

School of Psychology  
Division of Health Sciences

A Substantive Examination of Rural Community Resilience  
and Transition

*A Social Justice Perspective of a Civil Society*

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## Abstract

It is well established that rural regional Australians have borne the brunt of globalization in terms of the adverse impacts caused by social and economic restructuring resulting from global, national and local forces. In response governments and communities have embraced 'sustainability' and 'civil society' for promoting local community action and responsibility for social, economic and environmental issues. This research focuses on community narratives about the social change processes as they engage the forces of neo-liberal policies. Applying a qualitative, grounded theoretical approach to data collection and analysis this study also adopts a multi-perspective, multi-disciplinary framework to gain more holistic, contextual understandings of community functioning and change.

In echoing the principles of community psychology, the foundational, multidisciplinary concepts of sense of community, social capital, civil society, empowerment and *conscientization* have informed understandings of this community's process and outcome towards transformational change. This study offers a critical reflection of transformational change in an effort to promote more peaceful, collaborate relationships between dominant and oppressed groups in expanding our understandings and solutions for community change. Identified by Newbrough (1992, 1995) as the *Third Force Position*, the ideals of *political community* are visibly expressed as they attempt to pursue transformational change towards a just and sustainable future for the community. However, while civil society has made a positive contribution, also apparent are the processes and outcomes which affect those most vulnerable. Those most powerless continue to suffer from exclusion, marginalization and as a result are denied access to vital resources to meet their needs.

**Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature: .....

Date:.....

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## CHAPTER ONE - Setting the Scene

*This chapter provides an introduction to the issues underlying the adverse social and economic conditions being experienced by rural regional communities in Australia. This involves understanding the dominance of neo-liberal policy initiatives being pursued by governments to promote local community solutions to deal with the impacts of global economic reform. It begins by discussing the agenda driving globalization followed by developments within Australia toward a new governance regime to promote community sustainability as a 'bottom up' community responsibility to combat the impacts of neo-liberal imperatives driving globalization reforms in Australia.*

*This chapter also highlights the lacking focus on social justice outcomes in government policy initiatives that promote rural community development. The role of social justice in civil society groups promoting sustainability is also examined and discussed. The aims and objectives of the research including the methodology are outlined and an overview of the thesis structure is also provided.*

## **CHAPTER ONE – Setting the Scene**

“The vigorous pursuit of principles such as justice, fairness, individual rights, equity, respect for human dignity and pursuit of the common good constitutes the essential elements of the goals or purposes of government. Yet there is growing inequality between peoples and nations of essential resources and opportunities”.

(Denhardt, 1991, p.275)

### *Globalization - Poverty Alleviation & Global Disintegration*

Despite the lack of consensus on what globalization does or should encompass, the scholarly and popular discourse has grown exponentially since it first appeared in the 1970s. What emerged clearly from the globalization discourse is the intense conflict over the costs and benefits of globalization to society and the planet. While the negative perspective on globalization highlights its destructive effects: on democratic processes (Martin & Schuman, 1997); workers' rights (Thompson, 2003; Tilly, 1995); human rights (Liu & Mills, 2006); the earth's natural resources (Shiva, 2000) and the authority of the nation-state (Cox, 1997; 1999). The proponents argue that growth in international trade leads to widely shared benefits and to a generally civilizing effect (Levitt, 1983; Ohmae, 1991). A third group however, challenges this reality, arguing that both its extent and effects have been vastly exaggerated (Hirst & Thompson, 1999; Wade, 1996). Lastly, the fourth group conceives globalization as a matter of degree, a process long under way but accelerated by the diffusion of new technology, information, practices, free capital, and transnational organizations (Guillen 2001).

Globalization has been praised and condemned for increasing, (Featherstone, Lash & Robertson, 1995) or decreasing (Latouche, 1995; Milanovic, 2003) cultural heterogeneity around the world. It has also been characterized both as a condition of modernity (Beck, 2000) and as ushering in a new and distinctly different “global age” (Albrow, 1997). Tembo (2004) portrays

the ideological clashes as stemming from two worldviews at the extreme spectrum of the globalization debate. Reflecting the positive effects, the neo-liberal argument says that the distribution of income between all the world's people has become more equal over the past two decades and that the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen, for the first time in more than a century and a half (Dollar, 1992; 2001). These progressive trends have been attributed to globalization, in large part due to the rising density of economic integration between countries, which has facilitated greater efficiency of resource use worldwide as countries and regions specialize in line with their comparative advantage (Jenkins, 2004; Wade, 2003b). Hence the argument is that the globalizing direction of change in the world economy serves the great majority of the world's people well. From this perspective, the core solution for lagging regions is freer domestic and international trade and more open financial markets, leading to deeper integration into the world economy (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005; World Bank, 2002).

In critiquing the globalization project, Wade (2004) highlighted that the evidence emerging from the long wave of globalization has been acclaimed to confirm neo-liberal economic theory that more open economies are more prosperous, economies that liberalize more experience a faster rate of progress, and people who resist further economic liberalization must be acting out of vested or "rent-seeking" interests (p. 567). From this perspective the assumption is that the world economy is an open system in the sense that country mobility up the income/wealth hierarchy is unconstrained by the structure (Besley & Burgess, 2002). Hence, as globalization proceeds the hierarchy is in the process of being flattened, the North-South, core-periphery, rich country-poor country divide is being eroded away (Jenkins, 2004). The same evidence also validates the rationale of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral economic organizations as agents for creating a global "level playing" field undistorted by state-imposed restrictions on markets (Wade, 2003b; 2004). This line of argument is championed by the more powerful of the centres of "thinking for the world"

that influence international policy making, including the intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, also the US and UK Treasuries, and opinion-shaping media such as The Financial Times and The Economist (Jenkins, 2004; Besley & Burgess, 2003; Warf, 2006).

In contrast, the Left assumption is that the rich and powerful countries and classes have little interest in greater equity (Weisbrot, Kraev & Chen, 2001; Winters, 2000). In fact the manipulation by the more powerful players having sinister implications has been well documented. As Isaak (2005) stated the rich can create the poor intentionally or coincidentally and some managers of multinational corporations are clearly cognizant of what they are doing. He cites several examples, there are those who create sweat shops for children in order to manufacture their products cheaply in developing countries. Also the *maquiladoras* on the Mexican border, which import parts from the United States to be assembled for re-export to North America by young Mexican girls, they work under exploitative wages and living conditions in these factories. Such deliberate corporate strategies can take even more malevolent forms. As highlighted portrayed, in 1995, Shell Oil Corporations supplied the Nigerian government with arms when it sought to repress the Ogoni population, who were demanding that Shell stop polluting Ogoni land. This contrasts the claims of "poverty alleviation", as living standards have nose-dived since the discovery of oil in Nigeria forty years ago (Isaak).

Consistent with this view, the "anti-globalization" (more accurately, "anti-neoliberal") argument asserts that world poverty and inequality have been rising, not falling, due to forces unleashed by the same globalization (Weisbrot, et al., 2001). Furthermore the warnings are clear, if the rules in the globalized economy are not changed the gap between the rich and the poor will be pushed to extremes and magnify a number of global crises (Galbraith, 2002). Some of the major crises that can be expected include "over-population; epidemics; extreme educational inadequacies; unemployment; deficiencies in what we call "democracy"; political instability; environmental disasters; the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and the further



unravelling of the legitimacy of American unilateralism. Inevitably leading to global disintegration and war" (Isaak, 2005, p. 206). While there is agreement about the line of solution, which is some degree of tightening of public policy limits on the operation of market forces; the difference is that the "anti-neoliberal" camp embraces a much wider range of solutions than the liberal camp (Wade, 2004). Also sharing in commonality is their approach to the debate, Wade reports that it tends to be conducted by each side as if its case was overwhelming, and only an intellectually deficient or dishonest person could see merit in the other's case. This is clearly reflected in the claims made by Martin Wolf of *The Financial* that the "anti-globalization" argument is "the big lie" – and if translated into public policy, it would cause more poverty and inequality while pretending to do the opposite (2003, p. 11).

Taking a pragmatic view to the debate, Taylor (2004) does not share the optimistic view of globalization as a magic cure-all for what ails a nation's economy. Nor does he connect with the disastrous prediction of a plot by profit-hungry mega-corporations to exploit workers and despoil the environment. While he contends that globalization is simply a means to expand the range of possible commercial activities that used to be ruled out by geographic, technological or legal barriers (Guillen, 2001; Jenkins, 2004). There is agreement with the perspective that both the detractors and supporters have exaggerated the economic and social effects of globalization (Doremus, 1998; Hirst & Thompson, 1999; Wade, 1996, 2002b). While acknowledging the positive aspects of globalization, Taylor also heeds a genuine cautionary note to the consequences occurring in many areas, including sovereignty, prosperity, jobs, wages and social legislation (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005; Taylor, 2004; Tembo, 2004). Hence, globalization is too important to be consigned to buzzword status.

Departing from the typical discourse stressing divergent outcomes of increased prosperity and a growing gap between rich and poor as the effects of globalization, Taylor highlights a more complex analysis. The first assumption typically associated with globalization concerns the claim of a borderless world - according to Taylor the research shows that despite increases in international

financial transactions, national borders continue to play a significant role. Studies of trading practices occurring in US, Canadian and European markets have revealed that trade between regions within countries is three to ten times higher than trade that crosses national borders. Hence, these predictions have not been realized.

The second assumption relates to the forecast that exposure to global markets stimulates economic growth. Taylor is less convinced by this claim he noted that despite the broader benefits, globalization is not the single or even the most important ingredient of economic growth. There are a host of other factors that facilitate economic growth that includes "better education; better health; available investment capital; infrastructure for transportation, communications and energy; transparent administration of government and law; a legal and institutional framework that supports competitive markets; a well-regulated financial sector; a stable macroeconomic environment; sensible monetary, fiscal and exchange-rate policies; intellectual property protection; flows of information about technology and products; and widespread expertise in management, accounting and law" (Taylor, p. 30). These contextual considerations clearly demand a more sophisticated role of government and one that extends beyond globalization.

The third assumption is that globalization would lead to overall unemployment in developed nations as jobs flee to more labour-cheap nations. Studies have revealed a more complex effect. While countries with higher levels of international trade do not typically have higher unemployment, the effects of international competition causes what economists call "displaced workers" where workers are pushed out of one job and are forced to find another (Crews-Klein, 2005). As Tembo (2004) highlighted, while a flexible workforce is good for an economy, the individual workers can suffer high costs: lost wages, costs of moving and retraining and the psychological costs of uncertainty and a disrupted life. In view of these considerations there is a clear role for governments to cushion the human costs linked to globalization.

Globalization has also been associated with the “race to the bottom” as the darkly logical scenario of environmental destruction and worker exploitation (Isaak, 2005). Where political jurisdictions are pressured by profit-seeking businesses to reduce their costly environmental regulations and labour standards or risk losing jobs and economic power as businesses relocate to more business friendly jurisdictions (Arif, 2000). While it is impossible to prove that environmental protection and workers rights would deteriorate further in the absence of globalization (Taylor, 2004). What appears to be occurring is a paradoxical development for both exploitation and liberation. Where at one level patterns of Mexican and Asian industrialization reveal the hegemonic capacity of patriarchal norms to define women’s labour as not only “cheap” but socially and economically worthless (and therefore less worthy of equitable pay and other treatment) (Marchand & Runyan, 2000; Wright, 1999, 2001). This makes a gendered labour force crucial to the accumulation strategies of global capital (Wright). Globalization also offers possibilities for social transformation where it has been associated with international public pressure for implementing basic standards of living -activated by tourists who will not tolerate a filthy environment or an exploited workforce (Tembo, 2004). Hence, the ultimate protection for the environment and for workers in low-income countries is an involved citizenry with an income level high enough to lift its sights above basic needs and allow other social values to take their rightful place (Marber, 2004; Taylor).

### *Inclusive Perspective of the Effects of Globalization*

It is clear that economic globalization is a powerful trend, driven by a combination of technological developments, profit-seeking businesses, and generally supportive public policy (Hing, 2002). Also evident is the divergent perspectives to both the positive and negative effects of globalization. While the supporters applaud its many benefits and perceive it as less pervasive, more fragile and not an irreversible trend (IMF; Marber, 2004; Taylor, 2004; UN). Those who oppose it characterize globalization as the source of all that is wrong in the modern world, including poverty, injustice, inequality, violence and war (Hing, 2002; Isaak, 2005; Taylor, 2004; Mills, 2003).

It is self-evident that the discourse on globalization has taken on a life of its own. Most pertinent to the analysis however, is that the dominant discourse is ideological and strongly normative, this neo-liberal reading of globalization is problematic to those who critique it (Gourinchas & Babb, 2002). The concern with the hegemonic discourse of globalization dominated by neo-liberalism is that it carries with it neutral connotations of seamless cross-border transactions, reduction of barriers between countries, market integration, hybridity and transnationalism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999). In contrast, the more critical dialogue are more reflective of real life transformations generated by the new capitalism, such as intense competition, downsizing, leaning of production, long-term unemployment and class polarization (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). It is therefore vitally important to acknowledge ideologies of globalization as representing the selective transmission of class-dominated values, otherwise it can obfuscate existing hegemonic arrangements within the social order, that strongly favour some interests over others (Mills, 2003; Wailes & Ramia, 2004).

The aim of this study therefore is to articulate and appropriate a different political vision from the ones embedded in the process of a neo-liberal version of globalization and to call for an alternative vision. The objective here is to adopt an inclusive perspective to the effects of globalization in order to address the crucial problems and deal with the needs of a rural regional community where the impacts are most heavily endured. A more complex analysis is facilitated from an ecological focus that examines the important role of agency, and how culture, structure and situated action interact in shaping understandings and contention in a particular national context. Following is a discussion of Australia's transition towards globalization set within a neo-liberal vision followed by the impacts endured by rural regional communities.

### *Neo-liberal Globalization – Australia's Transition*

Across the course of the late-20th century Australia also followed most other nation-states in opening up state boundaries to international capital and trade (James, 2007). Globalizing the national economy involved four dimensions:

deregulation, corporatization, privatization, and micro-economic reform (Jones, 2002). While many commentators attribute this to the economic rationalism of the current (Liberal) Howard government, it has a longer-term history going back to the Labor years of the 1980s when massive structural changes transpired in response to the pressures of globalization (Dahrendorf, 1996). According to James, by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century all was in place for proclaiming that opening the Australian economy to the global market was both necessary to avoid Third World status and to set the directions for a glorious if tricky path to the future. This strategy is evident in a 2001 federal government publication called *Globalisation and Poverty: Turning the Corner*, which concluded that “Faster and broader progress can be made in eradicating extreme poverty and further reducing inequality if policies for economic openness and reform are sustained, taken up by more developing countries, and supported by industrialized economies through development assistance and trade reform” (p. 26).

