

Group Report

What impacts does ICE Cycles have on the Inner City East community of Christchurch?

How can opportunities and challenges associated with the operating model of ICE Cycles be addressed to ensure longevity?

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research explores the impacts of ICE Cycles on the Inner-City East community. Further, the research works to explore the challenges and opportunities ICE Cycles may want to consider and act on going forward.

An exploratory case study was used and a mixed methods approach utilised. The theory underpinning the research is from Bertotti et al.'s (2012) theoretical framework of Social Capital. Seven ICE Cycles volunteers were interviewed and a further eight participated in a short survey. Two other 'boundary spanning' community members with knowledge of both ICE Cycles and the Inner-City East community were also interviewed. Nine social enterprise leaders responded to an online survey with two of these being interviewed further. The results of these surveys were complemented with secondary data collated from existing literature. Data was analysed using a thematic framework.

The results of the study show that impact on the community is realised through positive influence on personal development and the social capital building of volunteers. Boundary spanning members also reported positive impacts through transport-empowerment and enhanced community connection. Challenges were found to be rooted in funding, human resources and location. Opportunities to navigate these challenges include assessing alternative funding models, securing a permanent space and introducing programmes to increase education and youth engagement.

2. INTRODUCTION

Inner-City East (ICE) Cycles is a project of Te Whare Roimata Trust; a community development organisation that focuses on addressing the needs and concerns of local residents in the Inner-City East suburbs of Christchurch. For decades, there has been a recognisable inadequacy of transport within this locality, hindering individuals from accessing facilities and employment and educational opportunities. The financial capability of many community members prevents them from purchasing a bike and those who do own bikes find the subsequent maintenance to be outside of the bounds of their financial capabilities and skill sets. Te Whare Roimata identified this issue and took responsibility to research potential solutions before creating ICE Cycles in 2011. As a result, ICE Cycles provides a solution to the transport disadvantage that is apparent within the community. They achieve this primarily through providing free bike repairs and the rebuilding of donated bikes, as well as teaching bike skills to the volunteers directly involved. ICE Cycles' has expressed an interest in strengthening their presence within the Inner-City East so that they are able to further serve the community.

This research will investigate the impacts that ICE Cycles has on the Inner City East Community and review how opportunities and challenges could be addressed to ensure the longevity of ICE Cycles. The objectives of this study are to determine what impacts ICE Cycles has, assess the strengths and challenges associated with its current operating model, and explore opportunities for overcoming these challenges. The research employs a mixed methods approach of data collection, with both qualitative and quantitative data being collected concurrently through a mix of primary and secondary research. Following a review of relevant literature, this methodology is clearly outlined before the results of the research is presented and discussed. The results reveal that ICE Cycles has a substantial impact on building community capacity and enhancing bonding and bridging social capital within the Inner-City East community. Challenges are associated with funding, human resources, and location. A number of alternative operating models of similar community bike workshops (CBWs) are thoroughly investigated and opportunities these were found to present are considered within the context of ICE Cycles.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is currently only a small body of research on CBWs, so this review has been expanded to assess the community impact of social enterprises, focusing on non-profit, community-led organizations like ICE Cycles. This literature shows that social enterprises can positively contribute to both the personal development of residents and the cohesiveness of the community.

Through involvement in a social enterprise, individuals are able to develop relationships with other residents and expand their connections in the wider community, thus helping to combat social exclusion and improve their individual wellbeing (Teasdale, 2010). Active involvement helps individuals to grow and develop their social and practical skill set, offering work and education opportunities that may have been previously unavailable (Bertotti et al, 2012). An inner community is often formed around the social enterprise itself, comprising of a core group of people directly involved in the organization, such as volunteers, but also including people whom Farmer et al (2016) terms ‘boundary-spanning’ participants, such as customers or visitors. Both direct and boundary-spanning involvement contributes to participants personal development and social integration, with many expressing strengthened notions of belonging and security in their community (Farmer et al, 2016). However, the greatest impact is often experienced by the volunteers (Bertotti et al, 2012). This is aligned with Morrow-Howell et al (2014) study, showing that volunteering can lead to an increase in productive and social engagement, giving participants a strong sense of belonging and purpose.

