

Social Capital, Communities and Recent Rationales for the Performing Arts

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Abstract

Researchers, practitioners and government agencies have begun to look to social capital discourse to provide cogent and adaptable rationales for performing arts organisations. Following initial applications in the community arts, this work is now being undertaken across other public cultural and arts policy fields — including the performing arts — where the provision of cultural infrastructure is traditionally less tied to social service delivery.

Using examples from Griffith University's 'Sustaining Culture' research project, this paper identifies theoretical and methodological issues entailed in these recent developments and considers their significance for social capital discourse as a way to conceptualise relations between performing arts organisations and their publics.

Keywords

Social capital, cultural consumption, governance, value, performing arts

Introduction

Is there a role for performing arts centres (PACs) in sustaining open, tolerant and creative communities? In Australia's major cities, cultural institutions and cultural precincts are centrepieces in urban renewal programs. These projects recognise the importance of culture in creating vibrant public spaces. In Melbourne, the extension of the National Gallery of Victoria to Federation Square has expanded the existing arts precinct across the Yarra. In Brisbane, the popular Southbank precinct combines commercial, residential, cultural and recreational uses. The Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC), the Queensland Museum and Art Gallery and the State Library, all designed by the architect Robin Gibson, are adjacent to the former Expo 88 site. QPAC has recently conducted an architectural review aimed at altering the building design to enhance its public amenity and to engage with the diversity of visitors (locals and tourists) to Southbank. At present, the building's main entrance turns away from the parklands and towards the busy road and bus station. Recent redevelopment has upgraded a pedestrian bridge spanning the road space between QPAC and the other state cultural buildings, creating a visible 'gateway' to the CBD; the bus station has been redesigned to make it safer; and the Victoria Bridge that crosses the Brisbane River to the CBD has been enhanced with new lighting. The proposed redesign will remove barriers to public access to the building, and open it out to the street and the river. Architectural and town planning solutions are the outward signs of QPAC's engagement with its various

communities, and its recognition of the imperative to provide spaces and other resources for civic life.

Despite performing arts centres being key elements of civic revitalisation, little attention has been given to understanding their role. Originally built as iconic bearers of national culture, the PACs are multi-venue spaces that are still often derisively referred to as 'culture bunkers', and dismissed as inflexible and inward (even backward) looking. Public discussion of cultural participation and civic engagement often assumes that the performing arts stand apart, and dissolves into assertions about the competing claims of high and popular culture. 'Community arts' and 'cultural development' have been linked in policy discourse. Their value is articulated in terms of the construction of identities, of attachment to 'place', and to the expression of diversity. By contrast, the performing arts are associated with 'elites'. Yet in recent years there have been many studies of the health benefits of arts participation and the role of the arts in facilitating educational attainment (Keating 2002; Landry et al. 1996; Mills and Brown 2004). Other studies have focused on economic impacts: the flow-on effects of the arts, the sector's size, or its contribution to cultural tourism (Shellard 2004).

Scholars and practitioners in cultural economics and sociology have been keenly aware of the limitations of economic models for determining cultural value. They have acknowledged that the market's inability to fully finance cultural participation and goods is both an inadequate justification for public support and an indication that cultural consumption is governed by distinctive imperatives. This work suggests that economists' model of rational choice does not capture decisions about the consumption of cultural goods. A key point of difference is the way choice is informed (Throsby 2003). Faced with a potential oversupply of 'creative content' that can be accessed from home, what influences the consumer's choice of attendance at the performing arts?

This question has renewed relevance in the twenty-first century: e-culture promises an unlimited supply of 'creative content'; new entertainment technologies have dispersed forms of creativity and produced new (privatised) spaces of cultural participation and consumption; culture and creativity are now widely understood to be central to economic development, to tourism and trade, and to quality of life. These developments have significant implications for the performing arts sector. They bring new imperatives to encourage and sustain excellence in arts practice and innovation in arts management — including building research capacity — and they highlight the need to demonstrate the benefits of investment in cultural infrastructure and to communicate the value of the arts to different publics.

