; O’Connor and Shaw, 2014). So too the link between rising social inequality and policies favouring the ‘creative class’ has been recognised, not least by Richard Florida himself (Florida, 2017). In the UK a large-scale research project ‘Understanding Everyday Participation’ has provided evidence of continuing social and ethnic divides in arts and cultural participation (Miles, 2017). At the same time it has sought to challenge the notion that high rates of ‘non-participation’ indicate a ‘cultural desert’ (Gilmore, 2013). All of which leaves large question marks over an urban cultural policy imaginary that came together in the mid-1990s (Grodach, 2017).

Addressing these developments at any length is beyond the scope of this paper; instead we seek to identify through a case study some ways in which urban cultural planning can move forward. We draw upon recent research in the social and cultural impacts of the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona), the published findings of which have contributed to destabilising a number of assumptions around cultural-led regeneration (e.g. Booth et al., 2017; Booth.
Mona is located within Glenorchy – Tasmania’s 8th most disadvantaged municipality (GCC, 2016) – and when it opened expectations were high for positive local impacts. However, this area has experienced little social, cultural and economic renewal with the adjacent municipality and state capital, Hobart appearing to be reaping most of the benefits. Booth (2017) observes that this institution’s impact counters aspirations that imagine large, innovative cultural institutions as epicentres, ‘the impact and influence of which radiates out into assumed vacant space’ (Booth, 2017: 13). Despite its location and unorthodox approach to museology, Mona’s local ‘effect’ in Glenorchy is more mundane; Mona has become ‘part and parcel of the tissue of everyday life’ rather than an epicentre of radical social and economic transformation (Booth, 2017: 14).

In this paper we contribute to a growing body of work that examines the ‘Mona Effect’ – Mona’s social, cultural and economic impacts on its local communities – as a means of better understanding the contributions of arts and culture to contemporary life and the potentials of cultural-led urban regeneration. Much to the previous research on Mona has either celebrated its contributions (e.g. Franklin, 2014; Franklin and Papastergiadis, 2017) or, as introduced above, contributed to dispelling some myths pertaining to the nature and scope of its ‘effect’. Here, instead, we offer evidence from two surveys of local residents that indicates some significant local impacts, and present a case for a strategic regional planning intervention to ensure a more even and sustained distribution of Mona’s positive impacts. More broadly, we aim to contribute to the re-imagining of the ‘creative city’ as an effective framework for cultural planning interventions.

It is important to note, that unlike the Bilbao Guggenheim, Mona’s arrival was not positioned within a broader strategy of regional renewal but was the esoteric brainchild of its multi-millionaire founder and owner. It arrived as an unexpected gift rather than the centre piece of
a regional renewal plan as in Bilbao (O’Connor, 2015; Franklin, 2014). As such, much of the unfolding ‘Mona Effect’ has been unplanned.

To make our case for a planning intervention, we draw upon the idea of ‘spatial imagining’ used in human geography and planning literatures. Such imaginings can vary in scale from the global (e.g. Massey, 2005), to the city (e.g. Amin and Thrift, 2002; Davison, 2005), to the local (e.g. Cooper, 1999). They can be a method by which to describe the practices and vernacular spatial perceptions that constitute places and communities (e.g. Åkerlund and Sandberg, 2015; Beech, 2014; Culcasi, 2016), or as observed by others (e.g. Norman and Power, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2014) spatial imaginings – re-imaginings or marginalised imaginings – can provide an identifiable impetus that may drive socio-political change.

We mobilise both approaches, juxtaposing the spatial imagining of Glenorchy residents with how Glenorchy is imagined within the context of the Greater Hobart region. Our aim is to gently upset pre-conceptions of Glenorchy’s place in the world and the role of arts and culture in such places, and point towards an alternate regional planning strategy.

**Research Site**

Located in the southeast of the Australian island state of Tasmania, the City of Glenorchy lies directly north of, and adjacent to Tasmania’s capital city of Hobart. Hobart’s population is predominantly middle class, and Glenorchy residents tend to come from working class backgrounds with lower educational attainment and income, and higher unemployment rates (Booth, 2017).

As the state’s capital, Hobart hosts the State Parliament, the publically funded Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, other significant government institutions, and the waterfront cultural and tourist precinct. While Glenorchy has a number of major shopping areas that include government and non-government services and shopfronts, and successful local arts
and cultural initiatives such as the Moonah Arts Centre (Booth et al., 2017), the centre of economic activity and the ‘seat of power’ is Hobart. This political and economic distribution is reflected in the name of the region – Greater Hobart.

