More than a museum? Understanding how small museums contribute to social capital in regional communities. *

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Abstract The purpose of this research is to understand how small museums contribute to social capital in their community. The research uses three distinct case studies to distinguish differences and similarities. The article first discusses aspects of social impact and the arts. It then identifies a suitable social capital conceptual framework to underpin the empirical research reported in this article. The methodology is explained followed by analysis and discussion of the three case studies. Each case is examined using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative component is used to understand key stakeholder perceptions of the museum. The quantitative component is used to understand how residents place value on their local museum. The research shows that the different nature of the locations results in variable museum impacts. However, bonding networks were more strongly evidenced than bridging networks in all three cases. It also suggests that residents place more trust in museums when the location is more demographically homogenous. Research using network analysis may further illustrate how museums may contribute to social capital in their localities.

Biography

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Introduction

Funding bodies and stakeholders acknowledge that museums and their programs need to demonstrate their impact and value in order to attract further funding and ongoing support (Wavell, Baxter et al. 2002; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Linked to this, a number of benefits are claimed for specific participation in museum programs and museum visitation as well as arts participation in general (Matarosso 1997; Williams 1997; Sandell 1998; Persson 2000; Sheppard 2000; Evans 2001; Parker, Waterston et al. 2002). Reports in the cultural sector indicate that benefits accrue to participants in the realm of educational attainment, positive social behaviour, community pride/identity, social cohesion, crime prevention, personal security, self-esteem, mood and development of life skills (Matarosso 1997). Yet these are still difficult to 'prove' or link causally.

Demonstrating impacts of programs, while not overstating or underplaying the role of the institution or program, is complex and not unique to the museum sector or the arts. In the nonprofit management literature, methodological steps have been developed which attempt to redress some of the inherent weaknesses in impact assessment, including social and economic audits and outcomes (Richmond 2000; Quarter & Richmond 2001; Campbell 2002; Richmond, Mook et al. 2003); measuring the intensity, scope and type of participation in voluntary programs (Wollebaek & Selle 2002; Hooghe 2003); measuring capacity enhancement between both grantee organisation and the funding body (Easterling 2000); and understanding factors of social value and developing associated social accountability frameworks (Putnam 1999; Poole, Davis et al. 2001; Quarter & Richmond 2001).

Research into the measurement of social capital has provided a useful way forward in unravelling the complexities involved in social impact measurement (Onyx & Bullen 1997; Williams 1997). However, there has been a great deal of debate in museum and arts participation studies in identifying indicators and measuring outcome as well as scoping the cultural/creative and instrumental nature of the arts and heritage sectors (Wavell, Baxter et al. 2002; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004; Cultural Ministers Council 2004; Travers 2006).

Drawing on the work of Putnam, Onyx, Bullen and others, Stone's study (2001) has provided insight into the conceptual frameworks necessary to develop survey instruments for social capital measurement. She maintains that measuring social capital through an individual's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour provides insight into the social capital stock and distribution within a community (or in her case, a family unit).

Stone has identified that there is a difference between a social process and the consequences of such processes – that is, does a desire, attitude or belief exist and if so what is the behaviour of the person when transforming that intangible into a tangible action? Stone maintains that the operationalisation of social capital measurements has combined social capital indicators with outcomes and that this is empirically questionable. She maintains that for an outcome to be measured there must first be a *norm* established as a baseline for impact or capital to be assessed. It could be argued that much of the work exploring social impact on participation in the arts and the museum sector has been similarly distorted, often with outcomes serving as evidence of social impact.

Methodologically, social capital has been used as an independent variable – how social capital influences other variables such as community development; a dependent variable – what leads to the decline or growth of social capital; and as both an

independent and dependent variable – what makes social capital and what impact is there on any given outcome (Stone 2001).

As Stone (2001) suggests, it may be difficult to prove causal relationships between museums and the social impact they generate. What is more achievable is to show how museums contribute to an impact but do not necessarily cause an impact to happen. In defining impact as changes to social and cultural stock and distribution, we can then see that social impact becomes the dependent variable. That is, how do museums increase or decrease cultural stock and how do we know? While the impact is dependent on the presence (programs, policies, activities) of the museum, this does not assume that no social capital existed before museums were created within the community. What is being measured in this study is how museums contribute to the stock of social capital not whether they create it per se, and what type of social capital can legitimately be associated with museums. The framework adopted here is two-fold. One is informed by social capital concepts of bridging and bonding networks generated by museum stakeholders such as staff, volunteers and users. The second is informed by a belief/behaviour dichotomy including trust and reciprocity which is tested within the broader community. The purpose is not to show causal relationships. Rather, this is exploratory research which attempts to locate the perceived benefits museums deliver to different constituencies.