The conclusion was clear even if a little tentative—globalization is good. By 2003 any restraint about the claim had all but disappeared (James, 2007). A Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade publication felt comfortable to change the subtitle from *Turning the Corner to Keeping the Gains*. The document begins with the sentence ‘The experience of Australia and many of its successful East Asian neighbours shows globalizing economies, those that are open to international trade and investment, deliver their populations higher growth in per capita incomes and better standards of living than those that remain closed to the world’ (James).

It was clear that economic globalization had become our new utopia. However, as James commented the writers of neither documents seemed familiar with the numerous United Nations annual reports that documented increasing division of wealth and poverty across the world, with crises developing in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, “across the decade to which they so proudly pointed, 13-million children were killed by diarrhoea, a number that exceeds the count of all the people killed in armed combat since World War II. Each day, around the world, 30 000 children were still dying of preventable diseases” (p.

172). It appeared that for the writers of these documents, 'Australia' was doing well out of the globalization process and therefore it must be good for all.

In line with globalization imperatives, for more than two decades successive Australian governments have followed the worldwide trend in industrialized nations to devolve responsibility for social welfare programs to local areas and to non-government agencies -the stated rationale being to break down welfare dependency and to promote individual responsibility (Argent & Rolley, 2000; Beeson & Firth, 1998). The dismantling of the welfare state and the triumph of capitalism have been the defining features of the Australian landscape in recent years (Alston, 2000). Meanwhile globalizing trends have had significant effects on rural Australian people and this is discussed below.

#### *Impact of Globalization for Rural Australians*

Rural populations have higher rates of aging and ill health and many rural areas are experiencing increasing levels of poverty, unemployment and mental illness (Day, Kane & Roberts, 2003; Fraser, et al., 2005). It would appear that there has never been a more important time to increase social capital in rural communities (Kilpatrick, 2001; Warin, Baum, Kalucy, Murray & Veale, 2000). However, government policies of devolution, privatization and managerialism have been formulated with free market principles as the dominant determinant and with little apparent considerations of the effects on social capital (Lynch, Due & Muntaner, 2000). Services have been withdrawn in many rural areas, NGO's report being overloaded and under-funded (Alston, 2000). There is widespread acceptance of the view that Australian rural people are becoming more socially isolated and alienated (Alston, 2000; Fraser, et al., 2005).

Faced with declining terms of trade, drought, population decline and a corresponding withdrawal of Federal and State government support, Australia's rural communities are experiencing increasing difficulties in adaptation (Cox & Caldwell, 2000; Kilpatrick, 2001). While not entirely unique to Australia, there is, nevertheless, a tendency for these problems to be compounded by the sheer

size, isolation and harsh climatic conditions of its inland regions (Eversole & Martin, 2006; Gray & Lawrence, 2001). Federal and State governments have sought to address these problems through 'ad hoc' initiatives (Morrisey, 1996, p. 240) which Sher and Sher (1994, p. 20) have called the 'de facto dual track rural development strategy' which is agricultural policies 'topped up' by measures of social welfare (Lane & Morrison, 2006).

These policies such as, the former 'Rural Adjustment Scheme' have been guided by a common misconception in Australia that connotes the 'farm' and the 'rural' (Sher & Sher, 1994, p. 10). More recently, however, perhaps because of agriculture's fall from its hegemonic position in the contemporary countryside (Marsden & Murdoch, 1998), it has been increasingly recognized that the task of developing rural Australia is more than simply a matter of ameliorating the problems of agriculture (Gray & Lawrence, 2001; Zollinger, 2003). Current initiatives now focus predominantly on issues of rural *community* development, incorporating strategies for the sustainability of the economic, social and cultural spheres of rural life (Herbert-Cheshire, 1998b; Kilpatrick, 2001).

### *New Governance Regime – Rural Responsibility*

Primed with the goal of holistic advancement, contemporary strategies for rural development in Australia are based on notions of self-help and bottom-up, community-based initiatives that are said to 'empower' the individual from the imposing structures of government intervention (Murdoch, 1997; Ward & McNicholas, 1998). The ideology behind the new discourses of rural development is one based upon notions of individual and community responsibility, which mobilize the skills and resources of the local community (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000, 2003; Little, 2001). The community self-help initiative has largely been inspired by US practices of the 1970s and 1980s as well as the wisdom of Australian and New Zealand community economic development experts (for example, Peter Kenyon, 1998; John Wise, 1998) that have attempted to imitate the success of the US Nebraskan experience (see Gorzone Development Network *A Regional Development Strategy*, 1998, cited in Herbert-Cheshire, 2000).

From this perspective, successful initiatives were dependent on the ability of rural people to change their attitude; by ridding themselves of their 'victim consciousness', developing the 'right' approach to change (Gannon, 1998), taking responsibility for their own futures (Kenyon, 1998) and breaking the 'cycle of dependency' created by previous programmes of government intervention (Wise, 1998). Hence, government subsidies were considered to be neither efficient, entrepreneurial nor competitive (Gannon, 1998), but merely served to remove the incentive for both farmers and local communities to become more competitive in the global market and to initiate direct marketing strategies as a way of attracting investment into their regions (Considine & Lewis, 2003; O'Toole & Burdess, 2004). Echoing neo-liberal policies of personal responsibility, competition, efficiency and reduced assistance, such programmes are indicative of wider changes that have taken place in the form and function of the state (Lane, 2006; Murdoch & Abram, 1998) and the corresponding shift towards new, advanced liberal forms of governing (Edwards, 2001; Rose, 1993, 1996a,b; Rose & Miller, 1992).

Defined as 'the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred' (Stoker, 1998, p. 17), the concept of governance helps make sense of these recent changes by illustrating the extent to which governing styles have moved away from the formal, coercive powers of government towards a new form of governing that, as the above quotation suggests, involves a partnership between state and non-state (including community) actors (Head & Ryan, 2004). As O'Malley has argued (1996, p. 310), the attraction of governance lies in the apparent freedom of the non-state sector from government intervention and the impression that the decision making process is increasingly 'bottom-up', being based on the will of individuals or groups rather than being imposed from above (cited in Herbert-Cheshire, 2000, p. 204). In this sense, governance can be seen to represent two apparent shifts in the relationship between the state and civil society: "first, that individuals and their communities have become increasingly involved in the governing of social life; and second, that this inclusion of local



actors is seen to represent the simultaneous retreat of government 'as a rule is carried out by the community itself' (Herbert-Cheshire, 2003).

It is evident that these new forms of 'state' governance have impacted upon the sustainability of many communities, especially in rural areas. As O'Toole and Burdess (2004) noted the shift towards higher levels of governance have effectively promoted sustainability as the responsibility of the local people. This shift has been simultaneously assisted by policies at federal, state and local level aimed at giving resources to small communities to find their own 'solutions'. Programmes like Regional Solutions at federal level, Building Great Communities at state level and the use of Community Building consultants at local government level are all based on the premise of developing strategic plans for the sustainability of small towns and their localities (Harris, 2000; O'Toole & Burdess).

These policies of community capacity building have attempted to stimulate participation on a broader basis, especially in local development associations (Cox, 2002; Young, 2000). In so doing, governments at the local, state and federal level have attempted to shift the responsibility of local sustainability to community level (O'Toole & Burdess; Reddel, 2002). Hence, governing through community represents the creation of a new, non-political sphere of civil society that is supposedly 'free' to govern itself and take responsibility for its own future (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000; Lane, 2006). While a new civil society governance relation is vital to enhance community capacity in directing societal development, also important is a framework to guide community visions. In this regard sustainability has been embraced as a sound basis for integrating environmental, social and economic decision making for over a decade and Australia, like many countries, has adopted this principle as the cornerstone of its efforts to address environmental and societal challenges (Agyeman & Evans, 2004).

*Pathways towards Sustainability*

Almost twenty years since 'sustainability' catapulted into international prominence by the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on Environment and Development, (WCED) 1987), it continues to provoke conflict over its definition and interpretation (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999; Ratner, 2004). Rather than forcing agreement it makes more sense to regard sustainability as a discourse and accept a plurality of views and allow for a "disaggregated approach" to the concept (Dryzek, 1997, p. 129; O'Riordan & Voisey, 1997). However, for the purpose of clarity this research adopts the interpretation offered by Agyeman, Bullard & Evans (2003) of sustainability as "the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of a supporting ecosystems" (p. 5).

Unlike the dominant 1987 Brundtland and 1991 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definitions where justice and equity are at best implicit, Agyeman et al.'s (2003) is holistic and is explicit in its concerns for justice. For example, Agyeman & Evans (2004) highlight four main areas of concern: on quality of life, on present and future generations; on justice and equity in resource allocation and on living within ecological limits. These areas of concern move away from the dominant orientation of 'environmental sustainability' to represent 'just sustainability', a balanced approach including an explicit focus on justice, equity and environment together. Jacobs (1999) calls this the "the egalitarian" conception of sustainability.

While sustainability has become an official goal in many countries, Buhrs & Aplin (1999) highlight that their approaches can be classified into three categories: green planning; institutional reform and social mobilization. While the literature on green planning focuses primarily on environmental policy developments (Falloux & Talbot, 1993; Dalal-Clayton, 1996); institutional reform concentrates on how the sustainability agenda has led to *institutional* government responses (Papadakis, 1996; O'Riordan & Voisey, 1997). The third body of literature focuses on social mobilization, and the importance of

(promoting) a grass-roots approach to sustainability (Durning, 1989; Mander & Goldsmith, 1996). While none of these paths on its own is likely to achieve sustainability, countries often appear to develop a path dominated by one of these approaches (Buhrs & Aplin).

In Australia for example, while the green planning approach has been popular with the promotion of a number of key policies and strategies, the federal government is reluctant to adopt a strong stance on environmental issues and intervenes only when public support is high (Dovers & Williams, 1997). It is inclined to 'pass the buck' to other levels of government, the private sector, communities and individual citizens instead (Papadakis, 1996). Hence, the institutional reform approach has been less relied upon. On the other hand Australia can lay claim to advancing the social mobilization approach through its Landcare partnerships and other initiatives being undertaken in local communities (Alston, 2002; Buhrs & Aplin, 1999). While their effectiveness in terms of outcomes and as a pathway towards sustainability is less clear. What is clear is that within local communities and at the local government level, social mobilization as a pathway towards sustainability is becoming an increasingly important phenomenon in Australia (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000; Pye-Smith, Feyerabend, & Sandbrook, 1994; Woods, 2003). The sustainability concept therefore is an apt framework from which grass-roots action and changed governance relations occurring in local rural communities can be better understood. By adopting an explicit focus on justice, equity and the environment, it is particularly pertinent for evaluating the community's decision-making process towards community directed sustainability visions.

*Industrial Society to Risk Society –Community of Denmark*

To declare that rural communities are undergoing massive structural changes and adjusting themselves to deal with a variety of global, national and local pressures is a truism. Yet the lives of rural Australians are affected differentially as they absorb, deflect or reshape the various influences upon their lives. The shift from industrial society to what Beck terms the 'risk society' sets a

new context for local political practice (Beck, 1995). He argues that the conviction of industrial society with its emphasis on progress and its neglect of a consensus about ecological hazards have dominated the thought and action of people and institutions in industrial society (Beck, 1995). However, the paradigm has shifted and people are expected 'to live with a broad variety of different, mutually contradictory, global and personal risks' (Beck, 1995, p. 7). Beck's account gives us a way to theorise how the paradigm shift from industrial society to risk society affects the manner in which individuals and groups reshape their narrative in ways that lead them to new kinds of enterprise (Beck, 1992, 1999, 2000). Henderson uses Beck to argue that the shift to a risk society constitutes 'paradigms in progress' (Henderson, 1995).

Hence, globalisation, technological developments, economic and industry restructuring, deregulation, and the ideological dominance of economic rationalism in Australia have all created an environment of uncertainty for people in rural areas (Cheers, 1998). For Lupton, this uncertainty leads people to a reassessment of their risks in the light of structural and personal changes that take place in specific socio- cultural and historical contexts (1999, cited in Cheshire, 2000). In the south-western region of Western Australia, is the rural community of Denmark where the actions of the local community involving multi-level stake-holder collaboration in promoting sustainability oriented development is a case in point. The activities of the people in this community can be explained from a multi-level ecological perspective. Changes at global, national and local levels have impacted on the life history of this community. Their changed circumstances both personally and structurally have given them the impetus to play key roles in redefining local environmental, social and economic development within the new governance regime.

The local Shire of Denmark was selected as the perfect community from which rich understandings about community transition as they adapt to the impacts of globalization and other structural changes emanating from national and local contexts were gained. Denmark is also ideal for this case study as it embodies the characteristics of a vibrant democracy; rich cultural diversity and

strong sense of community and identity to place. This community provided the rich substantive domain as the site of this research as it resonates resilience and a fighting spirit to combat adversity.

### *Aims & Goals of Research*

The major tenets of community psychology include: the *valuing of difference*, the *empowerment of disadvantaged groups and individuals* (Murray, et al., 2004; Rappaport, 1997; Thomas & Robertson, 1990), the need to consider the *person in context* (Dokecki, 1992) and to work towards social change to promote the social justice needs of marginalized and disenfranchised groups (Nelson, Prilleltensky & MacGillivray, 2001; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). Also pertinent, the ecological model of community psychology acknowledges that social values, structures, and policies differentially affect subgroups within a population and that policies or service provision practices designed to suit the majority or dominant culture may not be effective for others (Kelly, 1968). The ecological model recognizes the diversity of human beings and aims to foster the availability of alternative environments in order to reflect this diversity (Murray, et al., 2004). It moves away from the view that everyone has to fit into a single way of life and that there is a single standard or set of values (Rappaport, 1977). However, difference from the dominant culture is still an important factor that creates disadvantages for many people.

Within Australia one group of people who are often perceived as not fitting into the dominant group are people living in rural and remote locations (McManus & Pritchard, 2000; Walmsley & Weinand, 1997). For these people, where public policies have been designed for the majority— often are not appropriate and do not adequately meet their needs (Alston, 2002; Bishop, Paton, Syme & Nancarrow, 1993). In Australia, public policy models strongly reflect the values of the dominant culture which is urban dwelling, which seems natural given that over 85% of Australians live in urban environments (Humphreys, et al, 2002). As rural areas are often placed at a disadvantage by the concentration of resources and decision-making in urban centres (Eversole &

Martin, 2006), the question of equity is particularly relevant. Development decision-making is thus interesting terrain in which to consider questions of rural governance and the agency of local rural communities.

Only recently has increased attention been given to remote and rural area dwellers (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). Changes are beginning to occur in government policy and in allocation of resources, with many of these reflecting the lobbying efforts of powerful groups instigated by people living and operating local businesses in remote and rural areas (Eversole & Martin, 2006; Shirmer & Tonts, 2003). It is therefore imperative to understand how neoliberal policies and specifically the operation of the new governance regime based on community responsibility for sustainability impacts the resilience of rural communities. This is important because the impact of these differences lay in the geographical, physical, cultural, social, economic, and psychological environments in which people live.