Social enterprises can serve as a catalyst for local and regional development, by enhancing community solidarity and building community capacity (Kim & Lim, 2017). Capacity building is of significant importance for underserved, lower socioeconomic communities as it gives residents the tools and skillset to satisfy their own needs, making them more resilient against the disadvantages of poverty (Lovell et al, 2015). This is particularly true for CBW’s located in transport-deprived neighbourhoods, such as the ICE, as they provide residents with the means to transport themselves, leading to an increased sense of freedom and empowerment (Warren, 2019) and providing access to work, education and social opportunities previously out of reach (Kim & Lim, 2017). This is particularly relevant to the ICE community, as the lower socioeconomic

conditions of this neighbourhood can lead to mobility-based social exclusion and can contribute to a path of generational poverty as people are trapped in place, relying on a system that does not value or provide for them (Warren, 2019). Bradley (2018) situates his analysis of the Malmö Bike Kitchen in the theoretical context of degrowth, arguing that the bicycle is a convivial and democratic technology that allows individuals to become less dependent on the capitalist system, instead facilitating a self-sufficient lifestyle not driven by material consumption, and argues that CBW's cultivate a DIY and sharing culture innately aligned with the degrowth movement.

Our research of ICE Cycles will help to fill the gap in academic literature regarding CBWs, by providing a comprehensive case study of a CBW in a transport-disadvantaged neighbourhood, and a cross-comparison of different models and strategies that could prove useful for other CBWs. CBWs are a unique way of empowering communities while fostering a culture of sustainability and self-sufficiency, and therefore this study will also be relevant to the wider literature regarding degrowth, which is an area of growing academic and public interest (Bradley, 2018).

4. METHODOLOGY

The research used a mixed methods approach of data collection, with both qualitative and quantitative data being collected through a mix of primary and secondary research. Due to the two-part nature of the research question, methodology will be split into two distinct sections for clarity.

Community and Individual Impacts

In order to explore the impacts of ICE Cycles on the individuals involved, participant observation was undertaken as the first step. Participant observation sessions were utilised as a catalyst to form relationships with the ICE Cycles volunteers (Leavy, 2017; Farmer et al, 2016) and as a contextual basis to form our more structured face-to-face interviews off (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). Brief notes were kept after each session to track important conversations had and exchanges observed. The sample for the semi-structured face-to-face interviews was selected by ICE Cycles head volunteer, Jono. This was due to his superior knowledge into which of the volunteers would best be able to participate in such interviews (Farmer et al., 2016). Interviews were not fully structured

and held informally to allow volunteers to feel increasingly comfortable, subsequently enabling more authentic and meaningful responses to be elicited (Farmer et al., 2016). Questions were directed at extracting responses relating to if and how ICE Cycles had impacted on their lives, e.g. mental and physical well-being, and skill development. Caution was taken to ensure questions were open and not leading in anyway. In total, seven interviews were conducted.

Due to time constraints on interviewing, surveys were also utilised to deepen our understanding of the impacts ICE Cycles cultivates and to broaden research reach (Jenner, 2016). Surveys were of a quantitative and qualitative nature and were aimed at gaining further insight into the general impacts ICE Cycles has had on their lives. Surveys were handed out in hard copy to all volunteers present at a week's worth of workshops and eight were returned.

In order to assess the flow on impacts of ICE Cycles on the wider Inner-City East Community, interviews were also conducted with two boundary spanning community members. Such individuals possess knowledge of ICE Cycles and the community that it functions within (Farmer et al., 2016). Once again, the sample of interviewees was identified by Jono. The aim of these interviews was to identify key themes and instances of bridging social capital within the community. Data collected from both the community and individual volunteers were analysed using Bertotti's (2012) theoretical framework of social capital. This framework allowed us to evaluate the bridging and bonding social capital fostered by ICE Cycles. Further, this data was also analysed thematically in order to identify themes or patterns of impacts generated at both the individual and community level by ICE Cycles.

Challenges and Opportunities

In order to explore the challenges and opportunities ICE Cycles face, a short survey to send to a sample of 18 social enterprises was created. Questions were focused on identifying the enterprises operating models and drawing out any challenges or successes experienced due to the way they operate. In order to achieve diversity of responses, the sample chosen included an array of social enterprises, including not-for-profits, for-profits and hybrids types (Jenner, 2016). Half of the sample did not respond, lowering our final sample to nine social enterprise. This lack of responses prompted us to complement our primary research with secondary data collected from existing literature on social enterprise and other online sources such as websites of social initiatives. Two

respondents of the survey were followed up with further questioning via email due to their enterprise's relevance to CBWs. Questions were tailored to deepen our understanding of survey responses surrounding their personal challenges and what factors they saw as contributing to their current success and future longevity. Data collected through both primary and secondary research was subsequently analysed thematically, with the intention of identifying key themes or patterns of success or challenges cultivated by the different types of operating decisions.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Individual Impact

The results show that ICE Cycles has a diverse impact on individuals within the volunteer community. Patterns identified from survey and interview responses revolved around physical, social and mental well-being benefits attributed to volunteer's involvement with ICE Cycles. Practical skill improvement was also a key pattern identified from the data.

