

Cultural Value

'Producing Historical Abergavenny: The Cultural Value and role of Social Media in promoting Historical Awareness in one Town'
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Executive Summary

This proposed Cultural Value case study was intended to understand the character of cultural value generated through new media, digital access and co-production within the Facebook site, Forgotten Abergavenny; a community site which serves the town of Abergavenny Monmouthshire. In conjunction with three community partner organizations, it sought to assess and theorise the value, effect and cultural contribution generated by the site as well as the implications and lessons drawn from the working on one successful Facebook site for our partners. We worked with providers of traditional cultural provision (the museum, the library, the local newspaper) to understand how the results of the investigation of social media can help them to engage with social media.

The project sort to understand the personal experience and value attached to the use of the Facebook page ‘Forgotten Abergavenny; to assist in the development of a research methodology appropriate to investigating the experiences and cultural value attached to the interaction of community members with online media; to understand the experiences and value they attach to co-production; to assess these aspects of social media across divides of age and geography and to share these results with our local partners in a manner which informs their future practice.

Researchers and Project Partners

David Studdert. Ian Hargeaves. Heather Strange. Sassy Hicks. Abergavenny Chronicle. Abergavenny Council library. Abergavenny Museum.

Key words

Online, micro-sociality, facebook, value, community, local history,

General background regarding Facebook

In deploying Facebook as a tool for community history and memory, we must note current data on Facebook accessibility and usage, along with the global debate which continues to unfold around Facebook’s stated moral, cultural and civic intentions and the extent to which these sit in tension with the demands of its advertising-based business model, especially since the stock market flotation of the company in 2012.

The wider debate about Facebook has focused upon a range of critical points: the extent to which the company’s business model relies upon selling to advertisers access to FB users; the record of the company in paying local taxes; and concerns about data privacy arising from quite frequent changes in FB’s terms and conditions; the design and transparency of its data mining algorithms and most recently from its alleged implication in issues of cyber espionage following the leaks initiated by Edward Snowden.

Julian Assange, the exiled founder of Wikileaks, has likened Facebook to the East Germany security police. Other critics and analysts have suggested that Facebook’s social mission may be in conflict with its corporate goals and there have been frequent warnings about the social risks to individuals of exposing potentially embarrassing personal material on Facebook.

Much of this debate is polarised and mutually exclusive. Facebook supporters see it in progressivist terms as an untrammelled good, linking people who modern life separates, while demonstrably enhancing personal freedom and choice; its opponents view it as destructive of civil habits, offering only the illusion of social intimacy while inculcating mass surveillance and intrusion by state and corporate entities.

Normative, monolithic, one stranded explanations, characterise both sides of the debate. Yet the sheer scope of Facebook invites us to conduct research in a way that is not overwhelmed by such modes of explanation. The sheer plurality of Facebook users, the vast number of viewpoints expressed, coupled with the engagement figures, places these normative, structured lines of argument in a different context. Whatever the business model and legal framework applied by its owners, Facebook is seen by many users as a relatively straightforward and welcome means to more active social engagement. Sociality is everywhere on Facebook, in the chats, in the sharing, in the way business ads desperately imitate it as a means for attracting customers. Facebook is both a business and a social entity, conjointly. Indeed, much of what is immediately apparent to users - the ads and the presentation for instance - reflects an attempt by the business to keep up with the voluntary practices of a social entity. Facebook is shot through with paradoxes of this sort.

This investigation seeks to pose its questions in a way that is recognisable to the people living in or interested in one small Welsh town. How do sites operate? What do they tell us about how people create their own version of Facebook? How do we begin to address value, the value of this activity? Couching analysis in implicit moral terms of the sort underlying both sides of the essentially political ‘debate’ around Facebook, might appear in this context to miss the point. This investigation then employs a micro-social analysis, an analysis that stresses inter-linkage and plurality and which begins with

micro-social actions on one Facebook community page. A community page like thousands of others all over the world, one rather trivial in scale to the context of a global business model, while of course, taking its place within Facebook's technological and business shell. Here, in Abergavenny, Facebook presents itself as a community site for that elusive animal, the online community. This project then is more than simply a description of one site, simultaneously it is both an investigation of these people and that community, and of the value they bring to each other.

Wales

Facebook has been resiliently popular in Wales, and perhaps more so as connectivity has improved and the cost of particular devices, such as tablets, has fallen. It also important to note that Wales, an area of the United Kingdom historically badly served by mass media such as daily newspapers, is comparatively well served by Facebook, which can be experienced via broadband/wi-fi or via mobile telecommunications channels. Although Wales continues to lag the UK generally in terms of access to the fastest broadband services (The most recent Ofcom data shows that 71% of Welsh adults had a fixed or mobile broadband connection; 6% below the UK as a whole), Ofcom data also suggests that eight out of ten Welsh households now have internet access and that ownership of tablets doubled between 2012/13 and 2013/14. Facebook's UK audience in recent years has been tracking at around 26 million, which is more than double the use of BBC News online. Measures of Facebook usage, although past their peak rate of growth, suggest that with regard to this particular media habit, people in Wales are as active as the UK population generally.

Brief History of this particular site: Forgotten Abergavenny

Created as part of the 'Performing Abergavenny' project run by Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences, the 'Forgotten Abergavenny' Facebook pages have become a community resource for the people of the town and for those connected to Abergavenny worldwide. The decision to create a Facebook page to build cohesive engagement through promoted the town's common history was intentional. Indeed, this was the specific aim of the entire Performing Abergavenny project; a project tasked with using Humanities and Arts methods to 'build bridges across barriers of geography, class, and history', exploring how community cohesion could be increased through performance, locality and heritage. The project thus initiated the Facebook site Forgotten Abergavenny, as part of a number of performance based projects carried out in its yearlong project. History was one of those topics and projects were planned around various themes. Following a series of sparsely attended public meetings, the decision was made to abandon the previously agreed plan which involved small groups acting together to document various aspects of popular town memory, and to rather channel it all onto a Facebook site. The site was inaugurated in September 2103. Currently the population of the Abergavenny town stands at 14,300 and as of the end of July 2014, Forgotten Abergavenny is followed by 3,010 friends – or approximately one quarter of the town.

Advantages of Facebook as a Social Media Platform

Facebook currently has 1.3 billion monthly users worldwide, with 11,000 users within five miles of Abergavenny. Facebook is a solid and well used social media platform that the majority of people can understand and find in search engines. Furthermore this can be achieved without the user even possessing their own account.

The widespread use Facebook by all ages, the fact that it is free to establish as well as its social acceptability and its ease for sharing and social interaction make Facebook ideal for community based pages and for projects aimed at enhancing communal cohesion.