Most pertinent to the research is firstly focussing on the adequacy of government's macro-level policies and services to promote community sustainability and secondly the potential of the new governance relations emerging to promote community based initiatives that would deliver socially just outcomes. In keeping with the tenets of community psychology this thesis is guided by an overarching values framework of social justice that includes evaluating the needs of those most disadvantaged in the community are being met by both governments and local community initiatives.

### *Community Psychology & Qualitative Methodology*

The literature clearly articulates that rural communities in Australia have borne the brunt of local, national and global restructuring. Also pertinent is that there is a paucity of research focussing on their transition process at multi-levels of analysis. To gain contextual understandings of community in transition, which Beck refers to as 'paradigms in progress' this study adopts a qualitative approach within the critical community paradigm to promote social change

and to gain a substantive knowledge at ecological levels of analysis (Broffebrenner, 1979; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Wicker, 1989). Most pertinently, qualitative approaches to research reflect an underlying philosophy of science and set of methods that embody many of the values of community research and action (Banyard & Miller, 1998). Some community scholars advocate qualitative approaches as a way to better understand individual diversity and the nuance of social context (Trickett, 1996). Furthermore, qualitative methods are used to arrive at more ecologically-sensitive understandings facilitated by embracing a more eclectic attitude towards theory and methodology sanctioned within the discipline of community psychology (Syme & Bishop, 1993; Wicker, 1984; Prillentsky, 2003a).

To meet the overall aim of this study, that is to identify the critical issues the community faces in adopting a community mobilization approach to deal with the impacts of globalization and neo-liberal reforms, a qualitative descriptive method is deemed most useful for uncovering a rich portrayal of the domain (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 2000). To guide this study's potential contribution towards transformational change at the community-level, Prilleltensky's (2003b) concept of 'psychopolitical validity' has been used to enhance the analysis and social action aspects of this research. For example, by applying the conceptual rubric of Brofenbrenner's (1979) social ecological perspective a more holistic level analysis of the literature and community data is assured. Heflinger and Christens (2006) highlighted that ecological validity can be realized by attending fully to the many contexts of phenomena, including multiple levels of analysis, various domains (i.e. socio-cultural, physical, economic and political; Christens & Perkins). More problematic however, is achieving transformational community-level change. While the rationale for the transformative paradigm has considerable theoretical support it lacks research to guide its implementation (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Perkins et al. (2007) also identify community-level transformational change as an explicit goal for community psychology.

With multi-level transformational change as a focus this study adopted a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework to guide the analytical process and articulate a set of strategic responses that promote community sustainability within a social justice framework. While the concepts of globalization, sustainability and civil society aid the understanding of the macro-level influences impacting community functioning and change. The notions of sense of community, sense of place, social capital and transformational leadership provide a framework for understanding the meso-level processes implicated in building community resilience. Lastly at the micro level the concepts of empowerment and the political principles of fraternity, liberty and equality facilitate understandings of inclusion and exclusion. In combination these concepts provide an integral framework for understanding distributive and social justice values when multiple stakeholders with diverse levels of power collaborate to deal with community issues. Adopting a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework, following are the aims and goals of this study to capture the phenomenon from an ecological level of analysis.

1. To capture the community's understanding and response to the impacts of globalization, including inter-related effects emanating from local and national socio-political and economic changes.
2. To identify local applications of sustainability and the extent to which holistic notions of sustainability have guided community development initiatives.
3. To delineate the effectiveness of civil society processes operating to deal with the impacts of globalization and state devolution of responsibilities.
4. To identify characteristics of social capital applied by various sectors of the community in promoting social mobilization and collaboration in dealing with community issues.



5. To understand the link between sense of community, sense of place and transformational change towards a socially just sustainable future.

### *Structure of Thesis*

This chapter has provided an introduction to the issues underlying adverse social and economic conditions being experienced by rural regional communities in Australia and the dominant neo-liberal policy initiatives being pursued by governments to promote local community solutions to deal with the impacts of global economic reform. It began by discussing the agenda driving globalization followed by developments within Australia toward a new governance regime to promote community sustainability as a 'bottom up' community responsibility to combat the impacts of neo-liberal imperatives driving globalization reforms in Australia. This chapter also highlights the lacking focus on social justice outcomes in government policy initiatives that promote rural community development. The role of social justice in civil society groups promoting sustainability is also examined and discussed. The aims and objectives of the research including the methodology are outlined and an overview of the thesis structure is also provided.

Chapter two will provide a review of relevant literature exploring the depth of understandings related to globalization and specifically the social impacts endured by rural and remote communities since Australia joined the race towards the new capitalism agenda. In view of the ecological focus taken to the issues pertaining to community transition, this section identifies the macro, meso and micro-level multi-disciplinary theoretical frameworks that provide a broad contextual understanding about the way in which society, institutions and community function and inter-relate. The diverse theoretical frameworks provide a broad overview of the major players involved within this arena in order to appreciate the capacity of individuals in community to respond to the social impacts of globalization and to embrace bottom-up approaches to community sustainability.

This literature review will also provide the reader with a detailed analysis of the sustainability agenda which is the dominant policy prescription being adopted globally and in Australia as a means to deal with local issues and problems that have largely emanated from the forces of globalization. This section provides the reader with a detailed understanding of the domain under investigation and explains why the issues emanating from globalization and sustainability policy ascription are critical in envisioning a socially just society based on the values of emancipation and equity.

In chapter three the theoretical and conceptual methodological framework adopted for the study is described. Also following is the criteria underlying the selection of the approach advocated by community psychology as most suitable for community research to expose oppression and promote social change towards liberation. The research is situated within a social constructionist epistemology that explores community transition from a holistic perspective emphasizing the importance of the social, cultural, historic, and political context in which the various sectors of the community interact to influence social change within and outside their local communities. The study draws on aspects of a number of qualitative theoretical traditions: grounded and narrative theory. Including social constructionism where emphasis is on capturing the multiple constructions of reality involved when a diversity of community groups interact towards community goals. This research also adopts a critical theoretical perspective to identify the mechanisms by which marginalisation and exclusion operate, including hierarchies of power in order to promote reform towards more egalitarian structures.

This chapter also outlines the rationale for adopting a grounded theoretical approach to gain contextual data and for incorporating an eclectic multi-level conceptual framework as a heuristic guide to analyse the data emanating from the domain. This is followed by a detailed description of the research context and an explanation of the research methods used and the reasons surrounding these decisions. The research design is elaborated and this chapter also demonstrates the strengths of the three-stage data collection

process that offered the opportunity to refine and develop understandings of community transition. This process facilitated the researcher to understand community transition from a multiplicity of perspectives and to identify how structural change can be promoted towards more egalitarian processes and socially just outcomes for those who are marginalized and alienated by the process of community governance. In keeping with the tradition of grounded theory tradition and reflective iterative generative process, the multiple stages of data collection process enabled the testing of emergent hypotheses to arrive at an ecological level contextual analysis of community transition based on the experience of the Denmark community.

Chapter four provides detailed description of the ecological-level themes emanating from the community narratives to capture community issues and transition. Subsequently, the discussion entails analysis of the themes emerging from the substantive domain of Denmark and which have been grounded with the multi-disciplinary concepts (described in chapter 2 and 3) to capture rich inter-woven phenomena that is both pertinent and relevant to the research domain. Hence, this chapter examines the major phenomenon under investigation that is understandings related to globalization and the impact of this force for rural and regional communities facing the brunt of economic downturn. This chapter also captures the community's psychological and socio-political process of change in responding to the global imperatives of sustainability and neo-liberal policies driving local community initiatives. Most pertinent to the analysis is considerations of inclusion and social justice including power involved in promoting the sustainability goals of the community within the new multi-sector governance regime.

Chapter five discusses the implications of the data analysis in terms of addressing the impacts of globalization from a community mobilization approach, within a sustainability paradigm and in terms of delivering just processes and outcomes. Specifically this chapter incorporates multi-disciplinary literature to highlight ecological level factors implicated in promoting the social, economic, environmental needs of the community. The focus also includes

examination of the new governance relations for promoting empowering processes to deliver the social justice needs of those most vulnerable in the community. A key finding to emerge is that while the community has endured adverse socio-economic impacts and development and social justice outcomes are uneven, they reflect unity in their strong relational bonds to the community and spiritual connections to the beauty of their natural geography.

## **CHAPTER TWO - Multi-Disciplinary Literature Review**

*Chapter two will provide a review of relevant literature exploring the depth of understandings related to globalization and specifically the social impacts endured by rural and remote communities since Australia joined the race towards the new capitalism agenda. In view of the ecological focus taken to the issues pertaining to community transition, this section identifies the macro, meso and micro-level multi-disciplinary theoretical frameworks that provide a broad contextual understanding about the way in which society, institutions and community function and inter-relate. The diverse theoretical frameworks provide a broad overview of the major players involved within this arena in order to appreciate the capacity of individuals in community to respond to the social impacts of globalization and to embrace bottom-up approaches to community sustainability.*

*This literature review will also provide the reader with a detailed analysis of the sustainability agenda which is the dominant policy prescription being adopted globally and in Australia as a means to deal with local issues and problems that have largely emanated from the forces of globalization. This section provides the reader with a detailed understanding of the domain under investigation and explains why the issues emanating from globalization and sustainability policy ascription are critical in envisioning a socially just society based on the values of emancipation and equity.*

## **CHAPTER TWO – Literature Review**

*“We need, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new ethics, because I don’t think that with the ethics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – with so much greed, individualism, cynicism, hypocrisy – we can really build a more peaceful world”.*

Dr Arias Sanchez, Nobel Laureate (1987).

### *Overview - Globalization and a Quest for Social Justice*

The “vigorous pursuit of principles such as justice, fairness, individual rights, equity, respect for human dignity and pursuit of the common good” constitutes the essential elements of the goals or purposes of government (Denhardt, 1991, p. 275). Yet there is growing inequality between peoples and nations of essential resources and opportunities. Some U.S. policy makers predict the mounting poverty and inequality in Africa and Asia as posing national security threats in a post-9/11 world (Mirchandani & Condo, 2003). Echoing this sentiment Nobel Laureate Sanchez suggests that: “ we need to look at the real threats to humankind: illiteracy, poverty, and inequality. More importantly, wealthy countries need to transform greed and selfishness by supporting freer trade rather than prioritizing military mobilization in the battle against terrorism (cited in Mirchandani & Condo, p. 120).

Also expressing concern over the transition to a new world order, Newbrough (1998) observed: “The Post-Modern era has begun ... there are major dislocations of production, there are many new ideas, there are many old ideas, there is a cry for good leadership and there are many indications that things are not working, or are no longer acceptable” (p. 25). Also vexing is the assertion that globalization is vital for progress of society, as Wallerstein (1982) admonished: “...the world is in the midst of a crisis, structural and therefore fundamental, very long term and therefore one that lends itself not to a “solution” but to an “unfolding” ... the crisis [is the] demise of the capitalist world economy. ...It seems to be a crisis of transition ... to a [new] world order (p. 549).

Globalization is a powerful real aspect of the new-world system, and it represents one of the most influential forces in determining the future course of the planet. While it encompasses multifaceted dimensions: economic, political, security, environmental, health, social, cultural, and others (Intrilligator, 2004). It is important because debates about globalization can illuminate a world in which time and space have become so dramatically compressed that distant actions in one corner of the globe have rapid and significant repercussions on people and places far away (Giddens, 1994; Harvey, 1989; McGrew, 1989). Two ideas however, are central to the globalization story. Globalisation is said firstly to render the disappearance of national cultural difference, as a tidal wave of homogeneity engulfs us; secondly, it is apparently something over which we have no choice (Watts, 1999).

While the process of transformation described as "globalization" is neither a panacea nor a catastrophe. Both the reality and the perception of this concept need vital consideration (Merchandani & Condo, 2003). Sanchez (1987) pointed out that globalization is not a new phenomenon, we have had globalized wars and diseases for thousands of years. But what is different is the new phenomenon of globalization of capital flows, of technology, of communications, telecommunications, foreign direct invest, etc (Intrilligator, 2004). In the words of Thomas Friedman (2000) "globalization today is deeper, cheaper and faster" but we have had many globalized issues for centuries (Merchandani & Condo, 2003, p. 118).

Portraying the impact of a new and very different globalization process, Sumner (2003) argued that while communities around the world are feeling the impacts of global cultural, social and political forces, most overwhelming are the forces that stem from the economic forces known as corporate globalization. As the author emphasized the process promotes the rights of transnational corporations over other sorts of rights, such as human rights, women's rights, labor rights, indigenous rights, or environmental rights. As her powerful words demonstrates: "corporate rights are promoted by policies that seek to lower corporate taxes and accommodate international flows of speculative capital,

policies that seek to reduce public expenditures and privatize public services, and policies that seek to deregulate business and secure monopoly private property rights under law" (p. 39).

While many have powerfully campaigned the negative impacts of globalization, other writers are equally passionate about the beneficial outcomes associated, such as economic growth, income distribution and poverty reduction (Diaz-Bonilla, et al., 2002). This message clearly articulated by the Centre for International Economics:

"Economic integration ...an important part of the process of globalization – has allowed remarkable, but frequently unrecognised, progress against poverty and global inequality. Sound policy choices are crucial...to make further inroads into poverty and inequality. Policy choices that enable economies to take advantage of global opportunities and national measures to mitigate inequality ... and global action to reduce trade barriers are the key to accelerating progress" (Globalization & Poverty, 2001).

### *Responses to Globalisation*

Just as there is a range of interrelated domains and dimensions of globalisation, a range of political responses reflecting differing assumptions about the desirability and irreversibility of these trends have been further categorised. Wiseman (1998) captured the strategic responses under the following categories: 'fanatical supporters'; 'progressive competitors'; 'conservative sceptics' and 'socialist challengers'. While the 'fanatical supporters' champion global capitalism, they see national boundaries and destinies are simply barriers to be overcome. Enhancing the bargaining power of the corporation and undermining the legal and political regulatory power of national state institutions becomes the primary goal with the construction of regional treaties and agreements protecting the rights of property and capital as



key tools in this process (Mattli, 2000; O'Hara-Deveraux & Johansen, 1994). On the other hand the 'progressive competitors' are pessimistic about the loss of national policy-making sovereignty, deepening inequality and social conflict in a borderless world (Intrilligator, 2004; Linklater, 1998).