An important contribution to addressing the problem of cultural value is coming from the environment domain, where a sustainability paradigm has been developed and applied with some success. The cultural economist David Throsby (2005) identifies certain parallels

between environmental and cultural forms of sustainability. These include: a duty of care; commitment to equity issues (whether the intergenerational passing on of skills, art forms or heritage items, or intragenerational participation and access issues); and the economic and cultural values of diversity (whether the 'existence value' that comes from knowing that a species, art form or work of art exists, or the possible future economic value of biological or cultural systems). As Throsby argues, there is a ready resource for the development of a cultural sustainability paradigm in the form of the language of natural capital, where investment, depreciation, rates of return, renewable and non-renewable resources all have their cultural equivalents. Cultural capital, for instance, is 'an asset that embodies or gives rise to cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it might possess' (Throsby 2005). Cultural capital can have tangible or intangible forms.

Sustainability has been linked with human capital (Crossman 2000). However, Australian and international inquiries about the role of arts and culture in national and community development have largely been driven by questions about public subsidy and grant support, responding to changing policy environments and governmental imperatives. They have focussed on flagship companies, audience development, community arts and creative workers' patterns of workforce participation (Nugent et al. 1999; Throsby and Hollister 2003; Williams 1995). Performing arts centres are no longer dependent on public subsidy, but are successful commercial enterprises. In a globalising world, creative 'product' crosses national borders and contributes to economic and cultural exchange. The performing arts provide significant revenues from cultural tourism. These matters have been widely canvassed. What is less understood, however, is the performing arts centres' roles and functions in the creative economy and in enhancing quality of life; governments, business and the wider public have still to fully realise the potentials of the arts and culture in building cohesive, tolerant and sustainable communities. Further, despite an emerging rhetoric, there has been little analysis of how community engagement and creative, entrepreneurial activity might flourish together.

'Sustaining Culture: the role of performing arts centres' is a research collaboration between Griffith University researchers, the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and the other members of the OZPAC group of performing arts centres: the Sydney Opera House, the (Victorian) Arts Centre, and the Adelaide Festival Centre. The project team are investigating the ways PACs engage with their diverse communities from four perspectives: performance, participation, partnerships and publicity. To this end the project describes contemporary patterns of participation in the performing arts and investigates possible links to new forms of civic involvement.

In this paper we focus on a particular dimension of this research: the theoretical and empirical work on 'social capital' that is currently being adapted and applied to participation in the arts and culture. 'Social capital' — the resources people derive from their membership of social

networks — can help us understand how PACs form and sustain resilient social networks. Most of the theoretical and empirical work on social capital and the arts appears in the context of the community arts or in relation to social service delivery. In these applications, increases in social capital — measured, for example, by rises in levels of ‘trust’ — have tended to be seen as invariably desirable. Yet if we want to better understand the role played by PACs in the dispersed governance that makes sustainable communities possible, it is important to develop a more subtle and morally ‘neutral’ social capital discourse.

The research project

The research has three main aims: to describe the social and cultural impacts of performing arts centres’ activities, to develop a way of measuring these impacts and to develop a language to communicate the value of those activities to sponsors, government and the wider public. Put another way, we will describe the dimensions and scope of the Centres’ community engagement. Measuring and evaluating social and cultural impacts is a complicated matter, not least because those impacts are often subjective and intangible, and cumulative over time. Provision of cultural infrastructure is currently justified on the grounds that the arts and creative industries contribute to economic development and that cultural participation improves quality of life for individuals and communities. Yet while the shift in business and government to a ‘performance culture’ has given us a language of ‘performance indicators’, these are more easily able to communicate direct quantitative outcomes than to describe the contexts of cultural practices and to measure their wider social impacts. We have therefore isolated four zones of impact to analyse and measure the economic, cultural and social impacts of the activities of performing arts centres on particular communities. These zones are: participation (audiences); performance (artists and companies); partnerships (adjacent cultural, tourism and leisure industries, arts bureaucracies, government); and networks of publicity (both ‘expert’ and public).