By using 'call to action' messages encouraging followers to share posts and to 'Like' posts, Forgotten Abergavenny grew, organically and communally, without paid advertising or any aspect of the narrow company business model. Sharing of posts is a good indicator of this interest. Facebook insights show that between September 2013 and June 2014, post shares varied between 5 and 330. The more popular topics for increasing shares included a music video made about Abergavenny, old school photographs and historic pictures of local buildings.

Facebook also provides for inter-linking through other social media channels such as a blog and Twitter. Through the volunteer moderator's active use of this facility, the site maximised the Forgotten Abergavenny message with different audiences. Adopting a multi-channel marketing strategy would become a strong contributing factor to the success of this project, allowing Forgotten Abergavenny to have a huge impact in a short space of time.

In contrast, the development time and cost required to create a new website would have certainly been detrimental to achieving project outcomes within the timeframe of the Performing Abergavenny project, while, more crucially, growing an audience would have taken at least double the time achieved by using Facebook with its existing, readymade audience. Given it was a local site, where many local people already used Facebook, the capacity of Facebook to provide a centre for existing communal linkages proved a significant advantage.

Facebook also facilitates the easy upload of other forms of digital content, including digital storytelling, You Tube videos, website links, interviews with followers, event schedules and blog posts. It allows anyone to download the photos and information packs associated with Performing Abergavenny with just one click.

Equally crucial, was the decision to create a joint online and off-line campaign to alert people as to its presence. Over the first three months of its existence, Forgotten Abergavenny used a combination of off-line and on-line modes to publicise its presence to the town. The site ran tables in the popular local market where people were encouraged to bring old photos to be scanned and subsequently uploaded, something particularly helpful in reaching an older demographic; they used their contacts with local papers and groups to publicise the page and they attended long standing local volunteer groups such as the civic society and the rugby club, publicising the site and requesting photographs and content. It is clear from comparison with our partner websites who did not pursue a specific off-line campaign, how necessary this is for the site to attract interest and participants.

Usage

As of August 2014 the Forgotten Abergavenny site had:

- 3021 'Likes' and an average of 3,100 views per post.
- Was viewed in 49 countries, 79 cities and in 27 languages.
- Between September 2013 when it was inaugurated and June 2014, it has been viewed 300,000 times and it averages 7,500 views per week.
- Each post has drawn an average of eighteen comments per post and again on average, it has 1,200 active viewers per week.
- Originating from the site but measured across all platforms for inter-linked social media, it has achieved a combined total of 400,000+ views across all Forgotten Abergavenny channels: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, You Tube and Blogger.
- Its highest viewed post accumulated 16,350 views and across all pages on all media it has an average of 7,500 views;
- 59% of its followers are women and 41% men. Its highest user group are women aged 25-34 who constitute 15% of users. Its lowest user group are men aged 65 plus who constitute 2% of users.
- It accumulates on the average, 25 new 'Likes' a week.

One of the key elements which will be discussed in more detail further on in this summary is that all its followers have been gained organically, that is, not through paid advertising. In regard to day practice it is overwhelmingly a co-operative and user driven site; as we shall see this is a vital aspect in the building of a true communal web site.

Comparison with Partner Facebook pages

Abergavenny Library Facebook

Launched in July 2011, the Facebook account of Abergavenny Library is generally used as a community platform to promote library activities and other events and services provided by external organisations throughout the town. It has 86 'Likes' with the majority of followers being women at 62% of all total 'Likes'. Primarily, it acts as a digital 'noticeboard' with a variety of posts that cover topics both directly and indirectly related to the town alongside library news. There are a high number of 'shared' posts from other sources as opposed to actual created content from the library itself.

Most Facebook posts gain an average of 20 views but a recent post promoting 'Minecraft' sessions for young people gained over 100 views. Visitors come from seven countries and thirty-three cities with five languages spoken. The library's shows a much stronger presence on Twitter, more followers, higher number of posts and more 'Likes' than on the organisation's Facebook site.

Abergavenny Museum

Created in March 2011, the Abergavenny Museum Facebook pages have 135 'Likes'. There are a proportionally high number of female followers who compromise 67% of all visitors. Women aged 35 – 44 make up the largest viewing group with 27% of all views

attributed to this demographic and they also make up a massive 71% of all engaged users, i.e. most comments and sharing of posts. The lowest visitor numbers are males aged 13 – 17 with zero views. The average viewing figures per post are around 35 views with higher views focused on posts containing information about local upcoming events such as talks by William Gibb about a local Priory hitting the 350+ mark.

Abergavenny Chronicle

The Chronicle volunteered to be a partner in this project and submitted a letter of support in the original project application. However it was ‘discovered’ some months later by the editor, Liz Davis, that the Facebook account of The Abergavenny Chronicle was created ten years ago in 2004. There are difficulties establishing password and log-in details. It was set up as a ‘personal’ account, so no analytics and insights are available to help properly scrutinise its effectiveness. This Facebook currently has 1,500 friends and posts are created on an ad hoc basis by only one member of staff.

Analysis of the comparative style of postings across all four Facebook pages.

These statistics allow us to gauge accurately the statistical success of the Forgotten Abergavenny Facebook site. All these partner sites had been established longer than Forgotten Abergavenny, yet the new site has made a much greater impact. The museum has had 135 ‘Likes’ in three years! Forgotten Abergavenny has had over 3000 ‘Likes’ in less than twelve months. All the metrics show the impact made by Forgotten Abergavenny. An ethnographic examination of the style of posts accruing on the Forgotten Abergavenny site reveal other differences between this site and the sites of our three partners.

In particular, what is immediately striking is the difference in style and content of post between Forgotten Abergavenny and those of our partners.

General comments on the type of posts

Facebook is very image dependent and posts with images attached, gain the highest views. There is a surprising lack of historical photos of post-1945 Abergavenny on the museum site and this correlates with a general feeling in the town that the museum caters only for tourists and is of little relevance to the local community.

This feeling is unfortunate; furthermore in a period of austerity it is unsustainable. In the current economic climate, all funding is potentially under scrutiny and this applies particularly to areas such as libraries and museums. It was made clear to us in our initial interview with the current head of the local museum that they fully understand this, but were at a loss to know what to do, given their lack of financial capacity. The museum, while resource rich in local history, appears to still conceive of this resource in pre-online terms; terms which stressed displays within the museum and traditional modes of curating exhibitions and material. Furthermore the emphasis within these exhibitions remains within the legacy of a traditional mode of history, stressing big events and grand visions of history; one, in which to be frank, the life of the town and the particular members of the town, play a minor role.

In contrast, Forgotten Abergavenny stresses the oral and folk history of the town; the particular communal world in common: a history which involves and evokes memories.