Greater Hobart is made up of 7 municipalities (ABS, 2017) located around the Derwent Estuary. It covers 2.5% of Tasmania’s total land area (169,546 hectares) and is home to 42.8% of Tasmania’s population (ABS, 2017).

Tasmania has recently undergone a significant boost in tourism, with a rise from 855,200 visitors in 2012 (Tourism Tasmania, 2012) to 1.7 million visitors for the year ending June 2017 (Tourism Tasmania, 2017a). While anecdotal accounts and popular commentaries attribute this to the opening of Mona, only 4 per cent of visitors to Tasmania report that they were influenced to visit because of Mona. However, Mona is one of the top three visitor attractions in the state with 27 per cent of visitors to Tasmania visiting Mona in 2016 (Tourism Tasmania, 2017b). It appears plausible that Mona and its Hobart-based festivals – MONA FOMA and Dark Mofo – have contributed in more indirect ways to the current tourism-boom.

There has been little evidence that this influx in tourism is affecting Glenorchy, despite the Mona’s location within this municipality. Many visitors arrive and leave the museum via ferry from Hobart’s waterfront cultural and tourism precinct, and none of Tasmania’s other top ten attractions are located in Glenorchy. Although part of the popular Mt Wellington Park lies within this municipality and can be easily accessed from this direction, visitors are attracted to its summit which can only be accessed from Hobart. Glenorchy is transected by the Brooker Highway which is the major connector for those travelling to and from the northern and central regions of Tasmania and popular destinations in the Tasmanian
Wilderness World Heritage Area. However, this predominantly takes tourists directly through the municipality, rather than into it.

Although Glenorchy appears well off the tourist trail, the *City of Glenorchy Community Plan 2015-2040* (GCC, 2015) illustrates the impact of Mona on local perceptions and local government priorities. This Plan underpins the strategic planning framework for the municipality, and is based on extensive community consultation. Its overarching vision is, ‘It is 2014 – we are a proud city; a city of arts; of opportunity; of partnerships; a city that makes exciting things happen’ (GCC, 2015: 6). In the expanded version it states,

> Valuing arts and culture as part of our daily lives has transformed our community. We have built on the success of Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Glenorchy Art and Sculpture Park (GASP) and the Moonah Arts Centre to become a state, national and international hub for arts and creativity. Our local walkways, open spaces and commercial centres have incorporated public sculpture, architecture and street art that open the experience of art for all to share. We have become the cultural hub of Tasmania (GCC, 2015: 12).

As well as Mona, GASP and the Moonah Arts Centre are central features of arts and cultural activity in the municipality. GASP is a foreshore park with award winning structural and architectural features, developed initially in 2010 by the Council and now privately managed. The Moonah Arts Centre relocated to a new purpose built building in 2015 and is run by the Council. It aims to ‘enrich the local community by providing accessible and affordable arts and cultural experiences’ (Moonah Arts Centre, 2015), and hosts art exhibitions, screenings, workshops, live performances and other creative activities aimed at enabling both creative consumption and production. Its location in Moonah – one of the municipality’s main
shopping centre and a suburb that appears to be attracting artists to take up residence (Booth et al., 2017) – perhaps exemplifies the kind of broad scale change envisioned in the

*Community Plan.*

**Methods and data**

The data that we draw upon to illustrate significant local impacts of Mona and to build our case for a strategic regional planning intervention comes from two surveys of local residents. These surveys were administered by Glenorchy City Council on behalf of researchers utilising a panel survey to ascertain rate payer views on local issues. Originally, recruitment to the panel occurred through self-select and purposive sampling; the Council used its community networks and publications to recruit participants. To ensure that the panel reflects the demographic profile of the Glenorchy population, purposive and quota selection processes were then employed. Based on key socio-economic indicators, participants from specified socio-economic backgrounds were added to the panel. This process of matching the panel profile with the population profile is undertaken regularly to increase sample robustness.