The project makes innovative use of focus groups and network analysis. We use focus groups both as research instruments, to provide a source of information about the cultural participation of individuals and groups, and as research sites (Hollander 2004), where we observe whether participation builds various kinds of personal, social and civic capacity. The project incorporates significant elements of network analysis, as it investigates how performing arts centres foster networks of artistic excellence, enhance civic capacity and serve as nodes for political, business and community leaders to meet and network. Network analysis helps us to determine if adjacent and distant relations influence the development of social cohesion and maintain diversity. This methodology also contributes to an account of the ways in which ‘culture’ — practices, organisations, participation — is implicated in governance. These approaches are articulated to enable interrogation of taste and value.

'Sustaining Culture' pursues a number of specific issues and questions relating to each of the four zones of impact and the intersecting and distinct 'communities' brought into being by cultural participation:

Audiences

Audiences and prospective audiences are at the centre of this research. We have used focus groups to investigate cultural consumption (that is, the factors influencing decisions to spend, or not to spend, money and time on cultural goods and services) and cultural participation (that is, the patterns of use and enjoyment of different cultural goods and services). This ethnographic investigation is currently under way; it aims to discover what uses audiences make of cultural participation, what motivates participation and consumption, what individuals value about their experience and how that experience transfers to other spheres of existence.

Pierre Bourdieu's work (1984) has influenced many studies of investment in cultural capital. This work assumes that 'high culture' is the currency with the highest exchange value, buying social mobility. More recently, Richard Peterson (1992) and others have reported a change in patterns of cultural consumption in the United States. They distinguish two kinds of consumer: 'omnivores', who sample a wide range of cultural forms and connect with diverse social and professional networks; and 'univores', whose clearly defined and often singular preferences establish and maintain exclusive social bonds. One of our aims has been to test this framework's usefulness in accounting for impacts of arts participation in the Australian context.

We identify patterns of participation to test if and how participation is linked to individual and group quality of life. Our definition of 'quality of life' includes the capacity to build 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital. In particular, we seek to establish what role performing arts centres are playing and could play in promoting a balance of social cohesiveness and support for diversity. Of course, to some extent the value of arts participation is not dependent on direct impacts: there are undoubtedly groups who never participate, but who nevertheless value the existence of cultural resources. We have therefore attempted to be sensitive to the broadest range of ways arts activities are valued and to register impacts of different intensity. Focus groups are drawn from communities directly connected to performing arts centres and at an increasing distance from them. These groups include: audiences at particular performances; occasional or non-attenders; people who influence participation (e.g. parents, teachers, reviewers); ethnic and cultural groups and members of other 'taste cultures' (e.g. art cinema audiences, participants in cultural festivals).

Preliminary work with focus groups has trialled a structured interaction designed to elicit information about 'use values' and to test Peterson's categories of 'omnivores' and 'univores'. This process has yielded insights into motivations and values. Observation of interactions

within groups has contributed to a framework for analysing how participation is linked to the development and use of bonding and bridging social capital.

Performers, artists and companies (professional and community based)

An objection to studies that seek to establish the economic and social impacts of the arts is that these investigations overlook intrinsic or aesthetic values. Benefits afforded by the arts that are not replicated by other kinds of provision (e.g. of welfare) need to be highlighted. In the case of performing arts centres, it is especially important to differentiate benefits derived from other kinds of arts provision and participation (e.g. community arts programs). This dimension of the research uses interviews with individual performers, artistic directors, key production and technical staff and company administrators to explore how performing arts centres define and promote excellence and support innovation; assist in the development of emerging talent; encourage industry development and educate audiences to appreciate both traditional and experimental forms. Particular attention will be given to relationships with community based organisations (e.g. dance schools, music groups). Selected case studies of initiatives designed to support sustainable creativity and innovation (e.g. residencies, support for developing companies, education programs) are currently being undertaken.