Rather than pursue a ‘top down’ directed, official history, it determinedly sought out contributions from the local population of Abergavenny themselves, allowing these contributions to independently shape the page’s trajectory.

A simple analysis of the site will illustrate this clearly. Postings on the Forgotten Abergavenny site show an overwhelming predominance of 20th century activities particularly strong over the post war period from 1945. It is local history and the comment facility available on Facebook, shows it is also an oral history.

Over the twelve months of the site’s existence the bulk of the posted photos centre around the town itself: its old buildings, its popular locations, its streets, its activities such as rugby, boxing, football as well as people simply doing things: having picnics, street parties, fishing, all at various town locations like the cattle market, the castle and the swimming pool. This is working class history, popular history, often submitted from individuals who might be classified as belonging to groups termed as ‘hard to reach’. We will examine the motivation for this involvement in due course, what is important here is simply the participation. To couch it in slightly over-blown terms, it is a history for people that History ignores.

Of course this focus stemmed in large part from the focus of the AHRC Performing Abergavenny project which established the web site. However, the success of this project does show a strong desire for local people to examine and understand their own environs and their part and place in it. The site both linked into an existing communal sense of belonging and ownership and served to enhance and materialise that communal being-ness in the site itself. As such, it took its material place among the various, already materialised and existing town entities of communal being-ness: the council, the rugby club, the local history society, other communal and volunteer groups.

Social aspects of the site.

Forgotten Abergavenny has also integrated itself firmly into the community.

- There are 15 local community groups actively engaged and submitting content
- Schoolchildren from five local schools using Forgotten Abergavenny as part of their curriculum
- 18 local businesses use Forgotten Abergavenny content to strengthen their organisation
- ‘Hard to reach’ groups of people have participated via the site, in all events and activities, thus strengthening fractured community bonds-particularly relations between old and young
- Partnership working with approximately 25 Abergavenny based businesses and media sources

Of course, given that Facebook mirrors the shape of the town, so our investigation of the Forgotten Abergavenny site, revealed how the online world itself impacts upon social boundaries such of class. The type of the posts already illustrated, describe that clearly. Additionally there are more subtle signs of how class works in British market towns like Abergavenny. Several respondents expressed their long standing love and interest in

history generally and particularly local history. In the past however, their independent attempts to join the long standing, local history society had been rebuffed. In the words of one woman, they didn't seem interested in getting new members. This was the reason for her expressed delight when she located the Forgotten Abergavenny site.

To this extent then, the site, by its presence and through the micro-sociality it generates, is creative of links and communal being-ness, which simultaneously, illustrate, and by-pass, long standing social barriers.

It suggests that the failure of voluntary face-to-face organisations to engage certain so called 'hard to reach' groups is at least partially attributable, to issues surrounding the form of inter-action and the engrained social conventions in which the activities being offered are encased. A Facebook site from this perspective allows sociality to be much less mediated by the reality of existing social barriers. It feeds upon a more communal view of the town as more democratic, more inclusive and more personal. It offers in short, a communal sense of being-ness achievable through Facebook.

Not only therefore, is this a version of history for those excluded from thinking historically together about their own town, it is also an inter-active history; some posts have had over fifty comments and these comments often stress ties of location and commonality. Here for instance are some of the 38 comments recently posted in response to a picture of the old town cinema, (I have excluded the names of the people posting though they posted under their own names. I have left the spelling mistakes in):

Saturday afternoon ,

Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers, Lone Ranger, stamping feet, orange ice lolly and running home around Seven Corners to my Gran's house

I would visit the col every Saturday night 1940 to 1955 it was 9 pence in the front six rows 1/9 pence to the back upstairs was 2/6 pence the young ladies would come around with ice cream pop choc s popcorn and drinks if you were up stairs it was where you took your girl freind (no hanky panky) there was a queue outside 6/30 for 7/0 great memories

Went there so many times but still remember the star wars double bills and my parents taking me and my two brothers to see the 'black hole'.. frightened the daylight out of us .gaha

Like david wiliams , who i believe is ex somerset arms pub back in late 50s 60s. Sixpence on a saturday morning for hop along cassidy? Then later in life snogging!! In the back row. Who said modern romance was dead. Sugar

What about the Pavilion Cinema before it became a bingo hall?

I'm sure Flight of the Navigator was the last film that was shown.

Used to go there as a kid on a Saturday morning in the '50's / '60's and stamp our feet on the floor when the "baddies" were being chased!!!! Cowboys and Batman films I think!!

I got banned for life for letting a stink bomb off the last week it was open. I was called in all seriousness ' a little sabateur' and a 'terrorist' . Seemed a bit harsh.

I always preferred the Col. Great on a Saturday afternoon, all the kids would boo and stamp their feet for the baddies and shout for the white good guys. In the evening we always went into the cheap seats or the bug run as it was called. At the end of the film we always ran our before God Save The Queen (we were very young to those of you now tut tutting)) All the adults would be standing to attention and making comments as we made our escape. I remember Mrs Pilbeam working there for years.

Worked there in 1963-65 as a projectionist and also at The Pavilion. The Manager was Mr. Richards (Ted) the Chief Projectionist was Jim Lewis also Mike Webb and his brother Bryan were operators there. I eventually went onto work for Odeon Cinemas retiring in 2011. Strange now when I visit the town and sit in Wetherspoons roughly where the projection was.

Here two things are important to stress: the style of post and following from that, the style of comment. Both are vastly different from the sort of history still predominate in local museums. The conversations are personal in colloquial language stressing personal participation and ownership of the events being described. In this regard it is clear from the interviews, that the commonality of the people who were interviewed draws upon a pre-existing well of communal feeling and an understanding of what the comments 'meant'.

This particular thread located around the 'Col' reveals clearly how the social feeling of the page is created through ongoing actions, principally speech, of micro-sociality. The posted picture evokes comments which represent the memories of family, friends, rituals of childhood and cultural practice; certain people are named and located in time and space. The comments establish linkages across generations and between decades; the interweaving of comments up and down the page, establish a social meaning held in common; or rather it shapes and construction another element from the existing cupboard of town social meaning.

The page itself has the wide cross section of ages represented in these comments. People are recalling various decades: the eighties, the fifties and forties, someone else not included recalls seeing 'A Hard Day's Night', the Beatles film there. Others saw Star Wars and Flight of the Navigator.

The forum this site provides for all ages to inter-act is increasingly rare in this individualised and demarcated society. Indeed one of the characteristics of Forgotten Abergavenny illustrated in these comments is precisely the manner in which all age groups appear equally fascinated by their own history and the social process which allows these groups to appear in public side by side. The presence of one memory allows others to reconstruct a longer broader version of their own communal history.