The conservative sceptics are also deeply concerned about the increasingly dominant position of transnational corporations in national political debates and policy-making processes (Hing, 2003; Lind, 1995). However, at the other end of the political spectrum, the socialist challengers advance both a powerful case for the inequitable and undemocratic consequences, along with great vision for social and political change (Stirling 2005). Indeed, within this perspective impetus is created for new emancipatory experiments and creative relationships to emerge from global diversity and cooperation (Hing, 2002; Seabrook, 1993). As we cannot avoid living in a more interdependent world, it is imperative to understand both the reality and the perception of globalization. To establish more precisely the processes, costs and benefits of globalization, more careful analysis of its manifestation at the local level is warranted. Following is the dominant discourses relevant to globalization, particularly, in terms of its impact on the social, economic, environmental and governance relations within rural regional communities in Australia.

### *Impact of Globalization for Rural Communities in Australia*

The transition toward a neo-liberalist 'new' world order has been a relatively smooth process within the Australian context (Cerny, 1990), consequently, significant demographic, social and economic change has come to characterize much of rural Australia. This restructuring process, which is similar to other western nations, has had a profound impact upon rural places, socially, economically and physically (Fraser, et al., 2005). Evaluating the processes and outcomes of social sustainability in Australia, Meagher (2000) championed, that when the market mechanism becomes the primary legitimate means of social integration, significant social dislocation can result. "In Australia, one way ...that this *dislocation* can be observed is through exacerbated rural-urban polarization,

and the consequent emergence of destructive, populist political responses in hard-hit non-metropolitan areas" (p. 74).

Also supporting this perspective, Fincher and Wulff (1998) pointed out that several trends coincide to engender growing inequality between metropolitan areas and 'the bush'. First, employment opportunities in primary and secondary industries have rapidly declined since the 1960s. Second, counter-urbanization is occurring, as some disadvantaged and low-income Australians relocate outside metropolitan centres to reduce housing and living costs. Third, many public facilities in rural and regional Australia are closing as privatisation and corporatisation of previously public functions proceeds, driven by policies aimed at reducing the size of the public sector (p. 150-151). Indeed, Fincher & Wulff linked the emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation political party as a prominent political repercussion of the relative economic decline in many rural and regional areas. Although, One Nation's policy platform was backward-looking, even racist, it nevertheless, struck a chord with some of those who felt: "that rapid and corrosive economic and social change has been thrust upon them by governments who care too little for the consequences of their home-grown structural adjustment program for their constituents" (ACIRRT, 1999, p. 158).

A number of writers highlighted that by the 1970s, increasing production of basic commodities such as wheat, wool and beef, largely as a result of improving farm technologies (particularly in developing nations) contributed to international surpluses and a sharp decrease in returns to farmers (Fraser, et. al., 2005; Lawrence, 1996; Le Heron, 1993). Rural decline has therefore been strongly tied to diminishing terms of trade for primary produce, particularly agriculture, within global markets (McKenzie, 1994b). During this time the process of agro-industrialisation was occurring, leading to a centralization of agricultural production, (Burch & Rickson, 2001) and a drive towards economically competitive production (McMichael & Lawrence, 2001). The result has been farm amalgamations, fewer farming families (A decline of 22% since 1986) (ABS, 2003a, b) and reduced employment of paid labour (Lawrence & Williams, 1990).

The declining number of farms and the wider sourcing of farm inputs (Lawrence, 1996) also had a detrimental effect upon the economy and population of the towns servicing farming areas (Budge, 1996).

Despite facing great economic and social difficulties, many agricultural communities confronting falling international commodity prices and severe environmental degradations have also had their prosperity undermined (Bishop, Paton, Syme & Nancarrow, 1993; Gray & Lawrence, 2003). There is now a considerable body of literature both documenting and theorizing the economic and social changes affecting rural areas (Friedland, et. al., 1991; Green & Reid, 2004; Marsden et. al., 1993; Bonanno et. al., 1994; Burch et al, 1999, Gray & Lawrence 2001). One of the recurring themes is an apparent shift from a world economy based around the principles of mass production and consumption towards an economy based on more flexible production systems, diverse consumption patterns and the exploitation of highly profitable niche markets (Tonts & Selwood, 2003). In many respects this is reflected in the rural landscape, which is characterized by large-scale farms that produced one or two standardized commodities and country towns that simply serviced the surrounding agricultural industry (Greive & Tonts, 1996). Indeed, as Lawrence & Williams observed (1990): “more productive agriculture is coming to mean less productive and viable rural communities” (p. 40). Also concerned about the impact of population decline, Walmsley & Sorenson (1990) added that a significant fall in population leads to a reduction in the demand for goods, a subsequent decline in production of goods and services, decreased employment opportunities and further out-migration in rural areas (Fincher, 1999; McKenzie, 1994a).

### *Rural Community Decline*

However, with the collapse of the wheat, wool and barley markets (Budge, 1996); a dramatic fall in land values and simultaneous increase in interest rates (Smalles, 2000) and widespread drought (Budge, 1996) the 1980s and 1990s proved to be one of the most difficult periods for farmers in Australia.

At the same time, to stimulate domestic economies, governments were reducing both state interventions in the economy and the burdens of state expenditure and debt (Beresford, 2000; Gray & Lawrence, 2001). In Australia, these reforms included the reduction of tariffs, the deregulation of banking and finance industries, the removal of farm subsidies and the gradual deregulation of statutory marketing authorities (Burke & Lockie, 2001; Zollinger, 2003).

This cycle was also compounded by the trend towards centralization of public and private sector services (particularly health, education and financial services) taking jobs, capital and people out of rural areas to large regional or metropolitan cities (Lawrence, 1999; Raiston & Beal, 1997). The withdrawal of public sector employment, which accounts for up to one-third of employment in small country towns, (Jones & Tonts, 1995) also removed the regular 'drought-proof' income from communities, which can be heavily affected by the seasonal variations in the agricultural economy (Smailes, 1997). Whilst this persistent process of decline lead to out-migration, it can also lead to 'entrapment'; as property values fall and there are few buyers, house-holds may be unable to sell their property at prices that allows them to relocate to more prosperous areas (Budge, 1996).

A number of studies have also shown that the loss of amenities such as schools, hospitals and banks can have a social and psychological impact upon the town's remaining residents (Argent & Rolley, 2000; Frasier et. al., 2005; Raiston & Beal, 1997) and reduce the sense of cohesion and participation of community members (Witten, et al., 2001). Smailes (2000) argues that the removal of services, such as banks and shops, to larger centres, undermines community cohesion, as the mutually reinforcing nexus between social and commercial activity is removed. Another social dimension to depopulation is the characteristics of those who stay and those who leave declining rural areas. The majority of out-migrants are between 15 and 35 years of age (Black et. al., 2000; Productivity Commission, 1999). The loss of this age group often leads to a shortage of individuals who have the capacity for maintaining and participating in sporting clubs, recreational and volunteer organizations which are often a

strong component of a town's sense of identity and community (Productivity Commission).

This group also represents the 'child bearing' section of the community, pointing to further population decline (Hugo, 1994). Some studies from the US and Australia have found that people who leave declining rural areas are more likely to be better educated and have greater job prospects, (Fitchen, 1995) whilst those who move into these areas are overwhelmingly from low-income groups (Fincher & Wulff, 2001). Another feature of declining areas is the migration of low-income families attracted by depressed rural property prices and lower costs of living (Fincher & Wulff, 1998). In some instances this has led to a high concentration of low-income families in areas creating an 'us' and 'them' mentality between newer and older residents and inadequate levels of service provision for new households (Fincher & Wulff).

#### *Counter-urbanisation and Rural Renaissance*

Research however, suggests that Australia has experienced a more complex pattern of population change in rural areas, with two sharply differentiated zones of growth and decline emerging in rural Australia (Hugo, 2001). Whilst some of the strongest growth rates in the country are being recorded in the attractive coastal and mountain environments and urban fringe areas (Hugo, 1994), widespread decline is continuing in inland agricultural regions and to a lesser extent, mining towns (McKenzie, 1994ab). However, the factors that underpin rural decline and growth are often exogenous to rural areas themselves and are tied to national and international economic and political dynamics (Cloke, 1996). This has clearly been true in the Australian setting. Whilst rural decline is widespread, it is far from uniform across all rural areas. The contrasting picture in rural Australia is of significant population growth and migration to picturesque and coastal rural towns in close proximity to major urban centers (known as exurban areas). No single theory has been developed to explain rural repopulation (Champion, 1989) however, a number of reasons have been suggested (Dahms & McComb, 1999).

In Australia, research suggests that changing employment patterns have underpinned counter-urbanisation trends – with a range of industries including transport, utilities and tertiary sectors all experiencing growth in rural areas. As Hugo (1989) identified those employed in these occupations, the 25-39 year old age group with young families dominated internal migration flows to rural areas. On the other hand, the movement of retirees and others to coastal communities for lifestyle reasons and the reduced cost of living has also been a driver of growth in these regions (Curry, et al., 2001). Other areas of population growth are large inland regional centres that are not dependent on agriculture and mining (Eves, 1998). However, the reported impacts of counter-urbanisation have been mixed.

Pagquette & Domon (2003) reported that the migration of urban population groups to rural areas bring a range of opportunities to local communities, such as increased demand for new functions and services. This in turn leads to increased rural income levels, employment opportunities and net investment in rural housing stock (Stockdale, et. al., 2000). On the other hand, counter-urbanisation has also been described as a double-edged sword (Fielding, 1990) creating tensions between ‘old’ and ‘new’ residents in some communities (Curry, et al., 2001; Jones & Tonts, 2003) increased demand for limited housing stock and reduced affordability for ‘locals’ (Jones & Tonts, 2003) the impact of changing social structures on local decision-making processes (Grieve & Tonts, 1996) and the environmental impact of new housing and agricultural pursuits (Black et al., 2000).

### *Negative Impacts for Rural Communities*

While neo-liberal restructuring exposed Australian farmers to a volatile global economy, the cumulative impacts of centralization have also exacerbated their already deteriorating financial position. For many the only solution was to leave the industry (Productivity Commission, 1999). For others exploiting niche markets and commodity diversification and innovation have met with mixed success (Tonts & Selwood, 2003). While some farmers have met

with failure, for others it has been vital to remaining competitive in the global economy (Gasson, 1988). While highly cognizant of the inherent risks of oversupply associated with profitable niche markets, increasing numbers of regions have expanded into rural tourism, this is often based on landscape amenity, heritage architecture, special events (such as country music festivals), vineyards and various forms of craft industry (Gray & Lawrence, 2001). The outcome of these trends has often seen the emergence of more vibrant and resilient local and regional economies (Gray & Lawrence).

Nevertheless, while some communities have indeed prospered from diversification and innovative entrepreneurial activities, many authors have highlighted that national economic restructuring and globalization are seismically shifting the foundations of the rural industry with adverse consequences for those most vulnerable (Blair, 1998; Tonts & Selwood, 2003). These profound changes have resulted in many rural communities having witnessed population, physical, commercial and human infrastructure undergo considerable erosion - or "adjustment" as it is known (Falk, 1999a, MacKenzie, et al., 1999). Many groups in the affected communities are struggling to be positive, to face "challenges" and to create their own agenda for developing a sound social and economic base for their communities (Editor, 1997).

These forces have created a situation where many country towns are in decline and community morale is low (Day, Kane & Roberts, 2003). The impact of these problems is apparent in rural health statistics. Death rates are higher in rural and remote areas than in metropolitan areas (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1998). Rural populations have more male youth suicide, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, chronic disease, and socio-economic disadvantage (Harvey & Hodgson 1995; Rolley & Humphreys, 1993). Also, rural health workers report increasingly more substance abuse, low morale, and longer working hours – all of which lead to a greater risk of accidents, and less involvement in community activities (Department of Human Service and Health, 1996).

Many sociologists (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1998; Putnam, 1993b) have theorised that integral to community vitality and resilience is social capital, however, more pertinently, Algie (1999) attributed the demise of community as fundamentally linked to declining levels of rural social capital. Given Australia's context in which a market capitalist society operates, social capital is defined as investments and services to include banks; transport infrastructure; power; water utilities; communications services; as well as health and education that create the economic framework of our society (Falka, 1999). Social capital therefore has economic significance, without "infrastructural" investments the rest of the market economy cannot operate and hence society cannot meet its material needs and collapses (Algie). It is clear that these processes have generated a range of social problems for rural communities. In many areas of rural Australia the phenomena of rural depopulation, an ageing population, the withdrawal of services and the contraction of local economies have debilitated rural communities to the point where, in many cases their sustainability as viable social units is questionable (Jones & Tonts, 1995; Tonts & Selwood, 2003).

Also recording the cumulative processes associated with rural decline, Lawrence (1994) stated that the erosion of employment opportunities as farms become larger and less labour intensive, along with improvements in transport technology appear to be the fundamental causes of depopulation in rural communities. Also significant, these processes have considerable implications for the social sustainability of rural communities as rural population loss produces negative multipliers resulting in the contraction of local economies, the withdrawal of services and further demographic decline (Meagher, 2000). For example, a significant trend contributing to the social impact is the exodus of young people due to the lack of education and employment opportunities and the ageing of the population in rural Australia (Hugo, 1994; McKenzie, 1994). The decline of population is both a cause and consequence of rural social and economic change (Bunce, 1982). As Jones & Tonts (1995) clarified the loss of the younger generation due to a lack of education and employment opportunities results in reduced demand for existing public and private services.



Consequently, services are rationalized or withdrawn, resulting in further population decline and reduced access to local services and employment opportunities.

When small communities lose their residents, it affects the capacity of voluntary organizations, self-help groups and community networks to fill community roles - a prerequisite for enhancing social capital and civil society processes (Falk, 1999a; Wiseman, 1998). Advocates emphasize greater recognition by governments to the impact of declining levels of social capital in rural communities. Falk & Kilpatrick (2000) argued that this point is now being reached in many rural communities - where towns are dying and people are migrating to the cities. Combined with the fact that governments' as major providers of social capital have under intense economic pressure cut spending, social capital has borne the brunt (Falk, 1999a, p. 90). Is it any wonder that many in the bush feel that governments are ignoring them and policies only favour city dwellers (Falk, 1999). Given that social capital is becoming less of a *citizenship right* and more a matter of ability to pay, this results in exclusion of many vulnerable people and makes them less able to contribute to society (Algie, 1999). These structural impediments have reached a stage where all rural communities have in common a high degree of vulnerability to rapid change and extreme malaise (Wildman, et al., 1990).

Also corroborating the negative consequences of globalization for rural Australia, Zollinger (2003) identified, that neo liberalism carries the seeds of its own demise, as it promotes materialism and fragmentation of institutions. More pertinently, as rural areas experience rising inequality and marginalization, many in the bush are unhappy with the new governance, as: "...laissez faire government is inferred to cause dissenting voices being heard from many parts of rural Australia (p. 464). On a more positive note, Gray & Lawrence (2001) maintained that it is this very reality that may act as the impetus for rural dwellers to mobilize together toward shaping a future that is economically viable and environmentally sustainable. "Through collective reflexivity rural dwellers can become empowered to take advantage of some aspects of globalization and

bend policy in a manner that captures economic potential while protecting rural areas " (p. 465).