Partnerships (adjacent cultural, tourism and leisure industries, arts bureaucracies, government)

In recent years, state and local governments have established offices of community engagement and cultural and community development. Cultural provision has a pivotal role in regional and community economic development, in urban revitalisation, in the distributed 'governance' which characterises service delivery in the realms of health, education and welfare and in building civic capacity. This dimension of the research uses network analysis to explore the extent of performing arts centres' engagement with adjacent arts institutions, arts, leisure and tourism industries, government agencies and bureaucracies. It involves interviewing political, community and business leaders about their use of performing arts centres as sites for building and maintaining networks of influence. Our aim is to determine whether performing arts centres are significant nodes in various and intersecting networks, and how they can support community capacity building.

Networks of publicity

A major aim of 'Sustaining Culture' is to produce new ways of communicating the value of the performing arts. Our ambition is not only to contribute to the formulation of 'performance indicators' based on evidence of artistic, cultural, social and economic impacts but to stimulate talk about the value of the arts in a variegated public domain. Our contention is that discussion of the value of the arts has the character of an 'inarticulate debate' (Taylor 1991) because various interest groups work with incommensurate conceptions of 'value', particularly in the light of commitments to the 'democratisation' of the arts and the perceived

exhaustion of humanist rationales. We have therefore set out to analyse recent debate and critical reception in the national press and electronic media and in specialist journals. We have also been surveying the growing number of websites where this debate has a forceful presence. This aspect of the research involves a variety of interventions, designed to extend the range of participation in conversation about the arts. These include opportunities for audience interaction with performers, local symposia, panels at cultural festivals and the development of a web based discussion forum.

The project's wide-ranging scope will allow us to measure the 'reach' of PACs' activities beyond the measure of attendance at particular performances and repertoires. Clearly economic factors, demographics and geography impact on the choice to consume culture, but taste communities are shaped and formed by experiences beyond the formal setting of the concert hall or drama theatre. In contemporary culture, the formation of 'identity' has come to be closely linked with consumption of material and cultural goods. Our research promises to interrogate this process of identity formation and its relation to 'community'. To this end, we share Zygmunt Bauman's scepticism about the 'discursive explosion' of the notion of 'identity' and the concomitant appeal to 'community' (Bauman 2001). Bauman claims that " "identity" owes the attention it attracts and the passions it begets to being a *surrogate of community*: of that allegedly "natural home" which is no longer available in the rapidly privatised and individualised, fast globalizing world" (p. 151).

Community founded on identity divides and separates. It also preserves hierarchies and established networks of power. And it denies the complexity of association that shape individual lives. We all belong to dispersed groups. Some of these attachments are temporary; some involve formal membership; others depend on processes of mutual recognition. Bonds may be strong or weak, and some memberships intersect. In the case of dispersed groups and 'particle communities', to use Sam Fleishacker's (1998) term, habits of inclusion are critical to their continued existence. The project's definition of 'zones of impact' and its use of focus groups and network analysis are designed to describe and analyse if and how performing arts centres can promote habits of inclusion and bridging social capital through their community engagement strategies.

Social capital and community engagement

The concept 'social capital' — the resources embodied in membership of social networks — has played a role in recent attempts to understand how arts and cultural organisations help build and maintain resilient and sustainable communities. Researchers, practitioners and government agencies are looking to social capital discourse to provide cogent rationales and reliable indicators for arts organisations. Yet problems of theory and methodology currently limit the concept's utility in the performing arts. The 'Sustaining Culture' project therefore seeks to develop an analysis of social capital's relationship to cultural consumption that is

both adaptable and persuasive. In this part of the paper we identify problems in the theoretical literature, propose alternatives, and cite cases from the project where applying these solutions has produced useful yields in knowledge and practice.

'Social capital' is now widely used in some cultural and arts fields. The British government has a policy unit — Policy Action Team 10 — that was set up to use cultural and arts policies and programs to coordinate the work of different Ministries. The unit's mandate is to alleviate perceived problems of social exclusion in ways that also produced efficiencies in service delivery (Reeves 2002, p. 17). The community arts, with their 'instrumental' rationales and traditional suspicion of intrinsic aesthetic values, have seemed a natural fit for such governmental innovations (cf. Marsh and Reidpath 2005). Influential reports in this field have included those by Deidre Williams (1996) (for the Community Arts Network of South Australia) and Francois Matarasso (1996) (for the Comedia cultural policy research organisation in Britain) (cf. Selwood 2002). Subsequent research has likewise looked to social capital discourse to understand how community arts participation can be a remedy for social exclusion (Mills and Brown 2004). Social capital discourse is now being adapted and applied across other public cultural and arts policy fields — including the performing arts — where the provision of cultural infrastructure is traditionally less tied to social service delivery (Hager and Koczynski 2004).