Being-ness and identity

For the older viewers among those interviewed, the site brought back personal connections and personal narratives. The importance of this for older people cannot be underestimated.

F1 is eighty-four. He lives alone in a rural/farming village about thirty minutes' drive from Abergavenny. His son from “London, a degreed bloke”, got him onto the computer; describing how he found Forgotten Abergavenny he recalls

“I used to click on it and it just come up um the- the- and then I got friends or- y'know there's a lot of friends on there was a lot of people I know you see and- and of course um I- I my granddaughter is- is on there grandson does it”

F1 knows a lot of people in many of the photos and a lot of the trucks and railways and buildings. He recounted all these instances in the course of the interview; he points out specific people he recognises. After the interview he continued to chat a little – returned to talking about Facebook and said specifically that “it takes away the loneliness” and that “he can go days without talking to anyone”. He also comments regularly, indeed he posted on the thread concerning the cinema quoted earlier. F1 kept a diary of his visits to the site and in a week he visited the site 35 times. Clearly for him the site serves multiple purposes: it allow him to re-connect with the past and his own part in it; it combats loneliness for him especially since his wife died and it has served to awaken in interest in other possibilities stemming from the wider internet. This was a sentiment widely shared among the older users of the site. The micro-sociality F1 has established with the site and with the other people on the Forgotten Abergavenny page, allowed F1 (and everybody else simultaneously) to see his communal being-ness confirmed, nurtured and held in public, in common; and to see himself more clearly as a person to himself.

And this communal being-ness which is for F1 both social and personal, is composed from the three fold combination of, firstly, the presences in old photos: men, buildings trucks that he personally recognises; the memories arising from viewing other posts and finally, by his ongoing comments on the page in the contemporary world. All of which happens in his 2014, present day actions, of micro-sociality.

For **'younger people'** being-ness and identity was of a more complicated, and generally nuanced variety. Characteristically interviews revolved around the rich stories and the connections it allowed them to forge anew with older members of their family.

For P1 and P2, two sisters who had lived previously in the town and left during their teens, their return to the town had been rather a mixed experience. Many of the areas they had played in as children had disappeared or were radically different. The community had moved on and bore little resemblance to the one they'd known, at least overtly. Friends had changed or lapsed. Moreover, as they record in the interviews their mother had little interest in telling them about the town because she could not contain her anger about changes in the town'. It upset her. For P1 and P2 their immersion in the site began when P2 posted some postcards, this served as a spring board for her sister to re-join Facebook and to post and comment on the Forgotten Abergavenny site. In turn, as reported, the photos from the site has re-awakened her mother's interest and

allowed the two young women to develop new links their Nan and with other members of the extended family who have also posted. As P2 recorded in her interview:

Q -Some of your photos have had quite a lot of comments from people have you read them?

B -

Yeah yeah I've been a right geek with those (laughs) it is nice cause like, like I've enjoyed it because when I first you know found the postcards like I was really fascinated by it but it was very much like you know, I could go and home and share it with like you know, a couple of mates but- but that's really where it stops and like and you know, you want to share like that part of your history with people I think and you want people to be excited about it and- and- and the fact that they've gone on there and people have been excited has been really validated it's been like yeah you know, that's- that's not just like interesting to me, other people share that interest I think if you didn't have that Facebook group then that wouldn't have happened you wouldn't have really had you know, the-

A - It's pride as well like pride knowing that you your family have contributed to that kind of element of it.

All of which, as the women record, has widened their social world; not necessarily through leaving the town and travelling, but rather through expanding their awareness, of their own history; which in turn has allowed them to enhance their connection to their immediate environment.

P3 is another example of this. She is a young woman in her twenties Having lived in Abergavenny most of her life and having no desire to leave, her fascination for vintage clothing led her first to the site and then to a greater appreciation for the history of the town.

"I love vintage I love anything old that's why I really like the Forgotten Abergavenny with all the older pictures. it's nice being able to see the town what it used to be in its glory 'cause not many people walk around and look up 'cause y'know everyone just walks and sees the shops down here and no-one looks up and see like what the architecture is what it used to be how everything used to look and it's a shame to be honest but that's what most people are like really but yeah it's nice seeing what the original shop faces used to be like before it all turned like this really very commercialised and you see every s- every shop like this you've seen a hundred of them in every other city and town so yeah it's nice seeing more of the- the way it used to be"

Once again this interaction with the site was initiated by friends who sent P3 links and introduced her to the page. This relates to the point concerning the need for community groups to grow organically, something which Facebook makes possible.

This reliance on word of mouth while it is a risky situation from the perspective of any calculation regarding the site's future success, does mean however that interest in the site is capable of being sustained by enthusiasm and a genuine engagement; of a sort not necessary available to sites dependent upon advertising.

This self-growth aspect is further illustrated by another example, based this time on anecdotal evidence which credits the site with helping four people discover family and friends in cases where connection has lapsed, sometimes for decades.

So how can we as social scientists conceptualise this relationship? One way is through the work of Arendt and subsequent developments trialled by Walkerdine and Studdert during both the Performing Abergavenny AHRC project and the previous AHRC project: community as micro-sociality and the new Localism agenda.

In that project we examined the formation of communal identity through Arendt's notion of action, the space of appearance and the web of relationships. We argued that communal being-ness was sustained by the construction of being-ness which is both personal and communal; that this being-ness as a member of the Abergavenny town community was sustained by regular, routine micro-social interactions within particular spaces of appearances. This created/reinforced being-ness falls back into a collective web of relations which includes objects, subjectivity, history, material relations and practise generating further inter-actions, in turn sustaining of ongoing communal and personal being-ness.

Thus the web of relations (Studdert 2006) for Abergavenny itself, includes all the elements within the Abergavenny community and these elements and the being-ness they responsible for, are partially accessible through the photos displayed on this website.

The open nature of this web site where anyone can post or comment allows equal access to the history they all share. It is a site for the creation of communal identity through the discovery of being-in-common. It locates and positions people by the action of posting and speech as equal members within the communal being-ness of Abergavenny. In doing so, of course, it strengthens communal being-ness and locates the community itself as an outcome of a shared history and materiality.

So from the perspective of the users, the open nature of the Forgotten Abergavenny site and the online engagement with it is an action of co-operative sociality. Through the micro-sociality of comments and posting people align themselves with the town and with their own being-ness in the town history; a being-ness which is both theirs and the towns. They re-assert their own identity to themselves in common with the town, because the town itself is what sustains and validates this being-ness to them.

Thinking this way moves us far past simple pejorative labels like 'nostalgic. Primarily because this is an ongoing, always contemporaneous moment in which communal identity is being created and re-created.