Using a social capital framework, the following research questions were developed:

What bridging and bonding networks do stakeholders, directly associated with the museum, believe they develop and sustain?

What do residents within communities believe to be the value of their museums and do they act on these perceptions.

These research objectives relate to the findings of Travers (2006) into the economic, creative and social impacts of museums in the United Kingdom. His evaluation of the effectiveness of the wider benefits that museums deliver focused on identifying collaborative programming and projects that addressed pertinent current issues. He also listed partnerships between museums at community and national level indicating both bridging and bonding attributes. Travers concentrated on disaggregating and comparing secondary data as his method of analysis for the sector. The research reported in this article uses stakeholders and residents as the method of analysis. As such, it is limited to the specific cases investigated. The contribution we are seeking to make is to understand museum impact and social capital from informants' points of view rather than evaluating the activities and formal collaborations museums may or may not develop at the institutional level.

Research methodology

Methodological problems associated with measuring social capital and impact in relation to cultural institutions have been widely debated (Merli 2002; Matarosso 2003; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004). In particular, Wavell et al (2002) have listed a number of attributes that form part of the evaluation process. These attributes include analysing aims and objectives of the organisation, identifying inputs, the processes of transforming inputs, identifying outputs (services) and outcomes (engagement), assessing impact (change), and finally understanding how stakeholders and residents value the service. We have adapted this approach in our case studies. To simplify the approach, we have dissected the research into two parts: one that looks at individuals within the organisation (and includes consideration of aims and objectives of the organisation, inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes); and one that looks at residents and assesses their view of the museums (and includes outcomes, impact and value).

Limits were set on the nature and scope of the study. The researchers' interests focused on the impact of museums, and within this a subset of regional museums rather than major state or national museums were chosen. Three case studies were undertaken. The reasons for choosing this subset were threefold:

- There are sufficient differences within regional museums to identify 'representative' cases of type.

- Regional museums are more likely to be closely connected to the communities they serve whereas larger museums are more likely to serve a number of disparate and complex stakeholders and require different forms of measurement.

- While controversy may surround some major museums on their core purpose, their future is more or less assured, unlike smaller regional museums which are reliant on the 'goodwill' and largesse of community funders such as Councils, with no statutory obligation to continue support. This makes measuring impact a high priority in this context.

The museums were selected on the basis of:

- A representative of a 'metropolitan' museum within the greater Sydney area – the impacts that these museums create may be significantly different from those in more remote locations. In addition, these museums compete with significant state and national museums in adjacent locations. *(Heritage Centre)*

- A representative of a small regional museum – in some sense 'typical' of regional museums within regional and rural communities that have undergone structural change through drought or industry displacement of jobs (for example, farming, logging, fishing, mining) and are now reinventing themselves as tourist destinations or developing other new industries. *(Coastal Village Museum)*

- A representative of an Aboriginal Keeping Place at a regional level – although part of the museum sector, these are different paradigms to museums as such. Their core function is to act as a central meeting place and catalyst for Aboriginal cultural and social development and practice as well as 'neutral territory' for reporting Aboriginal cultural artifacts and finds by non-Aboriginal people in their communities. *(Keeping Place)*

Both qualitative and quantitave approaches were taken. The qualitative phase constituted the internal aspect of social impact accruing to the users, staff, volunteers and funders of the local museums. The analysis of the qualitative studies explored social benefits (bonding networking, interaction) and cultural benefits (bridging networking, quality of life, and services to community) at an individual level. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a number of stakeholders in all cases. The purpose of the discussions was to identify perceived impacts the museums were delivering to those directly linked to the centres. The analysis was facilitated by using Nvivo software.

The quantitative phase investigated aspects of social impact accruing to residents within the community. This instrument tested respondents' beliefs and what they actually did in relation to using the museum: sourcing information, participating in programs, showcasing the museum to visitors and willingness to contribute additional funding to the museum. This approach aligns with recent Australian work which looked at heritage and museum impact in terms of civic participation, social responsibility and community engagement (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006).

An interviewer-intercept street survey was administered randomly to the local population (n = 83 in Metropolitan Region; n = 120 in Coastal Village region; n = 93 in the Keeping Place). Numbers in each case study are small and the sample cannot be construed as representative of the population of the locality. However, we undertook further analysis of the beliefs and behaviour dichotomies reported by respondents using an independent t-test and validating the robustness of the factor analysis using Cronbach's alpha and varimax rotation. The same survey instrument was used in all cases.

The qualitative data findings are discussed discretely by case and the quantitative data findings from the three cases are discussed jointly for comparative purposes.