It is clear from the literature that the negative consequences of globalization and restructuring are unevenly shouldered by those most vulnerable in society. Reflecting on Australian values, Wiseman (1998) grieves most the sacrificing of the fundamental characteristics of Australian culture, all in the name of progress. In his powerful words he wrote that:

"The most disturbing development is the extent to which egalitarian and cooperative values have been swept away by the relentless narrowing of alternative policy visions, debates and agendas within and beyond Australia. "The struggle for victory at all costs on the global racetrack is fundamentally incompatible with the goals of sustainable production, fair distribution, cooperative citizenship and democratic sovereignty" (p. 55).

Social theorists established that conditions, changes and developments occurring within local communities can be attributed to external social forces (Hunter & Riger, 1986). To gain understandings of the multiple elements influencing rural community adjustment from a social injustice perspective – an ecological framework incorporating intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, state, national and global levels of analysis are imperative (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994). The researcher's most appropriate role in seeking to gain a contextual understanding of phenomena requires discerning the various levels of meaning that different entities create. To grasp a holistic perspective of the issues, an examination of the multi-disciplinary literature that contributes to a multi-level understanding of the change processes occurring within rural communities, in Australia and globally is essential. To gain a macro-level understanding of the global and national forces reshaping rural and remote Australia, the first literature to be reviewed is globalization, followed by sustainability.

*Macro Level Influences - Making Sense of Globalization Narrative*

Since the term “globalization” first appeared in the early 1970s, the scholarly and popular discourse of globalization has grown exponentially in both size and complexity. There is also little consensus in the field about its definition and what elements it does or should incorporate. Characterizing some commonalities of globalization, Jones (2004) includes the “appearance of global markets in finances, goods and services, and labour, the convergence of consumer demand across different societies; the lowering of traditional barriers to trade and investment (along with a related convergence of government macroeconomic policies); and key technological developments in the areas of information processing, communications, transportation and organization that lower the transaction costs of doing business across national borders” (p. 326).

Central to the concept of globalization, is the suggestion that somehow it is unprecedented (Graham & Neu, ). Challenging the ‘unprecedented-ness’ of globalization, Amin (2001) justified that globalization can be regarded as merely a renewed form of imperialism, with today’s multinational corporations mirroring earlier entities like the British East India Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company. Other researchers (e.g. Szeman, 2001) have also questioned the originality of globalization as a theory, pointing to Adam Smith in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Marx and Engels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and various social theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as having anticipated our current fascination with globalization. Some researchers (e.g. Hirst & Thompson, 1999) have also questioned the theoretical legitimacy of ‘globalization’ suggesting that it is nothing more than a fashionable catch-all.

Nevertheless, the consensus is that globalization is not a new process, (Hirst & Thompson, 1999) but what is new about the current process is the extent to which time and space have been compressed by new information, communication and transportation technologies (Robertson, 1990; Jones, 2002). Wiseman (1998) also highlighted a key concern associated with the extraordinary speed and spread of global flows, particularly in relation to

information and financial transactions. "It, has threatened the capacity of people and governments to regulate, resist or even fully comprehend the local impact of transformations that result from actions and decisions taken on the other side of the globe" (p. 15).

While advocates of global restructuring eulogise its benefits for all, Sheridan (1995) asserted that more honest accounts also recognise that "globalisation does produce losers, serious losers, long term losers, and strategies have to be found to help them" (p. 9). Portraying serious pitfalls for workers and the environment, Sweeney (1994) warned: "The real danger is that the fierce pressure to attract footloose capital, expand exports and compete on more open world markets generates a process variously described as "downwards harmonisation", a "race to the bottom", "competitive austerity" or "the low road to restructuring" in which there is constant downward pressure on wages, working conditions, social programs, environmental protection and democratic rights (p ). The review below will clarify the diverse notion of "globalization" and the potential benefits and costs stemming from its implementation.

### *The Rebirth of the Neoliberalism Creed*

Gourinchas & Babb (2002) wrote that market-based economic policies became institutionalized as a nearly global policy paradigm since the 1970s. Then by the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, markets came progressively to be seen as the most desirable mechanism for regulating both domestic and world economies (Gourinchas & Babb; Levitt, 1983). Incorporating a set of economic principles often identified as "neoliberalism" this became part of the accepted framework for thinking about and acting upon the economy on a global scale (Ohmae, 1989; 1991). One after another, national governments of both left and right implemented a wave of reforms – privatizations, dismantling of social welfare apparatuses, retreat of the state from economic regulation, tax cuts, opening of national boundaries – that profoundly transformed the relationship between their citizens and the economy (Campbell & Peterson, 2001; Rodgers,

2001). These changes mostly proceeded at a steady pace for over two decades without encountering much opposition (Intriligator, 2004).

This unchallenged legitimacy of market rule, is depicted by Gourinchas & Babb's (2002) as the "...reshaping of established social and ideological arrangements along market lines reflects a deep transformation of both the way in which modern economies are understood and the way they function" (p. 535). However, this universal 'neoliberal' transition from an interventionist era is viewed from two perspectives. The critics interpret it as a manifestation of the increasing control of capital (both domestic and international) over labour (Epstein and Gintis, 1992; Stange, 1988), or the imposition, by a set of international agencies and financial institutions of disciplinary policies (e.g. conditional loans, retaliation measures) that ultimately serve the interest of the world hegemonic power, the United States (Krasner, 1968; Stallings, 1992; Stiglitz, 2002, cited in Gourinchas & Babb, 2002, p. 535). This "coercive" perspective is mainly viewed as a by-product of the state of power relations among social groups or nations (Beeson & Firth, 1998). In the pro-globalization view, proponents of the free markets simply argue, that neoliberal transitions are favoured because their policies "work" better than statist ones (Taylor, 2002). It's worth noting that this "economic" view is distinctly associated with a vast international community of economic experts, many of who also participated directly in the implementation of neoliberal reforms (Williamson, 1994; Edwards, 1995; Radelet & Sachs, 1997). Nevertheless, these two views are not necessarily incommensurable.

Many writers have linked postwar economic globalization as the driving force behind the worldwide spread of market-friendly policies since the 1970s (Frieden, 1995; Maxfield, 1997b; McNamara, 1998; Kitschelt, et al., 1999). However, many claimed that little choice emerged for nations to pursue alternative paths. Given a context where production and finance became "flexible" and "globalized", (Piore & Sabel, 1984; Helleiner, 1994; Boyer & Hollingsworth, 1997; Castells, 2000) taking control of the economy increasingly became elusive (Beck, 2000; Guillen, 2001). Particularly, when the universal

ideology ordained by international market forces was interpreted by policy actors: "...as the only way to achieve growth, regardless of whether the course of action is rationalized in negative terms (e.g. "If we don't adapt to the global economy by making labor more flexible and opening our capital markets, we will fall behind") or more positive ones (e.g. "If we want to reap the benefits of economic and financial globalization, then we have to be more free trade and market oriented") (Gourinchas & Babb, 2002, p. 535).

*Critical Reflections and Politics of Resistance*

Considerable influence towards a neo-liberal transition is attributed to international normative pressures in constructing the liberalization process as "inevitable" (Centeno, 2001). Many sociologists recognize international norms (e.g., the belief in the "market logic") are social constructions of an elite powerful group (Kaplinski, 2000). Where the systematic institutionalization worldwide of economic policy has been efficiently engineered by rationalized others, for example, international organizations (e.g., United Nations, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], International Monetary Fund [IMF]) and associations, science, and the professions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Haas, 1992; Finnemore, 1993; Meyer, 1994; Meyer, et al., 1997). It is clearly evident that the dominant discourse is ideological and strongly normative, largely reflecting the optimistic visions of the transnational elites (Centeno).

The dominance of biased visions is problematic for Hing (2002) particularly when the image portrayed "is one of unity, globalism, and integration by international media and intercontinental hotels" (p. 305). Furthermore the supremacy of this representation effectively excludes the more critical definitions of globalization and appreciations of the impacts of the new capitalism for different communities (Bezuidenhout, et. al., 2003; Barrientos & Krizinger, 2003). To rectify this imbalance, Hing (2002) promotes alternative depictions more reflective of real life transformations that include a variety of contrary experiences, such as "...intense competition, downsizing, leaning of production,

long term unemployment and class polarization" (p. 306). The consensus therefore is that the process of globalization is multi-dimensional with multiple intentionalities (Marber, 2005). Moreover, if the intention is to promote a politics of resistance and avoid the pitfalls associated with an unquestioning acceptance of globalization, it is vital to understand the distinctive aspects and levels associated with the process (Martin & Schuman, 1997; Tilly, 1995).

Hing, (2002) identified four levels of globalization. The most crucial is the separation between advances in technology and concentration of economic power. While many applaud the expansion of communication and information technology, these narrow perspectives cannot be trivialised as they have grave impact on industrial production, organization and distribution. Again, while the power of info-communication has propelled the potential might of capital, the dispossessed can also use it to shift the balance of power between the classes (Hing). The next level concerns the concentration of economic power that is clearly demonstrated by the rise of anti-globalization movements and other events revealing the might of the U.S. Mobilization efforts to oppose WTO processes in Seattle and other cities have highlighted both the possibilities and limits to an alternative globalization (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005).

Also of concern, is the economic and military might of the US as it has translated to the subordination of others and universalization of US standards on human rights and electoral democracy (Hing, 2002). These events have incited nationalistic fears about the diminished status accorded to indigenous cultures and economy (Mills, 2003; Rudolph, 2005). Free market propagation has therefore become entwined with "subversion of collective dignity and self-respect, enhancing intensification of a sense of nationalism and demand for protection" (Hing, p. 306). Politicians however, have been quick to seize on the fear and anxiety incited by these events by peddling exasperation and fanaticism to masquerade their own failings to the structuring of a "bad" globalization (Wiseman, 1998).

According to Hing (2002) a third level referred to as the 'bashing of cultures' concerns the powerlessness faced by many developing nations on the path toward the new capitalism. For example, accompanying the penetration of universal cultural goods, images, and aesthetics is that they contribute to the demeaning of local cultural pride. Some changes that have transpired, involve cultural commodity consumption as part and parcel of the social fabric. However, the cultural economy represents just one aspect of the convergence of culture, economy and politics (Hing). This process of de-differentiation (Jameson, 2000) on a global scale appears contrary to the earlier processes of differentiation that had accompanied capitalist industrialization (Saunders, 1993). Nevertheless, optimistic opportunities are offered by the expansion of cultural homogeneity brought on by globalization. It can be adapted for humanitarian and social justice purposes by trade unions and other civil society sectors when strategizing for mobilization of solidaristic movements (Taylor, 2004).

The fourth level involving the collusion of the state is also wholly transparent. As Hing (2002) highlighted, the free market requires enormous levels of state intervention: " ,,,fundamentally to power the market; to fabricate the human as appropriate instruments for the production regime; and for the long-term sustenance of global capitalism" (p. 307). It is easily observed that ideologies of globalization represent the selective transmission of class-dominated values, however the ominous repercussions are that it masks hidden processes of fragmentation and the divided world we live in (Dore, 2000; Jameson, 2000). Imperative therefore is vigilance to the sheer hype of buzzwords from globalization discourses that obfuscate existing hegemonic arrangements within the social order that strongly favour some interests over others (Mills, 2003). Only by critically questioning the discourse of globalization can one question its inevitability and deflect it as an irresistible force (Hing). The way forward lies in promoting visions of a world based on collaboration and closer interactions between individuals, groups, communities and nations, otherwise the oppressive power relations over those most vulnerable are entrenched (Wailles, Ramia & Russel, 2003). This sentiment is clearly expressed by Hing (2002) "...the more



dominant consequence is one of heightened discrepancy between the worlds of experience of the poorer masses and the privileged minority generating a sense of powerlessness and frustration" (p. 306).

### *The Social Impact of Globalization*

While it is important to discern the process and the discourses underlying globalization, it is equally important to understand the impacts of globalization if we are to judge development imperatives from a social justice framework. Although the impact of globalization is one of the most controversial issues of the day, according to Jenkins (2004) there are two equally important positions from which it can be viewed. As he portrayed, the *Globaphobes* attribute most of the ills of the world to globalization. Specifically, the anti-globalization movement focused attention on the extent to which decisions affecting the lives of millions of the world's poorest people are made in international fora at which they have no voice. Globalization therefore is seen as marginalizing a large part of the world's population and contributing to increased international inequality. In contrast, *globaphiles* see extension of globalization as the key to eliminating world poverty. They point to the rapid economic growth of countries that have integrated with the global economy and the poverty reduction achieved in countries such as China and Vietnam that have opened up their economies in recent years (Jenkins).

It is true that, measured in the traditional terms of Gross National Product (GNP), overall economic growth has expanded over the last twenty years and the top 20 per cent of the world's population has indeed prospered (UNRISD). However, as Wiseman (1999) affirmed " ...the experience of those suffering the fiercest effects of globalisation is that it has in fact delivered rising poverty and inequality, as well as increasing fears about the future livelihoods of their communities and their children (p. 258). Also adamant about the disparate outcomes for different population groups, Kearney (1995) found that one of the key outcomes of economic globalisation has been the breaking down of some of the distinctions between rich "core" economies and poor "peripheral"

economies. This issue clearly substantiated by the UN: "Throughout the world there has been a striking convergence of social problems. Increasing polarisation is evident almost everywhere. Absolute poverty rather than relative poverty has been emerging in the industrialised countries, so that some people are now forced to take "third world" jobs and have living standards to match (United Nations Social Development Summit, 1996).

Instead of prosperity for all, social and economic polarisation within industrialised societies has given rise to the creation of sharp geographical divisions between poor and affluent populations. Portraying the lives of the rich elites, Wiseman (1999) describes that in global cities from Sydney to Los Angeles, and from Kuala Lumpur to Tokyo, concentrations of corporate strategic operations bring together large enclaves of corporate "symbolic analysts" - highly educated financial and information workers commanding huge salaries and demanding protection from the insecurity and crime in the cities around them (p. 256). While at the other end of the scale, there is rising unemployment casualisation of the workforce, falling wages and cuts to welfare and public services have led to rising poverty and inequality in most industrialised countries (Wiseman). Overall, only 30 per cent of the world's workforce is productively employed (Ellingsen, 1995).