Most of the results for Survey 1 (administrated in October 2013) were reported by Booth et al. (2017). Additional results for two questions pertaining to perceptions of Mona’s overall contribution to life in Glenorchy, and general place perceptions as impacted by Mona are included here. For Survey 1, 425 surveys were distributed and 188 surveys were completed (44.2% response rate). In October 2015, Survey 2 was administered, aiming at ascertain local engagement with the Moonah Art Centre (MAC). This 14-question survey covered socio-demographic, visitation pattern indicators and a question on perceptions of contribution of MAC to the Glenorchy municipality. Of the 441 surveys distributed, 150 surveys were completed (34% response rate).
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of independent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey #1 respondents (%)</th>
<th>Survey #2 respondents (%)</th>
<th>Glenorchy popn (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/managerial</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;60 years old</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full- or part-time</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39b</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal annual income &gt;$40,000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Source: Booth et al. (2017)
b 50% of the total respondents identified as retired
c Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 data (GCC, 2016)

For the place perception questions in Survey 1, descriptive statistics suggest overall positive experiences and perceptions of Mona contribution to Glenorchy and impact on sense of place. 54 per cent report that since Mona opened there are more things to do in Glenorchy; 65 per cent that Mona has increased a sense of local pride; 60 per cent that Mona has increased work opportunities in Glenorchy; and 87 per cent of respondents think the Mona’s contribution to Glenorchy has been positive or very positive. Only 7 per cent agree or strongly agree that Mona has made living in Glenorchy less affordable, and 4 per cent that Mona has made Glenorchy feel less like home. When asked if Mona has increased the value of real estate in Glenorchy, 13 per cent agree, 51 per cent are neutral and 37 per cent disagree or strongly disagree.

Bivariate analysis of the data reveals significant associations between place perceptions and socio-economic indicators. For example, education and occupation both have a weak but significant association with place perception, at the 95 per cent level. A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between educational attainment and Mona’s overall contribution, $\chi^2 (1, N = 178) = 5.2, p = .01, \phi = .2$; and between occupation and Mona’s overall contribution, $\chi^2 (1, N = 129) = 3.1, p = .04, \phi = .2$. Those without a tertiary education were more likely to perceive that Mona has made a positive contribution (91 per
cent) than those with a tertiary education (77 per cent). Those in a professional or managerial occupation were more likely to perceive that Mona’s contribution to Glenorchy was negative (13 per cent) than those in other occupations (3 per cent). Nonsignificant associations were evident between socio-demographic variables and the other place perception indicators. This may be due to the small sample size, though this sample did show significant associations between socio-demographic variables and visitation patterns at Mona (Booth et al., 2017).

For Survey 2, descriptive statistics suggest that in an average year 67 per cent of respondents report that they will visit MAC, and 33 per cent never. For the new MAC, 76 per cent said that they had visited and 24 per cent never. 35 per cent reported that they had visited alone, and most others with a partner, as a family and/or with friends. Sixty five per cent said that the main reason for visiting the new MAC was to see an art exhibition, with 39 per cent to attend a community function or launch, 23 per cent a music concert, 8 percent to participate in a workshop, 5 percent for theatre or performance (21 per cent said ‘other reason’).

Seventy per cent of all respondents said that they are likely or very likely to recommend visiting the new MAC to family and friends. In the next 12 months, 61 per cent said that they were likely or very likely to visit the new MAC. 76 per cent had visited the new MAC at least once, and 9 per cent five times of more. Sixty two per cent thought that the new MAC contributed a moderate or a lot to life in the municipality.

Bivariate analysis of the survey data revealed few associations of statistical significance i.e. there are few significant relationships in MAC visitation patterns based on socio-demographic variables, or on place perception impact and socio-demographic variables. There are no discernible differences, for example, in having visited MAC (old and new) and frequency of visitation based on educational attainment. These findings are very different from what has been found in relation to Mona, where for local residents, fairly tradition museum visitation patterns appear evident (Booth et al., 2017). For example, Glenorchy
residents with a tertiary education are more likely to visit Mona and more likely to visit more often.

It is important to note that comparison with population data (Table 1) indicates that our sample contains an over-representation of women, those with a tertiary qualification, aged over 60-years, and those in roles other than full- and part-time employment particularly of retirees. While this sample is based upon a non-probability selection strategy (de Vaus, 2014), it appears to be biased towards those with the time and resources for community engagement, and who are more aware of issues and developments in their local area. Given the over-representation of the tertiary educated, respondents appear likely, on average, to possess higher levels of cultural capital and be more receptive to cultural institutions like MAC.