Findings

Case Study: The Coastal Village

The Coastal Village is a relatively isolated small town with a resident population of about 3,200 but which can increase threefold during the peak summer holiday season. It is not a wealthy town with the average family income 32% lower than the State average. It has an ageing population as it is a popular destination for retirees, and many young people leave the town in search of employment. Dairy, fishing and forestry are the main industries in the surrounding area. The tourism industry is increasing in the Coastal Village (Coastal Village Area 2006).

Coastal Village Museum (CVM)

Coastal Village Museum has been open for fifty-seven years, with several extensions and renovations over that time. It concentrates on the history and social aspects of the past whaling industry but also includes other aspects of local history. The museum regularly hosts travelling exhibitions. The bulk of the workers are volunteers with a few people employed, mostly part time, to work in the shop and the office. There is one full time curator. The Executive Committee consists of volunteers with considerable continuity of service among the members. There is also a Friends group who manage the library, archives and records, assist in curatorial and conservation work, organise events and meals. The museum has about 40,000 visitors per year.

Qualitative data findings

Although the focus of the Museum is on the whaling industry, it is clearly a repository and active information resource about the history of the town and surrounding district. The most striking aspect of the interviews with those associated directly with the museum was the strong sense of identity felt by those involved – a social community group has developed. Cohesion and loyalty were two key elements expressed by the workers and volunteers in the museum.

> *…in all those years as far as regular monthly meetings go, we wouldn't have missed three or four at the very most. And with my other keen colleagues here, it would be nothing for us to have half a dozen or ten meetings a week, we'd pass in the street and discuss things.* (Staff volunteer CVM).

> *I think it's mostly the friends that you make in the group. We seem to have done a lot of things outside the museum as a group, going out to theatre nights together, going to social events.* (Staff volunteer CVM)

The CVM facilitates an array of social linkages with broad community groups and community members. Membership of the CVM plus other community groups gives rise to passive use of the facility as a venue, active use by hosting events for other community groups or members, or collaboration on joint activities locally. This form of network building establishes bonds between similar groups within the community. The range of links includes school concerts held in the museum, senior citizen lunches, hosting Australia Day events, drama and poetry groups, events for newcomers to town, participation in Whale Festivals and Heritage Week.

> *I think it enhances the museum's reputation, the museum's status and credibility within the community. I think it's important to the community to know that things they have in town are also conspicuously part of the community as well. And I think that the inter-relationship going two ways is an important thing to the community.* (Executive Committee Member, CVM)

The feelings of pride and ownership were constantly reiterated, underlining the notion that the museum contributes to the local community's sense of place and identity.

> *When I'm talking to our family and friends or whatever, and they're coming to visit, I'll say, go to the [CVM], it's not just a museum, you see this happened and you learn and you know and it's part of you then, and I think that's mainly what it's done for me.* (User, CVM)

> *But also the museum's definitely got a sense of belonging in the community and the community has a sense of ownership for the museum…* (User, CVM)

> *The museum is seen in a very positive light…. So you know if you're talking to someone and you mention the museum, it's going to get a favourable response and they're interested in it.* (Staff volunteer CVM)

The collaborations between the museum and the town were attributed to the involvement of townspeople and the reciprocal advantages. The president of the Executive Committee spoke of a clear focus, based on the collections of the museum which were directly linked to the people of the town and their past industrial history. Although many activities held at the museum appear to have little direct connection with the museum's actual holdings, all of the activities involved exposing the museum to the people, and showing it as a friendly, welcoming and interesting place. These activities may lead to donations or contributions of materials, or simply better understanding of the work and facilities of the museum. Collaborations were evident with many groups including service, education and cultural groups. The museum contributes to information and display material throughout the town. It also provides services such as a bookshop, archives for community records, a theatre space, documentation and restoration in the cemetery.

These factors translate into economic benefits for the museum which operates independently of Council grants and, importantly to the whole town, through generating tourism spend. There were many examples given in the focus groups and interviews of people coming to the town specifically to see the museum. Economic impact on the whole town was clearly evident through increased use of accommodation and food outlets. Staff emphasised discussions with visitors who had clearly come to the town specifically to visit the museum.

Case Study: Metropolitan Region

The metropolitan region is located in the western area of the City of Sydney. The metropolitan region has a population of about 150,000 people, almost half of whom were born overseas with over one third of the population speaking a language other than English at home (Metropolitan Area 2003). This culturally diverse population is drawn from China, Lebanon, India, Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Italy as well as the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The most common non-English language is Arabic followed by Chinese languages.