If much of the theoretical and empirical literature on social capital is concerned with its role in the delivery of welfare and support services, or the social and economic integration of the unemployed or of newly arrived immigrants (Gyarmati and Kyte 2003; Tillie 2003), other researchers are working on more comprehensive accounts of the arts as a kind of low-key way of skilling populations. Before this work can help us account for the role of PACs in governance, however, some outstanding theoretical and empirical problems must be addressed.

First, there is a 'high'/'popular' culture dichotomy in some of the research that makes it difficult to understand PACs as multiple-use public resources. Robert Putnam has correlated rising amounts of television viewing by Americans with reductions in levels of associational activity and declining levels of the proxy 'trust': a situation he famously described as Americans having developed a tendency to 'bowl alone', rather than in teams (2000). Arts participation has subsequently been advocated as a remedy for this faltering civility on the grounds that it is a relatively painless way to lure 'civic "couch potatoes" off their couches'; television viewing, so the argument goes, is 'the only leisure activity where doing more of it is associated with lower social capital' (<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/factoids.htm>). By contrast, the arts are valued on the basis that the:

“creation and presentation of art often inspires a raft of civically valuable dispositions — trust, openness, honesty, cooperativeness, tolerance, and respect. From museums

to open-air amphitheatres to dance studios, arts spaces are, at root, civic spaces. The arts are a superb means of building social capital" (Putnam and Feldstein 2000, p. 1).

The main point about the civic capacity-building role of the arts is an important one, but there are reasons for questioning and qualifying the radically opposed assessments that frame this point, particularly if one is trying to develop a comprehensive account of how performing arts centres engage communities with widely varying tastes. After all, the social nature of television consumption has long been a topic of empirical inquiry in media and communication studies (Brookes 2004). Also, the television industry's eternal search for the next 'water cooler' program — the show with mass appeal — attests to television's potential to cross social and cultural divisions.

A second problem in the research literature is that some advocates of social capital discourse confine their interest in the topic to associational activity, and thus underplay a role for government in engaging communities (cf. Fukuyama 1999; cf. Fukuyama 1995, p. 356). This role was widely acknowledged in the wake of the events of September 2001, since which time Putnam has based his own model for 'civic connectedness' on the 'sense of community "... created in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor through civic involvement, *with the help of government*" [italics added] <<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/putnam.html>>. Research into the nexus of social capital and community engagement — and more specifically, research on PACs' abilities to identify, manage and anticipate the personal, social and civic attributes and capacities of the communities they engage — needs to be able to acknowledge government's 'distanced' role, in which government does not necessarily provide direct funding but instead operates as a broker or facilitator of dispersed governance (cf. Foucault 1988).

A third problem (or set of problems) in social capital research concerns the concept 'trust'. Since the 1990s, the World Bank has helped popularise a definition of social capital as 'the glue that binds' (Bresnayan et al. 2003). This definition looked back to Putnam's (1993) studies of northern Italian civil society, in which he identified positive correlations between levels of social capital — measured by indicators such as objectively determined levels of associational activity and subjective levels of 'trust' — and the economic performances of communities and societies (1993).