While there is a process of polarisation within industrialised nations between a privileged minority with access to well-rewarded jobs, and a growing majority being banished to the economic and social margins, (UNRISD, 1995) the gap between richer and poorer nations also widens (Wiseman, 1998). More specifically, this polarisation is profoundly gendered with more women in the bottom end of the labour market, at the same time as declining health and community services increases demands on their unpaid caring and domestic duties at home (Yeatman, 1992). Women thus bear the heaviest burdens of globalization (Jenson, 1996) having filled the majority of positions in both the unregulated free-trade zones of the developing countries and the expanding low-wage, casualised workforces of the industrialised economies (Riley & Mejia, 1997). Additionally, many traditional areas of women's work are being

reprivatised, at the same time there are increased pressures on women to work in insecure and poorly paid sectors of the labour market (Wiseman, 1997).

With ever-increasing inequalities within and between nations large numbers of people are forced to move from rural to urban regions and across national borders to avoid poverty and find improved living conditions and employment opportunities (Featherstone, 1994). These rising tensions are reflected in Australia by debates that continue to erupt about immigration levels, the treatment of boat people, detaining of refugees, including the meaning of multiculturalism (Murphy & Watson, 1997). Globalisation also has a special and savage meaning for indigenous peoples, refugees and migrant populations. As Wiseman (1998) asserted both permanent and temporary migrants, including indigenous peoples, are most likely to be unemployed or to be in low-paid and precarious forms of employment.

At the political level, the autonomy and sovereignty of national and sub-national decision-making forums in both state and civil society have also been constrained. Watts (1999) eloquently illustrated, there is a history of governments crumbling under the weight of credit rating agency interventions in the 1990s; the realizable threats of IMF interventions, the World Bank and the World Trade Organizations, and the mobility of capital. Also supporting this contention, Wiseman (1998) clarified that the stated aim of the WTO is to provide a global decision-making structure for setting and enforcing rules in relation to international trade. "Its rules are binding on member countries ... it will be difficult for small nations to pursue directions or policies that may work against the interests of the most powerful nations and global corporations" (p. 31). Although, the author does not predict the collapse of national sovereignty in the near future, the inference seems clear that national and local economic policy making has become increasingly difficult with interventionist or regulatory policy options made vulnerable to capital flight and the speculative manipulation of national currencies.

*Displaced Workers & Unemployment*

While many scholars predict grave levels of unemployment to follow economic globalization, Taylor (2004) outlined a diverse yet more sinister impact for workers and the economy. On a positive note, the author found that higher levels of unemployment did not typically result for countries with higher levels of international trade. However, the downside is that international competition can cause re-allocations of jobs from one industry to another. In Kletzer's (2002) words, "...the distribution of the benefits from free trade – across industries, occupations, regions and ultimately individuals – is uneven (p. 1). In the US for example, while international competition benefitted industries such as aircraft, computers, entertainment and finance, American jobs have been lost in sectors such as, automobiles, steel, textiles, footwear and consumer electronics (Kletcher). While the declines have not been attributed to the effects of globalization, it is clear that increased competition plays a significant role (Taylor, 2004). As a consequence, globalization has been highly implicated with increases in "displaced workers", workers who are pushed out of one job and are thus forced to find another (Henry, 2005). These impacts are particularly harsh for those workers who are geographically concentrated in the rural South (US) where textile and apparel industry jobs are declining at a rapid rate (Mills & Alwang, 2004).

While it is extremely beneficial for the economy as a whole, to have a flexible workforce that moves between different employers, different geographic areas and even different occupations, the cost suffered by individual workers involved in these labour-market movements is high (Taylor, 2002). Consequences include lost wages due to unemployment or new employment with lower wages, costs of moving and retraining, and the psychological costs of uncertainty and a disrupted life (Taylor). While there are a multitude of reasons including individual and structural for why workers may be forced or pressured to move between jobs (Hamrick, 2005; Mills, 2001). Many writers advocate that governments need to rethink their policies to soften the transition experience of dislocated workers (Carews-Klein, 2005; Mills, 2002). By building institutions and programs to help

workers in the transition to new employment, the costs that workers must bear can be reduced (Taylor, 2004). Since the economy benefits from labour mobility, it seems logical for society to share the cost, as it is unjust to impose the burden solely on displaced workers who are forced to change jobs (Henry, 2005). It is also equally important for governments to refrain from demonizing globalization as the primary cause of job loss, and pretending that it won't occur in a dynamic market-oriented economy (Taylor, 2002). Instead, governments need be innovative about how to deal with the impact of dislocated workers by providing retraining and employment assistance as part of a total package of reforms (Henry, 2005; Taylor, 2004).

### *Industrial Relations & Individualization of Labour Force*

While macro-economic reforms have produced deleterious impacts for the labour force, micro-economic reforms are also undermining collective action. For example, Beck (2000) argued that industrial relations reforms have driven individuals to marketise and securitise everything. One consequence found among the younger population, is their extreme individualization. "Joining unions as a sign of collective solidarity is just one of the less attractive options competing against a whole host of alternative routes open to enrich the lives of the young" (p. 53). Not losing hope with the younger generation, actions such as anti-capitalist demonstrations and more recent research have revealed that the young are as altruistic and devoted to just causes. A Swedish study found that a substantial minority of young people are committed to trade union causes, and represent ideological members of "left" progressive thinking (Alvin & Sverke, 2000). On the contrary, many social activists perceive old strategies of labour resistance as outmoded in a context conducive to employer exit and volatile labour market turnover (Mills, 2003).

Nevertheless, many remain optimistic that ample opportunities exist for new forms of labour resistance within current industrial relations configuration. After all employers are still reliant on labour for profit making and given employers' reliance on increasing productivity and delicate IT infrastructure,

amicable labour-employer relations is more crucial (Tilley, 1984). Also contributing opportunity for collective resistance, ruling political parties remain dependent on voters to stay in government (Tilley). In sum, just as globalization rhetoric has undermined workers' confidence as autonomous agents, ruling governments hide safely behind ill-conceived debates to justify their impotence or lack of vision in opposing predatory global forces (Hing, 2002; Tilley, 1984). To promote solidary and resist models of development based on individualistic ideals, Hing (2002) asserted that a society based on free market values and principles is a destructive force on social life. Also, it would take enormous state intervention to mobilize the masses to access the fruits of economic based development. As she illuminated, for workers to ultimately gain access to state power and influence, "the foundations of collective life and social community need to be realised. This would require greater attention to political education espousing the new progressive politics" (p. ). In view of the complexity of social processes required to transform society in this direction, Hing, is less optimistic about the success of a neo-liberal progress as it is an insufficient source of inspiration for social change.

### *Feminization and the Disciplining of Global Labour*

Both macro and micro-economic reforms have produced deleterious impacts for workers and communities, macro-economic reforms have been attributed with producing gender and labour inequalities worldwide. Mills (2003) review of gender and labour inequalities attests to complex intersections, where in spite of a profoundly gendered global economy: "... gender meanings, relations, and identities do more than merely sustain existing structures of power in global labour relations; ...[it simultaneously] may be contested, reworked and even potentially reworked" (p. 2). Gender inequality however, represents but one dynamic within a global labour force, it is also segmented by class; ethnicity and race; nationality and region; among other factors (Clark, 1994). By tracing varied systems of domination in different settings, scholars have begun to illuminate the diverse processes by which gender and labour inequalities shape the global economy (Mills).

It is not a new phenomena, that international capital relies on gendered ideologies and social relations to recruit and discipline workers, to reproduce and cheapen segmented labour forces within and across national borders (Enloe, 1989, Ong, 1991, Safa, 1995). Historians of the industrial revolution document the early recruitment of women (particularly young unmarried women) as a highly flexible, inexpensive and easily disciplined source of labour (Dublin, 1979, Tilly & Scott, 1978, Tsurumin, 1990). Similarly European colonial regimes relied in part upon the mobilization of colonized women (as well as men) to work, for example, as domestic servants and concubines to colonial officials or as family workers on plantation estates (Stoler, 1985, 1991). However, today, more than in any previous era, the gendered and ethnically segmented labour pool upon which capitalist accumulation depends encompasses every corner of the globe (Mills, 2003).

Evidence from around the globe reveals that hierarchical gender ideologies serve to cheapen the direct costs of labour to capital by defining key segments of the population (notably women and children) as supplementary or devalued workers (Elson, 1995; Enloe, 1989; Marchand & Runyon, 2000). For example, global factories reproduce patriarchal models of organization wherein women dominate the lowest levels both of pay and authority, whereas men occupy most positions of supervisory and managerial rank (Ong, 1991). There is however, considerable diversity by which gender hierarchies take form within the global labour force. For example the labour recruitment practices in the export-oriented agricultural production offers another telling story by which gender meanings can be used to devalue and control labour (Mills, 2003). Comparing fruit workers in Chile, Brazil and Mexico, Collins (1995) notes that gendered norms vary in ways that clarify their arbitrary quality: identical tasks are defined as "men's" work in one place and "women's" in another. Yet in each setting patriarchal norms are manipulated to ensure the low cost structure of the industry. Of particular interest is that these practices do not always result with women being positioned at the bottom of the wage scale, if for example, a more vulnerable population (such as migrants) are available as an even

cheaper reserve pool (Collins, 1995). Studies in Latin America, India and Africa, have also found varied combinations of gender, class and ethnic divisions that structure agricultural labour inequalities in ways that limit employers' costs while undermining possibilities for workers' collective action (Chatterjee, 2001; Dolan, 2001; Freidberg, 2001, Orton, et al., 2001, Sachs, 1996, Striffler, 1999).

Different settings have revealed a varied interplay of multiple gender roles and meanings leading to a wide range of recruitment and disciplinary regimes. Lee (1998) found that the same company deployed sharply different gendered discourses to deal with its female workforces. For example, in Hong Kong older women were enlisted in a process of self-regulation, while in the nearby free trade zones of South China young rural migrants were subject to a much harsher, authoritarian labour processes. In the US Mexico border region, Salzinger (1997) also noted the utility of a single dominant gender discourse that constructs Mexican women as the ideal (i.e. docile) labour force for transnational industry. Yet, on the shop floor, the monolithic image of a feminized labour force facilitated divergent forms of labour regulation in different settings. "...from factory regimes that highlight workers' sexualized appearances as idealized objects of managerial consumption and control, to settings in which gendered identities are subordinated to workers' closely monitored performance of piece-rate production quotas" (p. 4 cited in Mills, 2003). These studies clearly highlight the effect of dominant discourses about gender but it cannot determine the day-to-day dynamics of labour control. As hegemonic ideologies intersect with local histories and demographics, production processes and managerial styles to produce site and even factory-specific regimes of control and contestation (Mills).

### *Gender in the Transnational Service Economy*

The feminization of global labour however, is not limited to third-world sites, for example, transnational migrants, both women and men also represent a pool of vulnerable feminized labour in the lowest wage sectors of the world's wealthiest economies (Foner, 2000, Kwong, 1998, Mahler, 1995, Sassen, 1998,



Yeoh et al., 2000). As sweatshop garment sewers, restaurant workers, domestic servants and day labourers they provide the undervalued services essential to maintaining both the structures and symbols of global economic power and privilege. As Bonacich & Appelbaum (2000) demonstrate, small subcontracting enterprises comprising the Los Angeles garment trade are essential to maintain the rapid turnover of clothing styles and fashions in the women's apparel industry. Small shops need to produce new products on demand in short periods of time, a process made profitable by hiring predominantly immigrant (often undocumented) and female labour at extremely low wages with minimal protections. Thus, gender and ethnic marginalization of this sweated labour force sustain the demands of an industry that is itself crucial to the ideological production of hegemonic femininity defined through the endless consumption of women's fashion (Bonacich & Appelbaum).

The complex effect of gendered hierarchies on the transnational mobility of global labour is also evident in the international market for domestic servants. Caribbean nannies in New York (Colen, 1995); Filipina caregivers in Los Angeles and Rome (Parreias, 2001), in Hong Kong (Constable, 1997) and in Malaysia (Chin, 1998; Mexican and Latina housecleaners in California and other parts of the United States (Hondagneu-Soelo, 2001, Romero, 1992); Sri Lankan maids in Saudi Arabia (gamburd, 2000) – all provide a feminized and racialized support structure for privileged households. In many cases, this commodification of reproductive labour frees female employees to enter or maintain professional occupations, thereby challenging some gender barriers in their own societies but without a radical reworking of gender responsibilities in the domestic realm. Instead these duties are displaced onto ethnically and legally marginalized women in a complex entanglement of gender, class, racial and ethnic hierarchies that stretch across the globe (Mills, 2003).

Ironically, many women and men who provide transnational service labour are themselves pursuing globally inflected desires for class mobility and consumption. In the Philippines for example, women with middle-class education credentials – nurses and teachers, find they can earn much more

working as domestic servants in Hong Kong, Italy or Canada (Barber, 2000; Constable, 1997; Parrenas, 2001). Despite the downward class mobility, these and other transnationally employed domestic workers can secure and even enhance the status of their families left behind. In fact, many such migrants use part of their international wages to hire even cheaper domestic help at home. In this way, circuits of transnational labour not only are a product of gendered and ethnic hierarchies within a segmented global labour force, but also they reproduce these same relations of inequality (Parrenas, 2001, p. 72-78).

### *Gender and Labour Inequalities of Structural Adjustment*

To capture a comprehensive view of gender inequality, analyses extend well beyond the confines of the formal wage economy and conventional arenas of capitalist production. Scholarly writings from Bolivia; (Gill, 1994, 2000) Zambia; (Hansen, 2000) Turkey (White, 1994) and Nicaragua (Babb, 2001) show how international structural adjustment policies and related neo-liberal economic programs impact on families and communities. They highlight the ironies of a global economy that rely on transnational circuits of labour mobility and at the same time the resilience of those families to absorb social costs. As Mills (2003) elucidated, structural adjustment policies involve states cutting back or eliminating social programs and subsidies; which have had a devastating effect on many communities often with sharply gendered implications.

Such programs of economic restructuring – usually implemented at the behest of international financial authorities, such as the IMF or World Bank – depend heavily on the flexible capacities of private households to absorb the loss of state funded social services (Benefa & Feldman, 1992; Bergeron, 2001; Harrison, 1997; Susser, 1997). This is achieved by mobilizing women's unpaid labour to subsidize the costs of international capitalism and to guarantee the debts incurred by poor states. For example, pushed as promising for international economic development, the growth of women's informal sector work is one of the underlying tenets of micro-enterprise investments (also known as micro-credit movement (Dignard & Havet, 1995).