Heritage Centre (HC)

The Heritage Centre (HC) is part of a library, museum and visitor complex each with distinct staff structures. It opened in 1998 and was intended to serve two purposes: the first as a focus for interpretation of significant heritage associated with the built environment of early European settlers; the second as a focus for interpreting Aboriginal heritage. The main role of the HC was not collection or exhibition development, but rather acting as the catalyst for what was perceived to be an 'open air collection' which was spread throughout the area, and linked by a heritage walking trail. However, the properties of the dispersed open air collection do not necessarily belong to the HC. They form part of collections of other heritage agencies such as the National Trust and Historic Houses Trust. An important function of the HC is to act as an interpreter of the diverse array of the metropolitan's cultural assets for visitors to the Visitor Centre.

Notwithstanding the caveats on exhibitions and collections, the HC maintains a permanent exhibition and mounts two temporary exhibitions per annum along with community exhibitions and running public programs including school holiday programs. The HC also hosts the local history group, consisting of volunteers who promote access to historical archives and records. The Heritage Centre reports some 30,000 visitors to its temporary exhibitions and the permanent exhibition of the area's heritage attracts a further 17,000 people annually (these figures are recorded manually) (Heritage Centre 2003).

The professional staff consists of a Director, Curator and Education officer. The adjoining Visitor Centre (the entrance to the Heritage Centre) consists primarily of information officers who are responsible to the Director. The HC forms part of a unit of the larger Council and reports to Councillors via the library section.

Qualitative data findings

Users, staff and volunteers within the HC, identified a number of benefits the HC delivered to the community and to themselves as users of the facility. There was however some variance in opinions.

Most users were repeat participants in a range of cultural activities such as calligraphy, jewelry, drumming, family history scrapbook production and story writing, undertaken by both children and adults. Participation in the classes indicated a number of positive benefits. These covered social interaction where users had become a close knit group, often extending social activities outside the HC. Economic benefits accrued insofar as the craft skills they developed were used as gifts and substitutes for commercial purchase. Cultural benefits included enhancing and extending their creative skills. However, there was also some concern about 'hoarding' the facility by those 'in the know' and it was perceived by some as an exclusive club.

The impact is that there are women out there with children that do need a little bit more interaction and education, they don't know how to work the system, they don't know there is a system to work. (User HC)

Cultural benefit only extended to their participatory cultural development. Very few became an audience for the curated exhibitions developed by staff or multicultural community groups.

Relationships between the volunteers and staff in the HC and library were occasionally tense. In most instances the relationship was perceived by volunteers as a partnership between the professionals and themselves. In other instances however, professional staff were seen as difficult or even undermining. Volunteers indicated that this had a negative impact on customers and undervalued the role and services volunteers delivered.

Volunteers are well connected to other historical agencies and networks such as the Historic Houses Trust and the National Trust. As volunteers they build up an informal network that they draw on to enhance their pool of knowledge. The link between the HC and these historic agencies rests on the personal connections fostered by volunteers.

Well some of the members of our group are also in that (National Trust and Historic Houses Trust). So if we get stuck for something we ask about Historic Houses…so we know all those people and the work that they do eventually ends up here and we know how to get it if you want more information… (Volunteer HC)

This means that the professional staff are reliant on the connection volunteers establish and maintain, however loose these connections might be. In the absence of professional collaborative programming and joint project management between the HC and other historic agencies, the bonding networks of volunteers become a proxy network for the organisation. Should volunteers leave, these bonds become severed.

While the staff at the HC were seen as appreciative of volunteers, they were also time poor and had little capacity to train volunteers in appropriate use of technology to enhance their effectiveness. Volunteers found this frustrating and some believed that the Council did not recognise or appreciate their input.

Professional staff were appointed to their positions from about 2000 onwards. However, it appeared that the purpose of the HC had been ill-defined. Purpose and mission evolved according to the interests of staff and this evolution may be at variance with the core purpose of the organisation.

Community exhibitions are programmed regularly but these are seen as almost silo developments rather than consciously contributing to a sense of cultural diversity. When asked what the impact of closing the HC would have on the area, it was stated:

I think the group that would feel the biggest gap would be the ones that the (Education Officer) is working with (users). I think a lot of people involved in exhibitions are fairly self-interested…I don't think there's a lot of crossover, cultural crossover. I think it's a very specific group that's interested in their own exhibition and in working together as a community, in expressing their thoughts and ideas to others…I don't think there is a particular loyalty to here. I think as long as they've got a place, why should there be? They just want a facility for that

to happen, whether it's called (the Heritage Centre) or whether it's run by the Rotary Club…(Director HC)

Combining a Heritage Centre and a Tourist Visitor Centre had the potential to strengthen experiences in offering unique interpretation of sites to both locals and tourists. However, Council staff acknowledge that these initiatives have not occurred and that the HC is operating more as an activity centre, mounting exhibitions and hosting the local history archives through volunteers. The leverage of cultural tourism is yet to be realised. Exhibitions were intended to run only in 'downtime' but the shift has been to act as a quasi art galley. The latter initiative is seen by Council staff as a barrier to establishing a professional art gallery – if the HC acts as an art gallery, then the need for one dissipates.