In this regard then the computer mediated space is no different from the multiple space of appearance existing and taking place in the 'real' world every day. Indeed as the interviews make clear the two spaces are in fact not divided at all. Thus the distinction many draw between the on-line and off-line space, is clearly absent for most of those we interviewed.

Thus, the presence of these landmarks provides a sense of communal feeling and unity among the people who view the site. The comments point to this, with people of all ages

describing places they remember, or links, through their families and friends, with the picture being posted.

From the perspective of the museum it is clear that they need to access this strand and desire for oral and local history; they need to speak for it as part of a plurality of views the town has about itself; ultimately they need to utilise it for their own survival. The days when local museums simply were content to mimic the high history of Grand National institutions, belongs to an age when funding was much more available. In the current climate, a local museum is not sustainable simply as an outlet for tourism. Using online facilities such as Facebook can engage those otherwise alienated by history and engrained class perspectives thereby finding an active role for the museum in the community.

Nor is the value of this confined simply to informal and personal investigation. As the history teacher at the local comprehensive stated in one of our interviews;

"Yeah I think history's important and local history being a part of that in terms ofwe talk about setting context for people and really to be aware of who you are and the- the place that you live you have to have a knowledge of what that place is, where it's come from and yeah I think that rooting is important it's an important part of my work with school children is to let them know about Abergavenny and the place that they live and why that it is the way that it is, we talk about the industrial revolution we'll talk about sort of transport in Abergavenny so the canal, the train station um the toll houses and- and make those links cause yeah otherwise it's just something that I've mentioned whereas if they can picture it it's more personal."

And further she explains, how she brought in various photos from the web site and a student said *"Oh I've seen this it's on that Facebook page' so yeah they're linking it in"*.

It is these sorts of situations where the students can relate issues to do with industrialisation for instance, to their immediate environment and ground the history in their sense of being-ness in the town now. Given that the comprehensive has "a mixture of different types of students with different abilities and interests", the commonality induced by this sharing of images and text relating to their common world, 'their world in common', is one way of creating interest and crossing barriers of class and ability

All of which illustrates how unwise it is to make sweeping statements about Facebook and the consequences of prolonged use (Terkel S, 2011). Historically these sorts of dire predictions about the effects of new technology have a long and unfulfilled place in social science history. Often these sorts of fears emerge from a partial and technological reductionist view which removes the particular technology from its social context. The benefit of the micro-social approach followed here is that it specifically locates everything in an inter-relational perspective in which no single element occupies a privileged position. In the case of Facebook this allows to see how participants utilise the technology to locate and understand themselves within a social context. Facebook is the tool, not the determining element, and as this project indicates and as one of the interviewers noted, Facebook has simply replaced the over-the-fence chat.

Of course our interviewees are not all Forgotten Abergavenny users. Many use the site in quite a passive manner, commonly termed 'grazing'; for instance the post from which

comments were extracted earlier, was viewed 4,200 times and accrued 152 ‘Likes’ with thirty-five comments. Yet there is clear evidence within the interviews of widespread sharing and social behaviour surrounding the site. Many interviews describe the process of finding the site as one where it was pointed out to them by friends or family, and this is common for all ages.

Something, which of course supports the notion that Facebook, at least in this communal context, is inherently a social action, whatever its business model, its superficial difference from previous media or the technological innovation in which it is contained

Ontological Security

Earlier we discussed the notion of micro-sociality and the construction of identity through the joint communal preservation of perspectives (Arendt H 1958) as well as the manner in which these identities are held in common communally. Ontological security is thus created and sustained through the inter-action of particular action which creates identity and the web of relations which contains meaning in all its forms. From this perspective one of the findings that emerged from the interviews was the role the site played in sustaining ontological security.

This was starkly illustrated in the interviews given by people who viewed the site from overseas.

"Wow. And do you show your husband Facebook page and the photos?"

Uh I don't really- he's not really much that into Facebook he's not really into that but I did show him a lot of stuff when I first came back of just you know, where I had been and all that stuff but, they're not so much into it I don't think they can really relate to it the way I can so I don't think they really get it they just look at the pictures and they're like 'Oh alright whatever'

Yeah. So it's a very personal thing?

Yeah I think so.

Relating back.

Mhmm I think so."

This statement that it is a personal thing, goes to the heart of the point I wish to make here. For those who were raised in the town of Abergavenny and now dispersed around the globe, there are, if not gaps in their memory, aspects of their memory and through that their identity, not validated in T3's case by her family, or indeed by her surroundings. T3 makes the point that her family are not interested particularly. For her however the reconstruction of these places in her memory, the re-validation of this moment in her life, is clearly an important issue. Several times in the interview she stresses how busy her life is, running her business in California, yet she finds time to connect through the site with people she hasn't seen for literally decades. Why is that? What is her motivation?

Standard accounts about the loss of self and dislocation stress the impact of globalisation (Vogler C 2000) and couch their investigation in relation to trauma and profound cases

of dispersion. I want to suggest something more minor, more low key, yet none the less crucial to people like T3 who have voluntarily moved, sometimes vast distances, away from their origins whether it be for adventure, work or simply because that is what happens in people's lives sometimes.

What this and other reports from those in similar positions suggest, is that for people in this position: those who have as it were, willingly moved, either for work or other reasons, they find themselves in a difficult position, especially as is the case with T3, they have married and founded families in their new location; families who are totally unfamiliar with their past. For these people like T3, sites like Forgotten Abergavenny validate the lives and their memories which constitute their personal narrative, their personal sense of who they are. It fills in gaps which previously they carried alone. There is nothing to indicate from the interviews, that T3 has an unhappy time living in California, indeed she appears to be very successful, however what is missing is someone/something who confirms her entire identity to her. This confirmation, which is not found in her family, or in the material objects around her (which of course confirm other elements of her identity to her), is validated for her by the web site, Forgotten Abergavenny. Through it she has renewed ties with old friends, the town and most crucially with who she was in that town. Earlier we spoke about identity as something held communally. For T3 this communally holding of identity is achieved through the web site; the site holds and validates that portion of her life for her and validates it to her in ways impossible for her family or her current surroundings to perform.

Another person in a similar situation is G1, a teacher in a German high school, another who has left Abergavenny in search of work and a different life. "*I show this to my students so they can understand where I come from*" she says in one portion of the interview, a sentiment which one feels represents a personal desire as well.

Finally there is K1 a woman in her sixties, originally from Abergavenny, now living in Vancouver. As she makes clear in the interview it is simply economically impossible for her to move back to Abergavenny, yet much of her life belongs there. This sense of dislocation and the use of Forgotten Abergavenny to reaffirm elements of people's lives to themselves is also prevalent in many accounts from people who, while still living in Wales, reside outside Abergavenny and in some cases, cannot afford to move back there. A number of interviewees remarked on this aspect of their interest.