Yet as researchers respond to these normative treatments of the 'social capital' concept, and as the concept is applied to new policy fields, social capital discourse is becoming more subtle and adaptable. (Helliwell 2003; Field 2003; Rothstein et al. 2004). Some researchers argue that different forms of trust — such as trust in family, neighbours and government — have different causes and effects, and that the validity of using levels of 'trust' as indicators of social capital depends on acknowledging these differences in one's choice of appropriate

research aims and methodologies (Fattore et al. 2003, p. 168; Rothstein et al. 2004). Putnam has refined his early work to develop a definition of social capital that emphasises its role in social networks: social capital as 'connections among individuals — social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (2000, p. 19; cf. Judge 2003). Other researchers have likewise disaggregated the 'social capital' concept; for them, trust is not an intrinsic quality of social networks, but one of their possible conditions or outcomes. Thus Michael Woolcock (2001) argues that if the best policy yields are to be derived from social capital discourse one must focus on 'what social capital *is* rather than on what it *does*' (2001, p. 3). The Policy Research Initiative (PRI) adopted this principle in a series of seminars it conducted in 2003 with Canadian bureaucrats from the local, provincial and federal levels (PRI 2003). The PRI researchers seek to derive the most policy traction from the concept by differentiating its determinants, components and outcomes (Judge 2003). An ability to make these distinctions is vital for effective and responsive cultural and arts management.

Conscious of the problem of generalising the public goods generated by PACs, the 'Sustaining Culture' researchers are using social network analyses to identify and map these civic resources. This research strategy would not be possible, however, if we could not discriminate between different types of social capital and their outcomes; which is to say, if we held all increases in levels of social capital to be desirable (Levi 1996; Rothstein et al. 2004).

There are two main types of social capital in the theoretical literature: bonding (involving social networks of people with similar attributes) and bridging (derived from social networks that cross demographic categories) (Frank 2003). The PRI researchers add a third type: linking (from social networks that allow members to lever benefits from those with power or authority) (Frank 2003). Our own research has explored how this social capital typology aids understanding of the civic impacts of performing arts centres' activities.

Bridging is obviously the most important kind of social capital for working towards a sustainable community of persons with capacities and tastes for tolerance, the free exchange of ideas, and the kinds of civic relationships that Mark Granovetter (1973) calls 'weak ties' (cf. Frank 2003). Yet critics of performing arts centres sometimes claim that the Centres do not create and sustain such ties; they accuse them of being unable to bridge social groups and of fostering monocultural enclaves that emphasise bonding. In short, the Centres have been seen as elitist and as inimical to the attainment of inclusive civic goals, as distinct from financial or aesthetic ones.

Our research in this area is incomplete, yet it is giving us reasons to qualify such criticisms. QPAC currently conducts focus groups with audiences of particular productions as an

extension of its market research and audience development practices. By connecting into this research we have begun to identify ways in which cultural consumption achieves bridging outcomes. These new knowledge yields are assisting QPAC in developing an audience research program that not only helps it identify, manage and report on what motivates attendance, but helps it identify civic outcomes it can plan to achieve or avoid (and thus improve how it engages with communities).

QPAC uses free pre-show talks to increase audiences' understanding and appreciation of some of its productions. In 2004, one of these productions was Bell Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. Focus groups drawn from the audiences who had attended these talks reported that the talks had made them feel special; because they were getting insights that other people weren't getting, they felt they were part of an exclusive club. This is an example of how the sense of bonding that individuals derive from shared routines, pleasures, knowledges and skills adds value to their audience experience. A sense of bonding can be a powerful inducement to attend. But attendance at the talks also increased audiences' capacity to engage with other audience members who were unknown to them. In this case, bonding acted as a potential 'sweetener' for bridging experiences during and after the performance.

One of our early research outcomes is QPAC's recognition that there are commercial and civic opportunities in applying social capital discourse. QPAC has subsequently developed an 'Admit One' program that sees it provide participants with spaces to meet before and after the performance, as well as employ hosts to facilitate introductions and discreetly supervise group interactions. However, 'Admit One' is not a dating service; it is an opportunity for single people, groups of friends, newcomers to the city, or persons whose partner does not share their cultural tastes, to occupy the Centre's civic spaces and meet others in a safe and tolerant environment.