The qualitative component of the research raises a number of issues in relation to social impact at a metropolitan level. Internally the HC operates as a 'club' bestowing benefits on users and volunteers in the form of social and skills benefit, pride in knowledge and connectedness to other related networks. For staff the benefits of the HC relate to relative program autonomy separate from Council's original mission for the HC. However, the latter has political ramifications that may destabilise the HC's operations. There is a sense of mission drift perceived by Council in relation to the HC where the HC is expected to act as a tourist centre, community centre, exhibition centre and link the extensive cultural assets of the area on limited resources.

Case Study: Inland Rural Area

The town is located in northern inland New South Wales and has a population of about 9,000. It has a long history of mining and grazing. Crops, orchards and vineyards are becoming increasingly significant. Tourism has long been important, as a main highway provides direct routes to major centres and cities.

Aboriginal Keeping Place (KP)

KP is a relatively new building with good facilities. It is funded from a diverse range of government and non-government sources. It contains an Art Gallery and a Restaurant offering Aboriginal cuisine. It has an educational program which shares the culture with the wider community (especially schools) through traditional dances and music, in addition to having an informative web-site.

Qualitative Data Findings

An important finding through the qualitative data was that KP fosters community pride.

It is seen to represent the local indigenous community and it forms links with many other organisations in and beyond the immediate town, such as historical and theatre groups, the local Council, and sporting associations. Functions and events held at the facility draw the general community into the centre. It provides employment and cultural opportunities (such as a library, and a venue for conferences).

KP generates income that stays in the community through tourism in the general town and at the centre. It is a major employer of Indigenous people. It offers skills development opportunities and hence a sense of self determination.

The non-indigenous community recognises the value of being able to share culture and the KP offers a point of contact if not reconciliation. There is appreciation of place and identity through the development of inclusive programs that draw on assets of all community culture.

There is a personal sense of pride in being able to teach information about history:

> *I really love discussing things with the Europeans because they've been brought up with lies about the Aboriginal people… they come in here, they ask questions and I tell them straight about how Aboriginals were treated and they walk out with a completely different attitude and it's just wonderful to see.*

At the same time there was clearly the sense that the Keeping Place is 'squeezed' between the two communities it serves: the indigenous community and the wider community of the town and district. There are some differences in opinion regarding the running and purpose of the KP:

> *But it's hard for the Aboriginal community to understand that they can't, they get a free cup of coffee and stuff, but just use it like they want to use it. Telling us we're running it like a white organisation.*

Barriers to better relations come through parts of the general community seeing the centre as exclusively 'Indigenous', and it was considered that perceived racist attitudes led to some members of the community not visiting and not knowing what is available.

This case study starkly revealed the contrast between factors that were affected by community divisions while others brought the community together. In turn these factors affect social, cultural, educational and economic impacts.

Quantitative data findings across the cases

A survey instrument was administered in all three cases and for analysis purposes the data are compared. The purpose of the survey was to compare residents' beliefs about their local museum with their behaviour in order to understand how residents valued the museum.

Demographic comparisons and visiting behaviour are outlined in Graph 1.

Graph 1: Comparative Analysis Between CVM, HC and KP
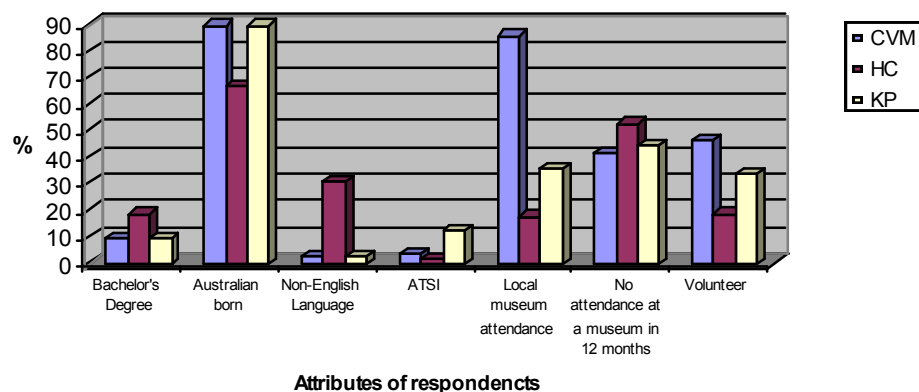
The demographics of the survey respondents tend to reflect the census statistics on demographics for each location. Attendance at museums in the past twelve months by respondents in all areas is significantly higher than the population average of 25%. One of the significant differences between the local museums is the attendance patterns, with the CVM far outpacing the other two museums. The CVM reports 40,000 visitors per annum in a population of only 3,000 (although this swells to 9,000 in peak tourist season). Another strong difference was in volunteer activity, which was reported as higher in the regional and rural areas, compared to the metropolitan area.