The social nature of Facebook which I have dwelt upon here is exemplified by E1, a working class woman in her fifties, who was housebound after a number of strokes. She reports that her doctor was constantly nagging her to get out of the house but for one reason or another, this had not happened. The Facebook page caught her eye and having a long interest in local history she became so fascinated by the site, that not only did she spend a lot of her income on books about local history, she started leaving her house to participate in local events organised by Performing Abergavenny.

Another such case is G2, a woman described as shy by her husband; lacking confidence about her writing she discovered the page and subsequently posts in a manner which her husband describes as much more confident and open than he's ever seen from her before. She has also attended events something she herself describes as surprising.

In all these cases the open style of the site as well as the inclusive nature of the subject matter and the relaxed approach of the posters has served to encourage people to participate and this initial participation has in many cases blossomed into something more over time.

Moderation.

Trolling

Trolling is internet slang for the intentional sowing of discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion.

One surprising aspect of Forgotten Abergavenny site is the absolute absence of any form of this sort of trolling. We can only surmise the reasons for this, however the open nature of the site and most crucially the fact that almost everyone posts under their own name rather than a pseudonym or specific user name, seems to provide one coherent explanation for this lack of abuse. Once again we come back to Arendt (1958) and her notion of a public space where we appear to others as they appear to us. Not only is this a crucial aspect of her notions of identity as something held in common, held communally, but in regard to the public space of the Forgotten Abergavenny page it suggests that anonymity on the web and in chat rooms is not the answer. Indeed it could be the case that anonymity actively encourages trolling because it allows for such outbursts to be camouflaged beneath pseudonyms. The most effective check on trolling is the need to appear to others as yourself; to take responsibility for your own comment and to be answerable for it in a public space before your community and your peers.

Moderation Practice.

One aspect which emerged from our investigation was the crucial role appropriate moderation played in the success of the site.

Forgotten Abergavenny is moderated by Sassy Hicks. She has performed this role on a voluntary basis for the entire existence of the site.

There are a number of key elements in her presentation of the site.

Firstly, her comments on the posts are welcoming and inclusive. They project an air of embrace and approachability which has vastly assisted the take-up of the site as well as encouraging active participation from across all classes within the town.

A good example of her style is found in these examples and they represent an accurate example of the ongoing style of address:

Thanks so much everyone for all your likes, views, shares and comments - this post has had 4,200 views! wow! If you have any other old pics of the cinema you would like to share please email them to: forgottenabergavenny@gmail.com

Huge thanks to Robert Davro Davies for submitting this photo of Llanfoist Bridge.

There is no date for this image, but it came from an old postcard and you can just make out the now long gone buildings in the town behind it. It is a really unusual angle, and the first one we have seen taken of the bridge like this.

We have edited it slightly to increase the resolution as the original was in sepia.

Thanks very much to Robert and his family for sharing it here with all of us.

Well said David Ward! Forgotten Abergavenny never took the plunge but it did always look cold. Good times eh?

This style of address crosses barriers of class and encourages participation. As E1 says, "And when you first go on there, you don't feel like you're pushing in you don't feel like you're goinggoing somewhere or doing something that other ...other people don't want you there."

Secondly, as the moderator Hicks spends approximately 90 minutes preparing each picture prior to posting; something which is vital if the photos are to display properly on the screen itself. Removing creases from old photos and cropping pictures so they present well on the internet, is a vital part of Hick's activities around the site.

Thirdly, as a Google trained analyst, Hicks can, among other things, access information about optimal posting times. She is careful to post photos when views are maximised, for instance on Thursday night. This means that new images circulate quickly attracting others onto the page. A reading of the demographics coupled with close attention to the types of posts which draw comments, also allows the moderator to tailor the posts to the interests of the audience, something else which works towards maximising participation and views per post.

In comparison, the three partner web sites have a totally different approach. All of those responsible for the organisational Facebook sites when interviewed described in virtually the same language, the same process surrounding the moderation and upkeep of their Facebook site.

Firstly, the page for the Library, the museum and the local newspaper were set up because it was felt within the organisation that without a social media presence the organisations would be perceived as 'Luddites'. In other words the pages occurred because of perceived outside pressures to have a page and not from any particular enthusiasm on the part of the creators. In every case the password holder did not use Facebook themselves and showed no interest in doing so. They thus lacked even minimal knowledge about what attracted people to Facebook or what interested or 'worked' within the online format.

Secondly, in every case the Page once established was then left to look after itself. The idea that for participation to increase requires active curating and a social media strategy seems to have been either ignored, or not understood. Of course these organisations all have cost and time pressures, however the amount of time required, at least according to Hicks, amounts to approximately a hour a day on average, which again suggests a lack of understanding of the process as well as the low priority attached about Facebook on the part of these organisations. This general air of disinterest was

matched by inattention once the site was up; something clearly indicated by the lack of current posts. Social media is content demanding and functions in a highly competitive market place where a multitude of options are available with a click of a button. To stay relevant and interesting in that context, sites require close curation and a steady flow of new content. The most used of the partner sites was the library and its content was according to our analysis, far too word orientated which also indicates a lack of organisational awareness concerning the style and mode likely to attract people to Facebook.

Once again what we see a potentially useful social media tool undermined by entrenched social attitudes, a lack of dedicated resources coupled with a lack of understanding, attention and capacity to utilize its potential for the benefit of the organisation and the community.

Given the strong future possibility of stringent funding it is imperative that local organisations utilize opportunities presented by social media for the benefit of their services and their future place in the local community. It is, listening to the interview with the head of local library services, hard not to detect some engrained resistance to the intrusion of social media into what was a fairly traditional service. While of course the pressures which daily effect these services and the people in them should not be discounted, it is surely counterproductive not to engage with these kinds of innovation. In any case the local councils are forcing them to engage whatever their personal attitudes.

In this regard there is clearly a mode of best practice in terms of moderation which it would be wise for local tax payer funded services to embrace.

Tool for enhancing face-to-face communal being-ness?

Technological findings.

It is a common assumption that use of social media and indeed computer use in general is linked to age; that older people are less inclined to use social media, that they lacked confidence about using computers generally and that, as a result, there exists a technological divide, not just across barriers of education and class, but also inter-generationally. Indeed the editor of the Abergavenny Chronicle made such claims to us in our interview, asserting that older people tending to read the hard copy of the paper but that they were unable to reach a younger, more media literate, audience.

Our findings do not support these claims. Use of the Forgotten Abergavenny page occurred across all age groups. Indeed in many cases a desire to view the page was motivation for several older people to learn how to use social media.

One aspect of this relates to how people access social media. Almost all those interviewed said they accessed primarily from either i-pads or laptops/desk computer.