Viewed as an ideal strategy for poverty alleviation, most micro-credit programs targeted primarily if not exclusively women for investment in small household based livelihood projects. Worldwide, the credit programs are hailed by international sponsors as “empowering” to women (Mayoux, 1999) however, criticisms are levelled at their inability to challenge the sexual division of labour in households and for reinforcing gendered norms (Milgram, 2001, Rozario, 1997). Some suggest that (in practice if not by intent) they are more effective at extracting profits from the economic activities of poor women and men than in transforming systems of gender hierarchy or empowering their clients socially and economically (Gill, 2000; Rahman, 1999, p. 142-51). Also contributing to their disadvantaged position is the tightened economic conditions resulting from economic restructuring as it not only diminishes the security found in formal wage employment but also increases dependence on informal means of income generation. This is less desirable as informal sources of livelihood including vending and hawking (Babb, 1989; Clark, 1994; Seligman, 2001), subcontracting and industrial homework (Beneria & Roldan, 1987; Gringerri, 1994, White, 1994; Zhang, 2001), artisan craft production (Grimes & Milgram, 2000; Tice, 1995, Wilkinson-Weber, 1999), domestic services (Adams & Dickey, 2000, Bujra, 2000, Gill, 1994; Hansen, 1992; Ozyegin, 2000), and sex work (Maher, 1997, Moon 1997, Muecke, 1992), are often largely feminized work.

### *Gendered Struggles In/About the Workplace*

While it appears that workers around the world may tolerate tremendous exploitation and hardship to achieve economic and social goals, their massive recruitment as idealized workers has also enhanced their relative bargaining power within the family and community structure. For many women global labour brings new claims to spatial mobility and greater autonomy. One theme widely reported is the greater exercise of power by young women over courtship and marriage decisions (Clark, 2001; Lynch, 1999; Mills, 1999b; Ong, 1987; Wolf, 1992). Other researchers identify other freedoms such as transgressive gender identities and alternative sexualities (Blackwood, 1998; Theobald, 2002). The costs of modernity particularly for women however, are they are vulnerable to

accusations of immorality and selfishness (Mills, 2003). State-based discourse around concerns about immodest or non-traditional behaviour of women working outside the home can also heighten their anxieties (Brenner, 1998; Heng & Devan, 1995; Ong, 1990; Siley, 2000b). For many this leads to actions of compliance and resistance to dominant gender ideals, where for example, young Balgladeshi and Egyptian women adopt “Islamic dress” to gain easier access to public mobility and wage employment (Feldman, 2001). More positively, for some women transnational employment is a safe haven away from violent or abusive relationships without relinquishing obligations to children or kin (Arguelles & Rivero, 1993; Gamburd, 2000; Parrenas, 2001).

While global workers both reproduce and contest the gendered conditions of their subordination, (MacLeod, 1991) the structuring of capitalist labour relations is however, not conducive to greater employee autonomy. For example, collective action against harsh working conditions is unlikely, particularly when alternative employment options (such as domestic service or sex work) appear less attractive (Harrison, 1997). Nevertheless, transnational workers find indirect ways to resist the paternalistic control of employers (Chin, 1998). For example, subtle forms of non-confrontational resistance such as footdragging, withdrawal or mass spirit possessions (Ong, 1987) are taken to employer demands (Drori, 2000). There is however limited ethnographic studies related to strikes, unions and other organized conflict as this is in part attributed to the formidable obstacles working against labour organizing within the global economy. As Mills (2003) clarified, the relative ease by which capital investment can shift from one site to another effectively limits the bargaining power of workers. Furthermore, many contemporary state regimes in their desire to attract international investors employ aggressive means to restrict (or ban outright) unions and other forms of independent collective organizing of workers (Taylor, 2002).

Other widespread practices, such as subcontracting also acts as a barrier to worker solidarity as components of end products are manufactured in several different countries by multiple subcontractors (Rose, 2000). This fragmentation of

the global labour force, distancing of production decisions and marketing away from people and places actually assembling global commodities, may well curtail opportunities for labour organizing (Taylor, 2002). In spite of the obstacles, labour conflicts do occur and sometimes women are often key and primary figures (Kim, 1997, Koo, 2001, Ogle, 1990, Cravey, 1998, Peria, 1995, Tirado, 1994, Hutchison & Brown, 2001, Margold, 1999, Roha, 1994, West 1997). Assumptions about the docility of a feminized global labour force are being challenged by patterns of organizing and activism around the globe (Chhachhi & Pittin, 1996, Hutchison & Brown, 2001, Louie, 2001, Rowbotham & Mitter, 1994). Although, few extensive ethnographic studies focus on gendered processes of labour organizing and politicization, studies of women workers in Korea (Kim, 1997); Asia (Brown, 2001; Margold, 1999, Mills, 1999a; West, 1997) and Latin America (Gill, 1994, Stephen, 1997) are beginning to challenge this. Some specific examples cited in Mills (2003) include, ethnically marginalized domestic servants struggle to unionize in Bolivia (Gil, 1994); transnational Caribbean and Filipina migrants organizing for better legal protections and citizenship in Canada (Srsiulis & Bakan, 1997) and unions and activist groups representing sex workers in many countries (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998).

While these efforts are inspiring, the global record of women's economic organizing reveals that they face enormous obstacles, given that even within unionized contexts they face patriarchal convention. For example globally union leadership remains predominantly male and women's efforts are often perceived as supplementary, subordinate or constrained by prior domestic roles and responsibilities (Kim, 1997; Stephen, 1997; West, 1997). The inability of labour institutions to rectify their own histories of gender inequality also poses an obstacle to labour solidarity and activism worldwide (Mills, 2006).

### *Masculinities & Global Labour*

While women have been highlighted as subordinated labour in the global economy, the gendered dynamics of men's participation has also received attention. For example, high rates of overseas contract labour in South and

Southeast Asian men have led some ethnographers to note the effects of this pattern of labour recruitment on local gender system and identities (de Guzman, 1993; Gardner, 1995; Pinches, 2001; Yamanaka, 2000). Reporting on Filipino men working in the Middle East, Margold (1995) found that they had endured harsh working conditions and persistent marginalization as members of an alien ethnic and religious minority. They also experienced their legal inferiority and vulnerability as a denial not only of their masculinity and their own humanity but the effects of these inversions continued to trouble many migrants even after returning home. A similar sense of vulnerability was also found in Thai men involved in overseas contract labour, expressed in part through fears of deadly attacks by female spirits (Mills, 1995).

In spite of the social and psychological dangers, many overseas workers aspire to confirm their masculine pride as fearless and competent workers in high status sites of globalization (Osella & Osella, 2000). Consequently, rural men in Kerala, India view overseas employment as imperative to acquire the material and symbolic capital necessary to claim a fully adult masculine status at home (i.e. to establish themselves as responsible and marriageable householders (Osella & Osella). Comparably, Chinese Malay men also perceive over-seas work experience as critical in attaining their successful masculine identities and authority over other men and women at home (Nonini, 1997). Crises of masculinity can also occur when transnational mobility involves both sexes or when men are the ones that are left behind. Not able to fulfill traditional provider roles, men are often compelled to renegotiate their status and authority within the household (Gill, 2000; Goldring, 2001, Levitt, 2001, Rouse, 1995). This can result in men deflecting their experiences of subordination through misogynist discourses or inflicting violence on female companions (Ferguson 1999, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994).

Global transformations can also inflict crises of masculinity for long-term residents of the world's wealthier societies. This can occur when non-migrant men experience the loss of relatively high-paying working class jobs to de-industrialization or loss of managerial positions due to corporate down-sizing

(McDowell, 2000, Newman, 1988). Bourgois (1995) informed that in New York City, young Puerto Rican men reject service-sector jobs as both poorly paid and requiring acts of deference that are demeaning to their masculine self-respect. However, without the educational or social capital to achieve well paying work in the formal economy, some young men turn to both high earnings and a hyper-masculine (and violent) sense of dominance in the illicit drug trade (Bourgois). Reporting on impoverished urban dwellers in Bolivia, Gill (2000) found gendered effects of economic restructuring reflected by heightened patterns of masculine violence both toward each other and women. This is attributed in part to the bastardising experiences of military service - one of the few employment options still available to poor men. In Zambia, Ferguson (1999) found the decline of its Copperbelt industry compelled former mine workers to re-examine their claims to a "modern" masculine self-identity predicated on secure wage earning and a domestic division of labour that are both increasingly untenable.

The revelation offered by ethnographic studies is that representations and experiences of gender hierarchy in the global economy are not just concerned with cheapening feminized labour forces, they also reveal the shifting ideological grounds upon which entrepreneurial models of masculinity stand. For example Zhang (2001) examined male-peer culture among new entrepreneurs and state officials in Beijing. This is "characterised by ritualized outings to nightclubs where men negotiate globally inflected norms of masculinity through the consumption of imported alcohol and the commodified bodies of women" (p. 240). Such ties between expanding business circuits and the heightened demand for women's sexual labour support similar relations of masculinized power linked to global tourism or military expansion (Enloe, 1989; Hyde, 2001; Law, 2000, Moon, 1997; Sinclair, 1997; Skrobanek, et al., 1997; Truong, 1990).

In a different context, analyses of post-Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe also reflect economic practices within gendered terms. For example the entrepreneurial and higher-paying segments of the emerging private sector are

often linked with a new sense of globalized masculinity, whereas lower-wage jobs and much of the public sector increasingly represent a domain of feminized and devalued labor (Gal & Kligman, 2000; Humphrey, 2002, True, 2000). Mills (2003) concluded that while impacts of global restructuring have been both positive and negative, they affect men and women in diverse ways: "whether hegemonic or subordinate, neither masculinities nor femininities in global economic relations are uniform; nor are they experienced in uniform ways" (p. 44). However, the most important points to emerge from ethnographic studies of gender, labour and globalization is that gender becomes visible by "uncovering the arbitrary and artificial ways through which gendered inequalities devalue labour and undermine the security and livelihoods of men and women around the world" (p. 16).

#### *Theoretical Arguments for Poverty Reduction and Globalization*

Despite the diversity of impacts attributed to globalization, the benefits are vigorously advocated as a force for poverty reduction ((Garrett, 1998; Evans, 1997; Weiss, 1998). According to Jenkins (2004) however, this link has been predicated on two spuriously associated factors. Firstly, it is based on the assumption that globalization leads to faster economic growth and secondly, that the poor share (to some extent) in the benefits of growth. However, as the author elucidated, researchers have often appealed to endogenous growth theory as a causal explanation for the link between liberalisation and growth. Even as Dollar (2001) points out, it is equally feasible to demonstrate that protection of the domestic market promotes growth. Most pertinent to the argument, is that the causal relationship between trade, growth and poverty is even less clearly specified, although implicitly the poor benefit from growth through some form of trickle down effect (Jenkins, 2004). Challenging this assumption, Bhagwati & Srinivasan (2002) demonstrated that it is possible to construct theoretical models where the poor are by-passed by growth or even become increasingly marginalized. Suggesting the link from trade to growth and from growth to poverty reduction is primarily an empirical question.



Corroborating this contention, Jenkins (2004) revealed that empirical studies in support of the pro-globalization position are open to criticism on several counts. First there is the question of defining globalization and identifying 'globalizers' as opposed to 'non-globalizers'. Secondly, cross-country analyses of the outcomes of global integration assume a universal impact of globalization that is independent of local conditions. Also supporting this view, Ravallion (2001) showed that the impact of growth on inequality (and hence on poverty) depends on the social context, on initial conditions such as the level of income and its distribution. On the other hand when studies continue to emphasize average relationships between globalization and poverty, such as the famous claim by Dollar and Kraay (2001) that 'the poor and the rich gain one-for-one from openness' it serves only to obscure such considerations and is seriously misleading (p. 3).

A further criticism is that cross-sectional analysis cannot infer what would happen over time. This is clearly evident with critics having argued that the world economy and most countries performed far better during the 1960s and 1970s than over the last two decades which *globaphiles* see as the golden age of globalization (Milanovic, 2003). Jenkins highlighted that this is true not only in terms of economic growth but also the rate of improvement of many of the social indicators were much better in the earlier period (Weisbrot, et. al., 2001). Faced with major concerns over methodology, even some mainstream economists (e.g. Srinivasan & Bhagwati, 1999) who are convinced of the benefits of globalization, have rejected cross-country regressions, and argued for more in-depth case studies. Ravallion (2001) also points 'to the importance of more micro, country-specific, research' (p. 1813).

Addressing these methodological issues, Jenkins' (2004) contextual analysis of the link between globalization and poverty reduction in diverse settings, firstly revealed that a simple generalization of this relationship is not supported. On the contrary outcomes are highly context dependent. While greater openness was much more positive for employment and potentially for poverty reduction in Bangladesh and Vietnam, this was not the case in both

Kenya and South Africa. Adding further support for integrating the social context in cross-country analyses, his study found differences in outcomes between different contexts were not attributed to the level of global integration but reflected the different forms of integration with the global economy. He cites two cases - Vietnam and Bangladesh as largely exporters of labour-intensive manufactures and Kenya and South Africa as largely resource-based manufacturers. Factors highly relevant in analyzing the local impacts of globalization is the value chain context, in the case of Kenyan horticulture, upgrading which involved increased local processing and packaging has been pro-poor in that it has led to an increased demand for unskilled labour. In garments and textiles, however, upgrading to take on more functions or to produce higher value products, would probably lead to a greater demand for skilled rather than unskilled workers so that the poor would be unlikely to benefit (Jenkins).

In view of regional disparities in terms of poverty reduction, Jenkins, warned politicians against the uncritical acceptance of globalization: "...the fact that the impacts of globalization are highly context specific limits the extent to which it is possible to draw general lessons and should be a warning to policy makers against generalized policy advice" (p. 10). Furthermore, as it is clear that globalization creates winners and losers both between and within countries, specific research is imperative to identify those most likely to be negatively affected by changes in integration with the global economy. Research suggests that too much reliance should not be put on globalization, even if properly managed, as a solution to problems of endemic poverty and un(der)employment (Barrientos & Kritzing, 2003). Even in cases where globalization had positive impacts in terms of employment creation and potential poverty reduction, the scale has been relatively limited (Weisbrot, et al., 2003). Other policies are vital, not just to enhance the positive impacts of globalization or to ameliorate some of the negative ones, but to tackle poverty directly (Rodriguez & Rodrik, 2000).

*Viability of State Sovereignty*

Given the diversity of outcomes related to globalization and specifically the negative impacts for those most vulnerable, the question most pressing is the capacity of nation states to address the social issues or is state sovereignty in decline? Many academics have argued that globalization, the rise of non-state political actors and the proliferation of human rights norms suggest that sovereignty is in decline (Zacher, 1992, Goulieb, 1993; Fowler & Bunch, 1995; Lyons & Mastanduno, 1995). Corroborating this, Strange (1994; 1996) claimed that "...the process of globalization is eroding the fundamental basis of international society - state sovereignty and its decline represent a revolutionary transformation in the Westphalian structure of the international system" (p. 211). Challenging this assertion, Rudolph (2005) claimed that perception of decline is dependent on how sovereignty is defined. As the author clarified, the concept of 'sovereignty' is usually taken to mean that "...a nation state has power and control over its own future...a loss of sovereignty implies a loss of legal and actual control over the determination of the direction of national policy" (p. 407). If this singular, unified view is accepted then it is no surprise that the proliferation of scholarly work equates multilateralism and increased border flows with a decline in sovereignty (Rudolph, 2005).