Beliefs about the museum held by residents were recorded on a 1-5 Likert scale and respondents were asked to give 'strength of agreement' with a number of statements (see Table 1).
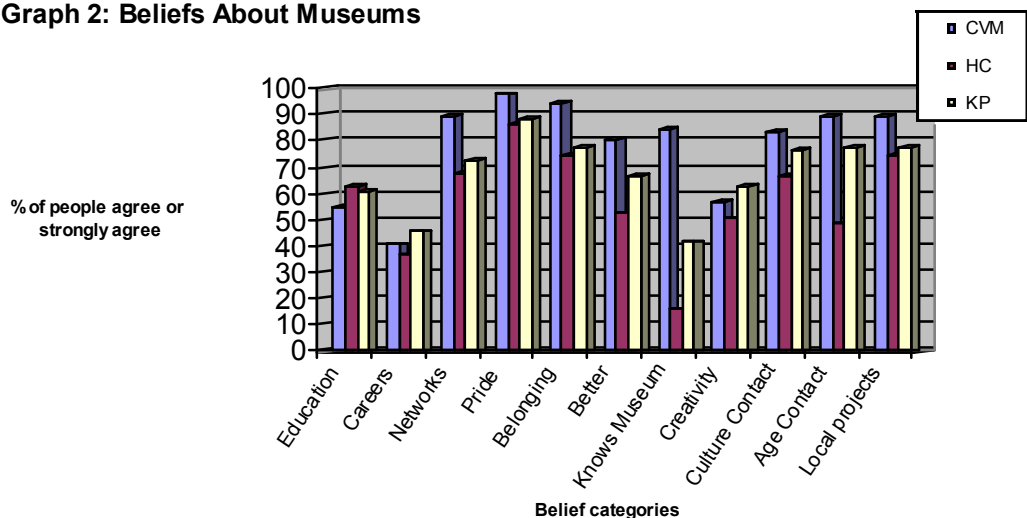
Table 1: Questions Pertaining To Belief

Please read the following statements and indicate your response on a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 strongly agre

A. Local museums are mainly for education
B. Local museums help people take up or develop careers
C. Local museums develop community and social networks
D. Local museums develop pride in local traditions and customs
E. Local museums help people feel a sense of belonging and involvement in their local communities
F. Local museums make people feel better about where they live
G. Everyone in this community knows about their local museum
H. Local museums help people develop their creativity
I. Local museums promote contact and cooperation across different cultures
J. Local museums assist in developing contact across different age groups
K. Local museums involve people in local projects
L. Local museums play an important role in tourism for this region
M. Local museums are places where people can debate issues
N. Local museums should have exhibitions relevant to the local area

The results in Graph 2 show beliefs about museums:

Graph 2: Beliefs About Museums

Beliefs were analysed in terms of their stated behaviour. Behavioral questions were structured as semantic differentials shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Questions Pertaining To Behaviour

*Please read the following statements and choose the **one ONLY** that you **MOST** agree with.*

1A. If I have visitors staying from out of town, I am more likely to take them to this museum **OR**

1B. If I have visitors staying from out of town, I am more likely to take them to another local attraction

2A. I would be willing to personally pay additional fees to improve the museum **OR**

2B. I think the museum gets enough money as it is

3A. I feel comfortable visiting this museum **OR**

3B. I feel comfortable visiting the local library

4A. I find museums are less important in this community than other community organisations **OR**

4B. I find museums are as important in this community as other community organizations

5A. If I want to know more about debates on social issues in this community, I listen to/read the local media **OR**

5B. If I want to know more about debates on social issues in this community, I find out more from a museum or library

6A. I visit a museum (here or elsewhere) to find out more about how ordinary people live/d **OR**

6B. I visit a museum (here or elsewhere) to find out more about different or extraordinary people's lives

7A. This museum collects items of little interest to me **OR**

7B. This museum collects items that are relevant to this community

8A. If I had to choose, I would give more funds to a local sport complex/playing field than other organisations **OR**

8B. If I had to choose, I would give more funds to the local museum than other organisations

Frequencies of actions associated with museums are found in Graph 3.