**Discussion**

Most visitors to Mona are tourists who are tertiary educated and middle class (Booth et al., 2017). While most local residents appreciate Mona’s presence and contribution in Glenorchy, previous research describes the issues effecting access to the museum by locals, particularly those of lower socio-economic status. This includes the affordability of food and drink, the explicit nature of some art work, concerns about the behaviour of children in the museum environment, and an overall sense that these kind of places are not for them (Booth et al., 2017). The results we describe here provide new insights into local residents’ perceptions and experiences of Mona and other local art and cultural initiatives. We observe that in terms of visitor demographics, MAC appears significantly more inclusive than Mona, and that while locals are constrained by various social, cultural and financial factors from accessing Mona, we find strong indications that Mona has had a significant and positive impact on local residents’ place perceptions.
Although those with higher cultural capital appear more cautious in their assessment, in general, following Mona’s arrival, Glenorchy is a better place to be and a place to be more proud of; people feel more confident and more optimistic. There is recognition of the positive role that arts and culture can play, even if Mona itself is not to everyone’s taste.

As previously introduced, this bottom-up re-imagining of Glenorchy infused with optimism and a focus on arts and culture takes on concrete form in municipality’s *Community Plan* (GCC, 2015). Although this localised imagining is significant, it sits within larger scale imaginings including those associated with Greater Hobart. As a geo-political region defined by municipal boundaries and local government structures, and as a regional planning unit under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993, these regional imaginings have a significant impact on what happens locally.

Greater Hobart embodies a spatial imagining that informs both sense of place and tourism promotions. For example, the regional tourism authority promotes the region as such: “The beauty of [Greater Hobart] is that everything is close to Hobart. Those eager to explore beyond the GPO will stumble across breweries, vineyards, beaches, museums and mountains right next door to the city” (Destination Southern Tasmania, 2017). This imagining prioritises Hobart as the centre of social and culture life in the region, as well as upholding and centralising political and economic power in Hobart. It maintains Glenorchy as peripheral and Mona as an appendage of Hobart, accessed by many using a ferry which bypasses Glenorchy altogether – as “just a few kilometres upriver from Hobart” (Destination Southern Tasmania, 2017).

This regional imagining appears to be reinforced by the characterisation of Glenorchy as working class or disadvantaged. Travelling by road or bike path from Hobart to Mona entails crossing what is colloquially known as the ‘flannelette curtain’ – the name for the boundary
between Glenorchy and Hobart, and a reference to working men’s flannelette shirts that are taken as emblematic of Glenorchy’s post-industrial working class suburbia (Booth, 2017b). As Cameron (2007) describes, ‘what we call things matters – because it has a determinant effect on the people and places to which labels are applied and the range of interventions available to deal with any problem’ (2007: 519). For Glenorchy, both the ‘flannelette’ characterisation of the municipality and its location on the periphery of the ‘hip and happening’ inner city, render a regional imagining of this municipality as bland and bereft of culture.

This can have a profound impact on cultural decision-making and planning with centralised – in this case Hobart-centric – perspectives on the ‘Mona Effect’ dominating thought and action. Not only is Glenorchy characterised in a particular, marginalising way, the uneven distribution of the benefits of Mona are overlooked as a peripheral issue to Mona’s impact in Hobart.

This dominant regional imagining acts to constrain rather than enable change within Glenorchy. However, with a community-led re-imagining of Glenorchy, an openness to the value of arts and culture, the inclusive nature of local community arts initiatives and Mona’s ranking as one of the top tourism destinations in Tasmania, there appears to be an opportunity for a larger scale regional re-think. As Norman and Power (2015) describe, when multiple imaginings are attached to a place, this multiplicity carries the potential for change.

Supporting our observations on a thriving and community-engaged arts and cultural scene in Glenorchy, Felton and Collis (2012) observe the outer suburbs can be a preferred location for creative workers – both those running small to medium commercial enterprises, and more public-funding oriented artists involved in creative activities such as the visual arts, music or writing. In their research Felton and Collis (2012) refute assumptions around the bland and
aspirational suburbia and the creative, ‘happening’ inner city urban areas, arguing that features of space, privacy, serenity and encounters with the natural environment are reasons why many creative workers choose to locate themselves in the outer suburbs. Lower real estate prices, lack of distractions are other factors here. They conclude,

Attending to the characteristics of place and to how people engage, imagine, and produce in places outside the inner city disrupts increasingly homogenous ideas about what a ‘creative place’ might be. It also disrupts stake yet pervasive assumptions about the cultural and the economic geographies of Australian outer suburbia (Felton and Collis, 2012: 188).