What was interesting was that many older people found an i-pad much more user friendly in this regard than a mainframe or laptop computer. From the perspective of enhancing online access this appears to be a significant finding. Almost all the relevant interviews spoke of the easy of using i-pads as compared to a main frame or laptop facility.

Value

TIME SPENT AND ITS VALUE

Having investigated the forgotten Abergavenny site and the interviews to offer an explanation for what Forgotten Abergavenny appears to offer its constituency, we can now move to the question of value. What value can we place on this level of engagement? To what extent can this be described as a ‘cultural event’ at all?

Additionally it is necessary to offer hard data to support the claims made about micro-sociality and communal feeling. One way of doing so is to think about attention: how long do people spend on the site? Engagement speaks of belonging, particularly on a community site.

How to measure this in money terms.

Establishing plausible measures for the value of cultural activities is a growing issue for the arts and humanities and the agencies which fund their research and other activities. During the execution of this project, we have attempted to foreground this issue with our research subjects, in interviews and in other data-gathering. We did so knowing that the resulting insights would be, at best indicative and suggestive, rather than empirically comprehensive in the manner of, say, the 2003 study of value of the British Library; or other more heavily controller explorations of ‘willingness to pay’ as an indicator of presumed value.

When ‘willingness to pay’ was raised in interviews as a potential proxy for value with the Forgotten Abergavenny community, many participants found it difficult to make this leap in calculation. Their participation in Forgotten Abergavenny was not, in their minds, associated with the pursuit of anything they concretely thought of as economic or financial value (Cole and Scribner 1974).

E1 was a good example when she says in the focus group:

"You can't out a price on people's emotions can you? You can't out a price on people's emotions can you?"

E1: It's like Chelsea said you know, if I was offered to stay off it and she said like she said 'You had the money and that's gone well what have you got after that?' Yeah she's she's right.

The genuine difficulty all this presents for the construction of a common monetary value does not mean of course that Forgotten Abergavenny is failing to generate value.

There are, some persuasive metrics which do emerge from the Forgotten Abergavenny study:

The Attention Economy

A term borrowed from economics; in the Facebook context relates to time spent on site. Data from the interviews supports this. Photos, discussion and shares all suggest strong levels of attention and engagement with the site.

The following metrics provide a clear picture in regard to time spent on the site

- An average of 1,200 actively engaged each week
- An average of 18 comments per post.
- An average of 7,500 views across all pages each week.
- 162 comments for all three posts in an average week.
- 13%, just above an eighth of those engaged write comments.
- An average of 3,100 views per post

The gentleman F1 mentioned earlier kept a time sheet for his viewings of Forgotten Abergavenny. In seven days he viewed the site on twenty-six different occasions.

The name of someone who's own beautiful pictures of the town, taken in the 1950's and 1960's, were posted on the web site, was known to 90% of the respondents in the interviews.

Levels of 'Liking' Sometimes Referred To As The 'Affective Economy'

- A total of 3,065 'Likes' in 11 months.
- An average of 25 new 'Likes' per week.
- Approx. 47% of people who 'Like' actively engaged each week
- As of September the first 2014, the first five posts displaying on the Forgotten Abergavenny site, have, in descending order, most recent first: A picture of old town gas works =57 'Likes' and 1 share; a poster advertising an event in the memory of local artist, Alexander Cordell = 25 'Likes', 2 shares; A picture of a steam train in Abergavenny station 1931 =78 'Likes' and 2 shares; a primary school photo from 1930 =36 'Likes' and 2 shares; a picture by Udo Schultz of Abergavenny castle, 76 'Likes' and 2 shares. These are random views of the site but not a unique collection of numbers.

What is clear is how passionate and involved many people are in their involvement with this site.

As we noted earlier, the Facebook pages of our partners are all of longer standing than Forgotten Abergavenny, yet the latter site easily outperforms them. It is possible to see this as a classic 'disruptor' in this local market for information about the past and the present, except there isn't a market there. Forgotten Abergavenny has engaged people who were not active in this field and who's current activity in relation to history can be directly attributable to the site. In market terms it has in fact opened up an entirely new 'market'.

No one interviewed used either the library or the museum site. Regular readership of the Abergavenny Chronicle was largely confined, as expected, to those over 50 but even here opinions were ambivalent. Very few had visited the paper's Facebook site.

From this discussion of value, the Forgotten Abergavenny study is not able to speculate with confidence about the specific financial value of either the inputs to this flourishing community intervention or the returns on investment. On the basis of the study itself, it would be difficult to contest the judgment that Forgotten Abergavenny is a success from which others can learn; that it is a type of community building activity in which public

investment might be justified; and that any such investment would also need to be mindful of the risk of disinvestment in longer-established cultural assets, such as local libraries and museums. It is also possible that Forgotten Abergavenny or another project of its type might be achieved through investment resulting from other types of community fund-raising, for which the Facebook site itself might be a ‘crowd-sourcing’ channel.

Another method of assessing value of course is to compare cost and benefit. In the case of Forgotten Abergavenny, the only cost has been the time of the moderator. Against this could be balanced its contribution to the cohesion of the local community measured in ‘Likes’ and views as well as its capacity to connect people. Given the low start-up and running costs involved in constructing a Facebook site – costs which of course can be amortised over the life of the web site, then regardless of the inability to ascribe an actual benefit cost for the cultural activity stemming from it, the web site is clearly cost efficient. The only running cost being the time of the moderator.

A value can also be attained by comparing other projects specifically tasked with achieving communal cohesion, their costs, impacts and benefits against those of the web site. On that basis it would be hard to argue against the notion that a community Facebook site as successful as Forgotten Abergavenny, does not represent value for money.

Findings in relation to Value

- Value cannot be viewed in isolation. Nor can the questions and the method used to ascertain the value of cultural input into the community.
- The British Library study while providing a useful starting point requires extension and careful thought if it is to have wider applicability. The questions located around the concepts of abstract and replacement value, the mode which formed the questions for which we sought responses, evoked an unenthusiastic response or just simple confusion. They are far too abstract and lacked contextual specificity. They need to be tailored to the specificities of the respondents thinking and cultural background.
- Value is not an ideal. It can only achieve validity as a measuring tool when approached inter-relationally: in relation to cost, to audience and to options. Understanding the value of cultural activity and input for goals such as ‘community cohesion’, cannot be achieved if the value is not a value derived from an organic approach.

One example will suffice. The homebound interviewee E1, by her own admission, had visited her doctor many times and had frequently been advised to get out more. Now she has got out of the house, by her daughter’s statement a minor miracle, and she is participating in communal off-line life and speaking of seeking out volunteer organisations to continue this activity. She puts this down to Forgotten Abergavenny’ and the effect it has had upon her.