Graph 3: Behaviour in relation to museums
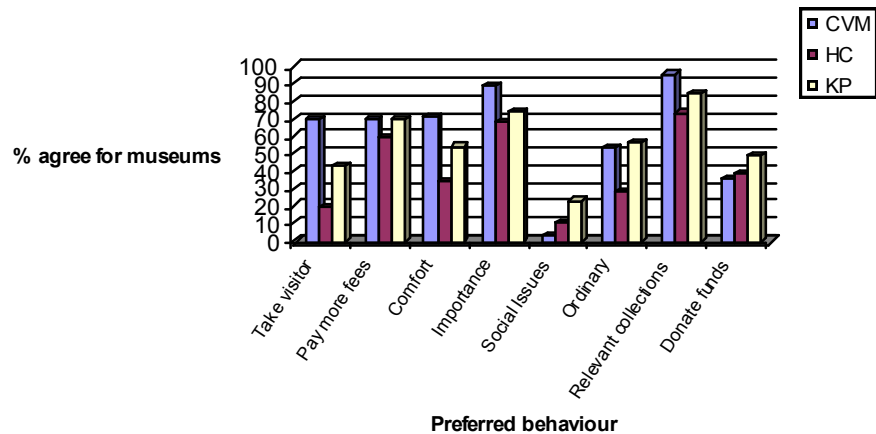
While the frequencies detailed give general trends, factor analysis allowed us to more rigorously understand how beliefs were grouped and how they correlated to behaviour.

Factor analysis grouped shared beliefs into four factors:

- Factor 1- Community (see C,D,E,F in Table II);
- Factor 2 – Activities (see B,H,I,J,M in Table II);
- Factor 3 –Tourist attraction (see L in Table II);
- Factor 4 – Miscellaneous (see N,A ,K in Table II)

Of these factors, 1 and 2 are the most interesting. The first factor, involving beliefs about museums and community, indicated an emotional attachment to the museum and the community it served. The second factor, which can be grouped as 'activities' offered by the museum, was a practical indication of the beliefs about the use of museums. Grouping these factors allowed us to determine to what extent each belief system linked to the others. An independent t-test was then undertaken to test whether the total for each factor varied in relation to behaviour. For example, the t-test indicated variation between beliefs and the behavior of those who would take a visitor to a local museum and those who would take a visitor to another attraction where $p < 0.05$.

Belief and behaviour analysis

Analysing the results across all three cases, the first three belief factors (grouped as community, activities and tourism) were positively correlated to behaviour preferences for *taking visitors to museums*, *willingness to pay more fees*, *museums more comfortable than libraries*, *museums are as important as community centres*, and *have relevant exhibitions*.

Only those who agreed that *museums are places to debate issues* in factor 2 (activities) said that they *found out about debates on social issues from museums or libraries rather than the media*.

There was a positive correlation between people whose behaviour indicated that they thought museums were places to debate social issues and their belief about the museum's importance in relation to education. Those people who clustered around

factors associated with community and activity also believed that museums should be about ordinary people.

Those who scored high on factor 1 (community) on average would choose to give more funds to a museum over a sporting complex. Interestingly, those associated with factor 3 (tourism) were not linked significantly to a museum or a sporting complex as a site for donating money. Those who indicated a preference for community relevance of exhibitions were more willing to have funds invested in museums than sport complexes.

There are some variations in these results if each case is disaggregated. The belief that museums promoted contact across cultures was relatively weak as part of factor 1 (community) in the Coastal Village compared to the Keeping Place or Heritage Centre. However, the Coastal Village had a higher correlation with people who were *willing to pay more fees* and factor 2 (activities) than the Heritage Centre or the Keeping Place. For the Heritage Centre *willing to pay more fees* correlated strongly with beliefs about *community and social networks* and *pride* respectively. In the Coastal Village *willing to pay more fees* was positively correlated with beliefs about *social network*. In the Keeping Place *willing to pay more fees* correlated more strongly with beliefs about *belonging*.

The graphs for each case indicate that the proportion of people who would be prepared to personally donate funds to a museum over a sporting field is 35.6% at Coastal Village, 38.8% at the Heritage Centre, and 50% at the Keeping Place. However, further factor analysis of scores for factors 1 (community) and factors 2 (activities) reveal that the Heritage Centre generally scores lower than either the Coastal Village or the Keeping Place. This also means that those in the community who see the museum as promoting pride, belonging, creativity and contact between age groups are more willing to pay for the museum than those who see the museum as part of a tourist construct.