Physical Well-Being Impacts

All eight of the survey respondents reported improvements in their physical health. It was uncovered during face-to-face interviews that these improvements primarily stem from being more active by commuting to different places in their daily lives via bicycle. Observational notes made during participant observation periods also showed that all volunteers travelled to workshops on their bikes and continued to be on their feet and active during workshops. One volunteer interviewee reported that the weekly community lunch and shared dinners after workshops has provided them with a better diet and increased their knowledge of alternative meal options, further contributing to their improved physical health.

Social Well-Being Impacts

A key philosophy of ICE Cycles is rooted in their promotion of positive social energy and intolerance of negativity. This is reflected in the volunteer survey responses which showed seven of the eight respondents experiencing increased levels of confidence and happiness. A common

theme identified from the volunteer interviews also supports this, with four of the interviewees acknowledging ICE Cycles as a place where they feel valued, safe and like they belong.

Mental Well-Being Impacts

Mental well-being and stability were a pattern identified in all of the face-to-face interviews. All seven of the interviewees alluded to an aspect of mutual respect between volunteers being the driving force behind their comfort in sharing personal issues and seeking advice. This fact shows evidence of bonding social capital being formed and fostered by ICE Cycles. It is also reflected in the observation notes of dedicated time made for conversations and sharing before meals where volunteers are encouraged to but not forced to share anything that may be going on in their lives at that time.

Practical Skill Development

All interviewees and survey respondents reported an increase in their practical skill set. Volunteers acknowledged that their involvement with ICE Cycles had taught them many new practical and technical skills. In open discussions at participant observation sessions, this was further attributed to increases in confidence and determination to learn and pass on knowledge.

5.2 Community Impact

Qualitative data collected during the face-to-face interviews, surveys and participant observations allowed the impact ICE Cycles has on the Inner-City East community to be identified. A key finding was that ICE Cycles has worked to foster bonding social capital internal to the ICE Cycles community and further, bridging social capital into the wider community. Interview and survey responses revealed a key theme of ICE Cycles volunteers forming important friendships that allow them to feel included and valued in a social setting, which in turn provides them with more confidence to operate within the community as a well individual. Common interests and values shared between the volunteers spark ideas and inspirations that were identified during our participant observation. An example of this relayed by one of the volunteers was the initiation of a bike group, whereby the volunteers arrange various bike rides to embark upon together over their weekends. This positively influences physical, mental, and social well-being, and is an integral example of the bonding social capital within the community being enhanced by ICE Cycles.

The Inner City East suburbs of Christchurch are commonly acknowledged as an underserved, low socioeconomic area with high rates of crime and unemployment (Barnett, 2000). The wide range of qualitative data analysed illustrated the dynamic way in which ICE Cycles has addressed this issue and helped to make the ICE community more resilient to the disadvantages of poverty. During face-to-face interviews, volunteers who have been recipients of donated bikes openly revealed how they have been able to access increased employment and educational opportunities, health and social services, and necessary resources within the community.

Interviews with boundary-spanning community members allowed for the assessment of the flow on impacts of ICE Cycles. Local community organisations, such as the Eastgate Library, City Mission, Comcare and Bellbird Bakery, work in close collaboration with ICE Cycles. All of these interviewees stated that ICE Cycles has helped them to increase their reach and improve outcomes for their organisations and members. One organization referred to their relationship with ICE Cycles as ‘invaluable’, stating that it helped them to enhance their own community impact by giving them an avenue to promote themselves to the wider community, connect with local residents who may not be aware of the services they offer, and receive general feedback to assess if they are meeting community needs. This shows that ICE Cycles’ collaboration with other local organisations provides both parties with opportunities to build bridging social capital, increasing both the breadth and depth of their community impact and contributing to the local development of the Inner City East. The aforementioned results and examples illustrate the way in which ICE Cycles impact the community by increasing community cohesion and bridging social capital within the wider Inner-City East community, whilst providing services to those in need.

5.3 Strengths of ICE Cycles Operating Model

In order to effectively address ICE Cycles challenges and opportunities, we felt it was important to also highlight their strengths as all of the social enterprise respondents identified the strengths of their operations to contribute directly to opportunities for longevity.