Trying to assess the value of cultural activity in this instance requires an organic approach not possible with the British library questions as currently applied. We need to be asking different questions, sometimes much more simple questions: Did she actually

seek out such organisation? How far was her motivation sustained? Were her visits to the doctor curtailed? The answers to these questions provide simple measurements and can be discovered by simple questioning.

If we seek an accurate picture of the value of social activities and an understanding of the value generated on a particular web site, a communal, web site, then an accurate picture of effect is the starting point. Effect for this woman located in the social and concrete picture of her life in which, it is claimed, Facebook played a determining role in behaviour change. Only that way can we accurately assess what the value of this Facebook site is.

Another possibility would be to ascribe a monetary value to time: the time the daughter feels compelled and does, spend with her mother in the home; the value achieved by lowering doctor's visits or by E1 performing volunteering work.

This could be then measured against the cost of setting up and maintaining this Facebook site.

Calculation of the value of arts in communal settings also needs to include the contextually specific, supply side perspective. Hypothetically, if E1 does maintain her outward trajectory into the community, does volunteer work and lessen her doctor's visits, the value of savings and costs achieved there alone, would more than cover the tiny cost of constructing a web site. However they would not cover the costs incurred in building and maintaining a British Library.

The entire value added through cultural activity question requires a sophisticated, clearly thought out approach on behalf of cultural funders; a full economic costing perspective needs to be developed and adopted; one can accurately measure social effect from an organic social perspective and within an organic social perspective.

In particular any Humanities attempt to develop valuing tools for communal cultural input should avoid viewing value solely from the user perspective. Value is a contextually specific and inter-relational outcome. To understand value accurately, requires an understanding of the 'buyer's' behaviour, certainly, but can only ultimately, be accurately assessed, in relation to provider cost as well.

Conclusions

In micro-sociality and the localism agenda, (AHRC report 2013) Valerie Walkerdine and I argued that enhancing communal being-ness, developing community cohesion, if you want to use the old terms, required aiding and abetting inter-relational linkages through increasing actions of micro-sociality. That more micro-sociality there is, the more linkages are established and communal identity is created and maintained. Communitarity has its own self-creating dynamic and the role of the arts, is therefore to simply provide events where micro-sociality can occur.

Forgotten Abergavenny has shown the capacity Facebook has for bringing a community together around a shared communal history. It has created linkages and had wide ranging and positive effects in people's lives. It plays a disproportionate role in maintaining and enhancing people's sense of themselves, their sense of themselves as contained and held within a shared sense of being-ness, communal being-ness.

To aid in the future use of social media to achieve similar outcomes, the AHRC investigation of the site has revealed the following:

- The absolute importance of careful and systematic curating to the success of the site
- The manner in which successful outcomes can be enhanced by knowledge of google analytics and the capacity this gives the curator to build audiences.
- The importance of building support and audience organically. Coupled with the importance of mutually enhancing and supporting publicity, functioning on and off line. The community need to know the site exists.
- Persistent attention to the site with regular updating and a steady supply of material to display.
- The mode of language used by the curator.
- A commitment to the open ended nature of interaction that social media allows and a full appreciation and application of the possibilities this represents.
- The potential role of pages such as this in bringing age groups and classes together across local divides.
- The preference of older people for I-pads over other devices.
- The need for councils and council services like the museum and library to understand the terms of practice and the requirements of running on-line sites dedicated to proving local services. To provide the financial capacity for a member of staff to devote time and persistence to maintaining and growing the website. And this requirement is something funders need to acknowledge.
- The importance of maximising all the capacity of social media through linkages and co-operation with similar web sites. The lack of communication between the museum and Forgotten Abergavenny is particularly detrimental to the museum. Such linkages and content sharing would increase the audience for the museum web site in a very short period of time.

Recommendations for our Partners.

- If the potential of Facebook for enhancing communal interaction is to be realised more attention is required both in regard to the creation, and subsequent maintenance of the Facebook pages. Attention here means both personal knowledge; regular dedicated time for someone to correctly and creatively moderate the site; active sourcing of content and matching off-line activities to publicise its presence.
- Much more use made of facilities that link Facebook pages both to other Facebook sites and to social media in general. All these sites have material which could be posted on Forgotten Abergavenny in return for links back to the council, library or chronicle site, yet none of our three partners offered or thought to suggest this.
- Understanding that openness of the comments function upon the Facebook sites involves and creates interaction and activity; that such interaction should be under people's real name which serves to discourage trolling and raises the feeling of safety

and enjoyment around the site and that the site should be free of any overt council or social engineering agenda.

- A commitment to an audience led trajectory where the audience set the agenda regarding what history is important to them.

Research Methodology and Methodological Advances

In that project we examined the formation of communal identity through Arendt’s notion of action, the space of appearance and the web of relationships. We argued that communal being-ness was sustained by the construction of being-ness which is both personal and communal; that this being-ness as a member of the Abergavenny town community was sustained by regular, routine micro-social interactions within particular spaces of appearances. This created/reinforced being-ness falls back into a collective web of relations which includes objects, subjectivity, history, material relations and practise generating further inter-actions, in turn sustaining of ongoing communal and personal being-ness.

Thus the web of relations (Studdert 2006) for Abergavenny itself, includes all the elements within the Abergavenny community and these elements and the being-ness they responsible for, are partially accessible through the photos displayed on this website.

The open nature of this web site where anyone can post or comment allows equal access to the history they all share. It is a site for the creation of communal identity through the discovery of being-in-common. It locates and positions people by the action of posting and speech as equal members within the communal being-ness of Abergavenny. In doing so, of course, it strengthens communal being-ness and locates the community itself as an outcome of a shared history and materiality.

So from the perspective of the users, the open nature of the Forgotten Abergavenny site and the online engagement with it *is* an action of co-operative sociality. Through the micro-sociality of comments and posting people align themselves with the town and with their own being-ness in the town history; a being-ness which is both theirs and the towns. They re-assert their own identity to themselves in common with the town, because the town itself is what sustains and validates this being-ness to itself.

In relation to methods we used narrative interviews, focus groups and analysis of the analytics of the site investigated by a trained Google analyst. Respondants were located through the site Forgotten Abergavenny and through personal contacts. Respondants were asked to keep a diary recording the number of times they visited the site.

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The Cultural Value Project seeks to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. The project will establish a framework that will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate it. The framework will, on the one hand, be an examination of the cultural experience itself, its impact on individuals and its benefit to society; and on the other, articulate a set of evaluative approaches and methodologies appropriate to the different ways in which cultural value is manifested. This means that qualitative methodologies and case studies will sit alongside qualitative approaches.