A mapping exercise of ‘cool’ and ‘creative’ places in Wollongong found that local residents located creativity in the suburbs as well as at the city centre (Gibson et al., 2012), and that “neoliberal policies promoting ‘creativity’ barely capture what is possible through cultural planning” (Gibson et al., 2012: 292). For example, one of the sites of creativity identified by participants was the local hardware megastore, particularly the paint aisle. Likewise natural sites such as beaches, escarpments and scenic lookouts were also identified are being ‘cool’ and/or ‘creative’. The researchers observe that there are many “unheralded and prosaic sites of suburban creativity” (Gibson et al., 2012: 299). Thus, creative activities can be located in the fringes or in previously unexpected places, outside specific central inner city/creative nexi often focused upon in cultural planning (Gibson et al., 2012). This, we would suggest, is more marked in locations such as Glenorchy which are close to the rural, with rural creative industries themselves becoming the subject of research in recent years (Bell and Jayne, 2012; Harvey et al, 2012; Herslund, 2012; Thomas et al, 2013).

In addition, it has been observed there are a collection of creative endeavours that are fringe dwellers within regards to what counts (or does not count) as part of the creative industries.
Mayes (2010, cited in Gibson et al., 2012) observes that in relation to cultural planning, “fringes groups, amateurs, community non-profit collectives and unusual forms of creativity are often missing from analysis and from creative city visions” (Gibson et al., 2012: 288). As Jayne et al. (2010) observe:

> the metropolitan focus, measurements and categories used by theorists such as Landry and Florida (since taken up by countless policy makers) fail to capture the complexity and diversity of cultural production, consumption and creativity in small cities (Jayne et al., 2010: 1413).

It can be argued that Glenorchy is already the hub of creative arts and culture envisioned in the municipality’s Community Plan (GCC, 2015). The nature of this hub appears to bear the hallmarks of grass-roots approaches to cultural planning, emphasising a “more inclusive, democratic approach to local diversity and endogenous cultural vitality” (Gibson et al., 2012: 289). Hence, what appears to be at stake here is not some kind of local transformation – a rich diverse and inclusive arts and cultural mix already exists – but recognition of this unique and vernacular mix as an integral part of Greater Hobart.

Such a reimagining of Glenorchy’s place in the world and the role of arts and culture in such places can take on more concrete form through regional planning that considers cultural participation in terms of both consumption and production. Access roots to cultural production rather than just consumption is a key indicator of equitable cultural planning. A recent report suggested that only 13 per cent of those working in the creative sector thought it represented the full diversity of Tasmania’s population (O’Connor, 2017). If tertiary education is a good predictor of formal cultural participation (art galleries, concerts etc.) then it quite definitely marks professional cultural activity, with over 70% in that recent survey suggesting they had tertiary or vocational education in the field. The rise in ‘credentialism’,
the absorption by universities of a broad range of creative disciplines, the rise in student debt and the reduction in funding for TAFE – Tasmania’s government-funded vocational training institution – all work to magnify the role of social class and ethnic status in the creative industries (Oakley and O’Brien, 2016).

Whilst cultural participation is about a broad range of everyday activities, if there are no routes from this to engagement in cultural production at a more professional level, then this too seriously undermines the promise of equity, access and inclusive that underpins the transformative rhetoric of creative communities (cf. Banks, 2017).

**Conclusion**

While Glenorchy itself may be embracing and planning for more inclusive approaches to local arts and culture, the region as a whole retains a focus on the inner city – Hobart and its waterfront arts and cultural precinct. In this, Greater Hobart fails to envisage or plan for cultural-led regeneration that is more vernacular, *in situ*, evenly distributed and perhaps, long-term.

While our findings indicate local optimism and a valuing of arts and culture in local life, how sustainable these shifts may be appears in doubt if most benefits continue to take place elsewhere and if there is little regional leadership to harness a more inclusive approach. Without careful and deliberate planning the possibility of Glenorchy gaining a greater share in the benefits of Mona appears farfetched, as these benefits by and large co-occur with entrenched and familiar socio-economic patterns.

An opportunity exists for a strategic regional planning intervention that embraces a re-imagined Greater Hobart and Glenorchy’s place and role within this, and responds to Glenorchy as an existing arts and cultural hub, rather than a ‘poor cousin’. In such a response, Mona would be understood not as an appendage of Hobart, but at home within Glenorchy’s
vernacular and diverse mix of arts and culture. The grassroots work being done by Glenorchy City Council can then be supported on a regional scale, as well as responded to by decision-makers and through regional planning to enable a more even distribution of – not so much the ‘Mona Effect’ – but of creative effects. This would include access routes to creative production as well as consumption (O’Connor, 2017).

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1 Details of survey questions can be obtained by contacting the corresponding author.
2 More details of the bivariate analysis can be obtained by contacting the corresponding author.