The four main strengths identified by ICE Cycles is their open-door policy, volunteer run nature, deep community roots and their ability to be completely self-funded. Many of these strengths were echoed by the not-for-profit respondents of the survey, however self-sufficient funding was

found to be a strength unique to ICE Cycles as a CBW. On review of secondary data, it was subsequently found to be a substantial strength of other CBWs as the independence made them less vulnerable to the often undulating nature of external funding (Bradley, 2018).

From the thematic and theoretical analysis of the volunteer data, it was identified that these key strengths were the underlying theme behind the positive impacts and patterns of social capital building experienced by ICE Cycles volunteers.

5.4 Challenges of ICE Cycles Operating Model

The three main challenges identified by ICE Cycles centre around human resources, location and funding. Human resources were a challenge identified by seven out of the nine social enterprise survey respondents, irrespective of operating type. Funding was identified as a challenge by only two of the total nine but was a more consistent theme in the existing literature available on CBWs. Location however, was not identified as a challenge by any of the nine respondents, but rather as a strength of their organisation. A theme that was echoed by the CBW literature, with many indicating that permanent locations act to increase social interaction within the community as it provides a safe and comfortable space for individuals to congregate (Bradley, 2018).

ICE Cycles have expressed an interest in introducing regular educational programs and skills workshops, but currently lack the specialised man-power required to lead and manage such initiatives. This challenge of human resources is further complicated by the lack of funds available to make these specialised positions paid, in order to attract experienced or qualified individuals. Further, it is important to ICE Cycles and their purpose that these people come from the Inner-City East, in order to ensure that the bonding social capital of the organisation remains central.

The lack of a permanent facility presents a number of daily challenges to ICE Cycles and also acts to restrict their growth. One of the CBW interviewed via email described having a permanent location as “amazing”, citing that it allows their organisation to operate more “efficiently”. This is particularly relevant to ICE Cycles as each week tools and resources are transported between their two locations via cargo bike. This is not only inefficient, but dependent on human resources and weather conditions. Accessory to this, ICE Cycles current location situation results in operating hours being limited. Interest for increased workshop hours and subsequent social time

was one of the stand out themes identified in the volunteer survey, something a permanent location would allow for.

The issue of funding presents challenges of its own but is also heavily related to the aforementioned challenges of human resourcing and location. As the key underlying challenge identified by ICE Cycles, alternative funding models that complement ICE Cycles purpose will be the main focus area of opportunity exploration.

5.4 Opportunities/alternative Operating Models

Funding

The challenge of financial security needs to be addressed in a way that is aligned with ICE Cycles ethos of community and cooperation, is suitable for their members, and allows them to remain self-sufficient. Through an analysis of existing CBWs, utilising both primary and secondary data, it was found that funds are often generated through membership fees, shop sales, and fundraising drives.

Charging a small membership fee to customers would help ICE Cycles cover costs and provide participants with access to their workshop and services. Moreland (2018) suggests the membership fees also help cultivate community, as it allows residents to support an organisation they believe in and become a part of its inner community in the process. This strategy has been employed by the Melbourne based CBW we interviewed and Malmö Bike Kitchen, who had to introduce a €10 annual fee after their two year municipal funding ended (Bradley, 2018). From our interviews, the Melbourne CBW reported no negative effect on participant numbers due to their small fee and felt that it did not compromise their integrity or restrict them in any way.

Given the socioeconomic context of the ICE neighbourhoods, it is important that this cost does not financially restrict people from getting involved or serviced, as this would diminish ICE Cycles community impact and social capital. The Malmö Bike Kitchen overcame this by allowing people to donate their time instead (Bradley, 2018). Membership fees are aligned with ICE Cycles values of cooperation and can also help to build community capacity, by allowing the Inner-City East

community to support and sustain ICE Cycles, which in turn supports these residents, without relying on external actors.

Another common strategy for generating funds is through the sale of refurbished bikes and parts or charging a small fee for repair services. Arizona-based bike kitchen, BICAS, raised funds through these means and have now transitioned from a fully volunteer-staffed workshop to having 13 paid employees (Bliss, 2015). Once again, ICE Cycles would need to find a way to do this that does not financially restrict people from participating. Two of the survey respondents implemented a koha based system, where participants are encouraged to pay what they can, and any surplus is distributed to support the repairs of their less affluent neighbours. Another option is the concept of 'bike bux', utilized by New Orleans CBW RHUBARB, where people earn a set amount of credit (bike bux) for every hour they volunteer. These bike bux could then go towards paying for services and parts or, alternatively, people could gift their bike bux to someone in need, thus fostering a sharing culture well aligned with ICE Cycles' ethos (RHUBARB, n.d.).