The audience focus groups themselves fostered bridging social networks through an ostensibly bonding experience. These groups were not only a way to gather data and test propositions; they were a form of best practice community consultation for the sector, and a way for QPAC to build bridging social capital within disparate patron groups (Hollander 2004). In a focus group with audiences of the Queensland Orchestra, for example, we found that it was not uncommon for participants to arrange to attend future performances together. Yet the outcomes from attending this group were not confined to the bonding of persons with similar attributes. One woman of Finnish background, who had previously only attended QPAC with friends from Brisbane's Finnish community for Sibelius concerts, was invited by strangers from other cultural backgrounds to attend other kinds of performances with them. Thus, while we can say that bridging is indeed the most important form of social capital for

building sustainable and tolerant communities, it also appears that under the right circumstances bonding has a tactical role to play in achieving those outcomes.

Conclusion

Performing arts centres exemplify the tensions and opportunities entailed in government/community relationships. They deliver the public benefit of social cohesion while also being instrumental in the kinds of capacity-building that are vital for forms of civic engagement that sustain the values of tolerance and diversity. With suitable adaptations that address problems in some of the social capital research — problems like normative assumptions about the nature of ‘social capital’ and the desirability of its outcomes — the concept can be a useful tool for understanding how the Centres help to constitute publics that are not simply bound together by sameness, but by the things they do together as joint occupants of the civic spaces cities can provide (cf. Bauman 2001).

To date, almost all inquiries and studies into the performing arts have been focused on performing arts companies (Nugent et al. 1999) or on community arts projects and programs (Williams 1995; Matarasso 1996); the literature on performing arts centres is thin. This situation gives a sense of urgency to research into the Centres’ role in governance. The current ‘performance culture’ of the arts sector has seen the fortunes of economic or financial rationales rise, yet recent developments in economics — notably the ‘sustainability’ paradigm identified with the work of cultural economists like Throsby (2005) — acknowledge the continuing relevance of other systems of measurement and value. After all, the Centres have a mixed role: they act as producers and as venues for art practice; they have mandates to nurture arts industries and cultural identities alike; and they must make profits while complying with the principle of ensuring access (QPAC Annual Report 2003–2004, p. 1; QPAC Strategic Plan 2004–2008). This hybridity means that one cannot simply equate performing arts centres with ‘high’ art, their audiences with ‘univores’, or their outcomes with the reinforcement of a rigid hierarchy of cultural tastes (cf. Bourdieu 1984). The Centres’ hybrid nature also means that they are used to balancing competing responsibilities and imperatives. Their motivations and opportunities to develop new ways of measuring and communicating their public benefits are likewise mixed. This is the context into which ‘sustainability’ and ‘social capital’ are emerging in performing arts centres.

As concrete expressions of civic pride and prestige, performing arts centres have all the advantages and disadvantages of their physical locations: they must manage the historical legacy of being housed in large, prominent and deliberately imposing buildings, often with heritage values that must be maintained. In order to remain relevant and competitive in an expanding leisure market, and to manage their varied role, the Centres devote considerable resources to engaging communities by ‘breaking out of the box’. Methods include: redesigning their buildings (QPAC has recently conducted an architectural review as part of

its current masterplan); adopting marketing and programming strategies to attract new audiences (including youth, single people and parents with young children); forging supportive commercial and other relationships with performing arts companies (such as company-in-residence programs) or with other Centres (like the OZPAC group of Centres that unites QPAC, the Sydney Opera House, the Arts Centre in Melbourne, and the Adelaide Festival Centre); and expanding their research programs beyond the market-driven imperatives of audience development (the Griffith/OZPAC research partnership being a case in point).

Performing arts centres are re-imagining and redesigning themselves as multiple-use civic resources. In this paper we have noted cases in which QPAC has used social capital discourse to identify and coordinate the measures it uses to achieve its goals: the 'Admit One' program, audience focus groups, or free pre-show talks. The bonding and bridging typology enables QPAC to strike appropriate balances that maximise its capacity to engage communities; it enhances QPAC's ability to manage factors that may produce easy familiarity and comfort for some, or which inhibit or repel others. As performing arts centres redesign their buildings and practices to encourage bridging across audience groups, improve their public amenities, and add value to patron visits, their civic significance increasingly relies on their skills in managing different forms of social capital, as well as on their ability to use the 'sustainability' concept to manage varied and often competing values.

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