The quantitative findings suggest that there is variation between beliefs and behaviour in the three cases. This is starkly revealed in looking at the combination of attributes in factor 1 (community) and comparing these with behaviour. The CVM had a loose understanding of the museum as a place to develop cross-cultural understanding compared to the other two cases. This may be partly explained in the coastal village region which has a more homogenous demographic profile. It may be easier then, to connect relevance of a cultural institution to beliefs and 'community memory' than to a more heterogeneous demographic where shared beliefs are less obvious and 'community memory' is constantly evolving. There was a relatively high correlation between money (donations and willingness to pay) and belief in what museums deliver in terms of creativity, opportunity, reducing barriers in all areas although this was higher for the coastal village and the rural inland area. Conversely, there was a higher correlation between money and beliefs about networks and pride in the Heritage Centre than the Coastal Village Museum or Keeping Place. These findings also suggest that the connection between tourism and the local museums is not highly important to respondents. This is not to deny a tourism role for the local museum, but rather the museum's importance appears to be how local respondents view their local museum within the community first, rather than as a projection to outsiders and attracting visitors.

The significance of this survey across cases, suggests that there is some merit in aggregating belief concepts around emotional community factors and about the services activities and practical outcomes that residents perceive museums offering. In comparing these belief systems with what respondents say they do or would do (particularly in relation to willingness to pay, places of social debate), we can then begin to understand what matters to residents about their museums and the value they place on these institutions.

Conclusion

The findings of this research were separated into an internal view of the organisation (qualitative data gathered through key stakeholders) and an external view of the organisation by those in the community (quantitative survey instrument). A social capital paradigm of bridging and bonding to gauge impact indicated that:

- considerable bonding occurred within all the museums and to some extent with like institutions outside the museum;

- two museums acted as 'clubs' for a closed set of users;

- bridging between museums and the community was variable;

- bridging and bonding was detected more strongly within one museum, which had demonstrable connections with a range of community organisations;

- in some instances, however, the social capital asset may be said to have been hoarded by a few 'founding' individuals with little succession planning.

The community survey focused on beliefs about museums, such as their educational role, life opportunity role, pride and sense of identity. It then juxtaposed these beliefs to behaviour in relation to visitation, willingness to pay fees or donate money, access to information and relative importance to other community organisations, in particular sporting fields and libraries. The results of our cases suggest that there is variation in the social impact of each place:

- The Coastal Village Museum had a clear vision of its purpose. It reached out to a relatively homogenous community, while maintaining the focus on the sustainability of the museum and ensuring its prosperity.

- The Heritage Centre suffered somewhat from mission drift. Its original purpose as a centre for tourism and managing an open air collection, in collaboration with other cultural institutions, was not realised. Instead it created a club atmosphere for a limited range of users.

- The Keeping Place wanted to reach out to the community but its role was compromised by the context within which it operated – that is, was this a museum for indigenous people or a museum that reflected indigenous culture and understanding for a broader constituency? Incipient racism and internal conflict also contributed to its inability to frame its core purpose, to produce the social impact it was seeking.

While this phase of this research suggested that a social capital framework and a methodology that tested it were valuable, it left gaps in the inquiry. Building on social capital frameworks, a broader inquiry using network analysis has recently been used by Roodhouse in investigating networks and connectivity in libraries in an English county (Roodhouse and Johnstone 2006). In Australia, there has been interest in how community cultural organisations can act as strategic partners in community building within regional areas (Dunn 2005). A second phase of the research will use network analysis to further analyse social capital contributions of local museums and assess opportunities for strengthening partnerships.

The idea of a museum as a cultural silo delivering 'good' to a community, has strained the credibility of what local museums can realistically deliver. The social capital that museums deliver may be enhanced by creating bonding and bridging networks among a range of institutions. In the research reported here, we have 'forced' a competitive choice between museums and other institutions such as libraries or sporting facilities.

While this highlights the relative esteem with which museums are viewed, it denies the additional benefits that may accrue from partnerships with cultural and non-cultural institutions. Developing strategic organisational partnerships at local levels, is an area of policy that needs further investigation.

Partnership mapping can test how communities value cultural organisations and identify how organisations are inter-connected. Using network analysis interconnectedness can measure the strength of bonds within the community and identify and measure bridging attributes that mark contributions to increased community diversity. Understanding this dynamic in more depth, may give policy advisers a comprehensive view of the value of cultural institutions, as embedded organisations within their communities. It may then be possible to develop policy initiatives that are less 'adversarial' or competitive in their approach and more strategic in delivering opportunities and benefits to people, in ways that can be easily accessed.

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