Fundraisers can be an effective way to generate lump sums while also raising ICE Cycles' profile, which could potentially help address human resource challenges by attracting specialised community members to their work. Buffalo CBW hosted a successful annual fundraiser for ten years, 'Tour de Farms', leading a bicycle tour of local farms, markets, and food distributors, highlighting the community's connection to their local food system and celebrating sustainable transportation (Bertram, 2011). Sponsored by local organisations, this fundraiser not only brought in an income for Buffalo CBW but fostered a greater sense of connection to both people and place. By bringing together a diverse range of people and bolstering local pride, the fundraiser promoted bike culture in the neighbourhood which helped to further embed the CBW by growing its base of customers and volunteers. It is suggested that if ICE Cycles hosts a fundraiser, that it is specifically tailored to the work they do and the community they operate in, as exemplified by the success of Buffalo CBW.

Permanent location

Securing a permanent facility would significantly enhance ICE Cycles community impact, not only improving the efficiency of their work but also improving both their bonding and bridging

social capital. Having a consistent space of their own would strengthen the inner relationships of the ICE Cycles community, thus bolstering their bonding social capital. Through volunteer interviews, it was revealed that volunteers feel comfortable and enjoy coming down to the current ICE Cycles locations just to hang out, without feeling pressured to work. It is expected that this would only be heightened with a permanent location, as exemplified by the Malmö Bike Kitchen, who found that their transition into a permanent space had unexpected social impacts, with the CBW becoming a social meeting place for city residents of different backgrounds and nationalities to come together (Bradley, 2018), which showcases the possibilities for bridging social capital to also be enhanced. A permanent location would also allow for more frequent and consistent workshops and contact hours, a desire highlighted in our volunteer surveys, and provide the opportunity to host educational workshops and programmes.

An example of a successful programme other CBWs with permanent locations had utilised to enhance their community impact was the Earn-A-Bike programme (EAB), where participants learn to dismantle, build and maintain a bicycle, gaining valuable skills, self-confidence, social opportunities, and then get to keep their refurbished bike. These EAB programmes can take various forms and can be moulded to suit the particular needs of the community or mission of the CBW (Moreland, 2008; Bliss, 2015; Bertram, 2011). Focusing particularly on the effects of EAB programs targeted at youth in disadvantaged communities, Warren (2019) found that the hands-on learning and community-focus are a ‘transformative experience’ for youth, helping with personal development and social integration, outcomes that have flow-on effects that benefit society in general. By providing participants with the freedom of their own transportation, the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to be self-reliant, and an open-door community, EAB programmes show great potential for empowering individuals and enhancing ICE Cycles community impact.

6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The incumbent limitations of the research relate to time constraints and lack of existing literature. Due to relationship and rapport building with the volunteers being integral to the depth and personability of the research it was infeasible to sufficiently survey and interview as many of the

ICE Cycles volunteers and boundary spanning community members as would have been optimal. The same issue applies to limiting our responses garnered from the social enterprise survey.

The significant gap in academic literature surrounding CBW's and cooperatives does not match the abundance of CBW's and cooperatives popping up around the globe. This fact limited the research in that comparative capabilities were slim.

As a result of these limitations there are many opportunities for future research that would work to increase the significance and scope of our results. Options include conducting an extended study to allow greater reach and the longer term impacts of ICE Cycles to be assessed. Furthermore, carrying out a comparative study following the procurement of a permanent location would present an opportunity for any changes in impacts to be investigated.

7. CONCLUSION

The research has shown that ICE Cycles has a positive impact on personal development and community building through cases of bonding and bridging social capital. The most prominent challenges ICE Cycles face revolve around human resources, location and funding. We have identified that these challenges could be addressed by increasing funding through opportunities such as fundraisers, membership fees and the sale of services and bikes. These opportunities will work to ensure the success and longevity of ICE Cycles, as was seen in the literature and similar case studies. ICE Cycles' ability to improve their financial position through methods that align with their values and ethos, will allow them to continue impacting positively on their volunteers and the wider community. Doing so will also provide more opportunities for growth and improvements within the Inner-City East community. The lack of literature surrounding CBWs restricted us slightly in presenting an indisputable case study, however we feel confident in our results due to the substantial findings of our primary data collection.

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