However, when sovereignty is viewed more complexly, states will often self-limit their sovereignty by accepting constraints on their actions, in order to gain certain benefits such as inclusion in international regimes or organizations. For example, Rudolph (2005) asserted that rather than operating passively, trading states have been instrumental in establishing the current system of openness and globalization. "States, for the most part, need not participate in processes of globalization and mutilateralization, but choose to nonetheless. "They do this not out of weakness, but out of a conscious consideration of the tradeoffs" (Barkin, 2001, p. 45). Within this context, border transgressions affirm sovereignty rather than its decline or growing irrelevance, as it is the expression of choice of authority (Rudolph). In contrast, it is only when choice is constrained by exogenous forces that one could argue that sovereign authority has been

circumscribed (Barkin). This suggests that sovereignty is more complex than the traditional definition.

Many suggest that more complex theories of sovereignty can be broken down into four distinct types: Westphalian, domestic, interdependence and international legal (Krasner, 1995/1996; Ruggie, 1993; Thomson, 1995; Liftin, 1977, Burch, 2000, Caporaso (2000). Firstly, "domestic sovereignty" refers to the organization of government authority within a state; second "Westphalian sovereignty" is defined as those aspects that exclude external actors from a state's domestic authority configuration; third "Interdependence sovereignty" refers to the control of trans-border movements and fourth "international legal sovereignty" is limited to those factors that involve the mutual recognition of states within the nation-state system (Burch, 2000). Krasner (1999) further distinguishes aspects of sovereignty dealing with "authority" and "control" noting that Westphalian and international legal sovereignty deal exclusively with authority whereas interdependence sovereignty deals exclusively with control, while domestic sovereignty has elements of both (p. 9-25). By disaggregating the concept of sovereignty, a greater clarity emerges about relevance of authority, its' responsive to changing contexts and how it can be manipulated by the state to promote evolving interests. In fact, several scholars (e.g. Liftin, 1997, Krasner, 1999; Mattli, 2000) have suggested that dimensions of sovereignty can be "bargained" to promote overall grand strategy and to maximize other dimensions of sovereignty. In this sense, sovereignty is conceived more in terms of a set of ongoing norms and practices that can display variation and flexibility (Rudolph, 2005).

### *Defending Sovereignty*

It is therefore conducive to the grand strategy of maximizing economic goals for states to decide to relinquish a degree of "interdependence sovereignty" (i.e. control over transborder flows) (Keohane, 1991). Therefore, in this state-sponsored bargain where one facet of sovereignty is willingly suspended to bolster other dimensions, clear linkages exist between maximizing

economic gains and the maintenance of both Westphalian and domestic sovereignty. As Rudolph (2005) outlined, states that are unable to generate sufficient economic productivity are more likely to become dependent on stronger nations and to have less capacity for ensuring their military defense, both of which are crucial elements in the maintenance of Westphalian sovereignty. Moreover, the ability of the state to provide an improved standard of living for its citizenry can have a significant impact on the relationship between the state and the people. Maximizing domestic growth therefore serves to strengthen domestic state sovereignty, whereas neglect can only serve to weaken the relationship between the state and the people (Rudolph). Sovereignty is not simply "sold" for economic gain, but dimensions of sovereignty can be "traded" (decreasing control over one dimension in order to increase others) to forward the interests of the state (Gilpin, 2000).

In terms of trade and capital flows, there is ample evidence that most advanced industrial states have adopted a trading state approach (Stein, 1984, Gilpin, 2000, 2001). For example the creation and growth of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have served to create an environment conducive to international trade and capital mobility (Sassen, 1988, 1996; WTO, 2000). The potential benefit of "increased national prosperity is worth the cost in terms of diminished national policymaking autonomy and power" (Mattli, 2000, p. 150). Although the dominant logic involved in the grand strategy of trading states has been predicated on openness in trade and capital flows, trends in government policies toward labour mobility however, have taken a nearly opposite course of action (Cornelius, et. al., 2004).

### *National Identity and Societal Security*

The emerging empirical evidence (Shanks, 2001; Rudolph, 2003a) is that, migrant-receiving societies seem acutely sensitive to the *types* of migration flows, not just their *volume*. Specifically, migration by *people* who can be instrumental in shaping the identity and culture in a new social environment after relocating

(Rudolph, 2003a) has significant implications for understandings of sovereignty and national borders (Shanks, 2001). For example, in Britain the preferred migration from the Old Commonwealth countries (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) was increasingly surpassed by migration from the New Commonwealth countries of the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies (Paul, 1997, Spencer, 1997; Money, 1999; Hansen, 2000). In the United States, immigration flows included increased proportions of immigrants from Mexico, Latin America and Asia as well as rising numbers of illegal aliens circumventing the official recruitment channels (Reimers, 1985; Calavita, 1992).

However, increasing societal insecurities with these changing migration patterns were reflected in public opinion polls, policy makers' statements, anti-immigration initiatives, and a gradual increase in the popularity of right-wing parties – especially in Europe (Fetzer, 2000). Subsequently, new policies were enacted to curb these flows, in Britain for example, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act established the first of a series of increasingly restrictionist policies aimed at reducing the levels of immigration. France and Germany also ended labour importation programs increasingly dominated by North Africans and Turks, respectively, in 1973-1974. The United States abolished the Mexican Bracero program in 1964. It is important to note, however, that restrictionism was not directed at migration per se but rather to specific streams of migration that were considered less societally proximate in the receiving society. Yet, restrictionist policies have had limited success in controlling migration flows, and in reducing perceptions of societal threat (Massey, et al., 1998). While an intensified focus on border controls by governments have had a very limited impact on changing migration patterns, they have at least been successful in diffusing perceptions of an "alien invasion" that had gained political currency in the 1990s (Andreas, 2000; Rudolph, 2003a). Governments have done so by reaffirming the resilience and significance of the country's border, even if the gesture is largely symbolic (Rudolph, 2005).

The insights that can be drawn from the European and US responses to migration is that the characteristics of the migrants associated with globalization

of flows appear to be more threat-inducing than simply changes in volume (Shanks, 2001). While this does not mean that migration policy has digressed from the trends of trade and capital flows, it does highlight that policy closure was directed at those aspects of migration that generated perceptions of societal threat (Massey, et. al., 1998). Policy developments of the late 1980s and 1990s reflect the general economic trends that favoured flexible production modes and the growing importance of human capital. These factors have therefore placed the state in a quandary, with macro-economic interests pressing for openness and societal security interests pressing for closure (Rudolph, 2005).

### *Societal Sovereignty*

Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (1996) prompt us to consider where sovereignty resides: Does it reside in an apparently homogenous people ("nation" or Volk) or among the residents of a territorially bounded political entity? (p. 2). As James Rosenau (1997) points out "to the extent that people have a need for community and a sense of independence, then to that extent the achievement and maintenance of sovereignty for their nation [serves] important human longings" (p. 220). In a world of unprecedented migration, the implications of this *societal* dimension of sovereignty (and its link to domestic sovereignty) are evident (Fetzer, 2000). "When it is no longer clear who makes up the nation, a state's internal sovereignty and the existence of the state itself is threatened" (Doty, 1996, p. 122). The result of this evolution is that "the social organization of the world ... has become much more complex. Bordering has become much more multi-faceted in terms of both "geographic and non-geographic forms, as well as of social, political and economic character" (Jacobson, 1998, p. 455).

Our global age is therefore characterized by a central tension: where markets are highly elastic and responsive to change, and social identities are not. As Rudolph (2003a) identified, although borders are important in maintaining economic ties and serve as symbolic "points of connection",

maintaining stable national identities requires at least the image of the geographical border as highly resilient – a “hard shell” rather than the “soft shell” characterised in economic discourse. The grand strategy of establishing a balance between economic and societal security however, appears flawed in liberal states exhibiting an increasing degree of ethnocultural heterogeneity and a strong modern national identity, (Hollifield, 1992; Smith, 1997) as identities are, to varying degrees, in a continual state of change as a result of factors both internal and external to the society (Rudolph, 2003b).

Globalization therefore, confronts states with difficult choices about the appropriate level of engagement with regional organizations and about the current relevance of national sovereignty. As Linklater (1998) indicated central governments are finding it increasingly difficult to generate a commanding consensus about questions of national identity and national purpose. Therefore what current developments tell us about the nature of sovereignty is that what we see today is simply an increased awareness of sovereignty’s various dimensions and the gains to be reaped by making trade-offs between them. As Rudolph (2005) elucidated, firstly, in the economic realm, interdependence sovereignty is willingly ceded to bolster Westphalian and domestic sovereignty. Second, in the societal realm, Westphalian sovereignty has been increasingly ceded in order to bolster interdependence sovereignty (control over migration flows), domestic sovereignty (the relationship between government and polity), and societal sovereignty (identity).

Contributing an insightful dimension to the sovereignty debate, Martin (1998) points to a major impact, in that the September 11 event certainly raised the stakes concerning the importance of interdependence sovereignty as a prerequisite to defending other aspects of sovereignty. Exactly how this will be achieved remains to be seen, but it will no doubt spark even more debate regarding sovereignty. In his oft-quoted book, Hinsley (1966) observed that “preoccupations with the question of sovereignty are most acute during periods of rapid change” and events such as terrorism in this new millenium suggest that we live in just such a volatile time.



Signalling more optimistic visions of the power of nation states, Watts (1999) pronounced: "nation states possess and exercise choice about how they will deal with the emerging global market. History has not stopped, nor has the challenge to keep on making history evaporated" (p. 57). Much of his confidence comes from Weiss's demonstration that new internationalized economies are diverse, and in fact nation states react differently, creatively and often successfully to deflect or moderate some of the worst features of restructuring. Furthermore, that much of the theory and the rhetoric about globalization itself has a political effect that emphasizes the inevitability of the process and "our" collective helplessness in the face of these trends. For certain states, which she calls "catalytic" states - play a leading role in using the power of the regional blocs to exert countervailing pressures in pursuit of various national and regional objectives (1999, p. 56). Governments around the world – but especially in the Anglo-American nations have, therefore been attempting to develop new strategies of governance that are designed to promote national economic security (Beeson & Firth, 1998). This has involved a complex array of techniques and a wider array of agencies than simply govern, per se. In Australia the attempt to enhance economic competitiveness and prosperity by reconstituting not only national institutions but also the population itself has gone further than most (Wiseman, 1998). As such, it merits closer examination.

### *Governance and Australia's Globalization Narrative*

At the time of the Hawke Labor Government's 1983 election victory the Australian economy was still a highly protected 'farm and quarry', (Castles, 1998) where full employment for men and relatively high wage levels were defended by a centralised wage fixing system. By the end of the 1990s, Australians were living and working in a deregulated economy in which long-standing principles of security and stability had been overwhelmed by the new mantra of 'competitiveness in a globalised world' (Wiseman, 1998, p. 41). In 1990 Keating summarised the dominant themes of government economic policy:

“The question at issue is whether we build on our approach of the last seven and a half years, of deregulation, of removing the meddling hands of bureaucracy from the operation of markets, of forcing our business and our workers to confront the realities of world markets and international opportunities - or to retreat to the failed policies of the past” (Wiseman, 1999, p. 255).

Competitiveness was embraced as both the diagnosis and the cure for all kinds of economic and social ills, with the choice of remedies underpinned by increasingly dominant ‘economic rationalist’, neo-liberal economic policies (Gleeson & Low, 2000).

Within the Australian context, Wiseman (1998) observed three steps towards the global racetrack. Step one involved the deregulation of financial markets, exchange rates and financial institutions to encourage productive investment. Step two brought deregulation of trade through tariff cuts and lobbying for multilateral free-trade agreements. The third step saw a vigorously pursued program of microeconomic reform, reduction in tariff production and the privatisation and commercialisation of public-sector activities, such as banking, transport and telecommunications. Australians however, had to pay as terms of trade worsen and imports continued to rise (Fincher & Wulff, 1997). As the official rates of unemployment rose to over 11 per cent in 1993, it became obvious that some had to pay a higher price than others (Wiseman, 1998).

Rising debt levels and the volatility of deregulated exchange rates placed tighter limitations on the ability of governments to pursue social and environmental goals (Fiss & Hirsh, 2005). Keating may well have believed his own rhetoric about building a complementary relationship between competitiveness and social justice, but many Australians had become increasingly fearful about the individual and the social costs of competitiveness and begun looking around desperately for an alternative that appeared to offer a more comfortable ride (Wiseman, 1998). However, despite its campaign rhetoric, John Howard’s Liberal government pursued more fierce and less compassionate policy directions that

supported international corporate competitiveness at all costs (Dahrendorf, 1996).

While the Howard government continues to pursue more intense industrial relations reforms, many trade union opponents, interpreted it as an attempt to place the balance of labour-market power in the hands of employers, thereby undermining the rights and working conditions of workers (Livingstone, 1996). For the corporate advocates of deregulated globalisation, the message for Australian government policy makers has also been very clear. The role of government is not to pick winners but rather create an environment in which (enough) winners pick Australia" (Yetton, Davis & Swan, 1992; Report to the Australian Manufacturing Council). This translates to mean reducing taxes, creating more flexible, wages and working conditions, undermining the influence of trade unions, and providing "effective and efficient infrastructure at minimum cost" (Zimmerman, 1991, p. 23). In distinguishing the imperatives driving neo-liberalism, Wiseman (1999) denounced the tactics as simply to "exploit globalisation as a new set of weapons with which to fight an old battle designed to maximise profits by wringing as much out of the workforce, while keeping taxes low and expecting public funding to cover as much of the infrastructure costs as possible" (p. 300).

### *Welfare to Competition State*

There are both winners and losers emerging from the neo liberal policies pursued by the Hawke and Keating Labor governments as well as the Howard Liberal government. The impacts according to Cerny (1990) is to accelerated the transformation of Australia from a "wage earner's welfare state' to a 'competition state' with higher levels of poverty and inequality and a rise in the proportion of the 'working poor'" (p. 621). This is clearly reflected by the Howard Government's dramatically reduced budgets for Commonwealth involvement in social and community services ranging from health, home, community and child care and labour-market programmes. In the first sign of an ongoing assault on services to indigenous communities, \$400 million was cut from the ATSI budget

(Wiseman, 1999). ATSIIC was subsequently axed and for Watson (2005) the removal of this symbol of Indigenous self-determination represented " *authoritarian* liberal practices of unfreedom", (p. 57). All these moves signalled dedicated moves toward a privatised, family-based, self-insurance model of welfare provision (Steketee, 1995).

The most worrying feature of our political system however, is the way in which the public appears to have lost faith in the capacity of governments and parliaments to solve problems (Lane & Morrison, 2006). Also sharing concerns about the impact of an unhealthy democracy, Cerny (1996) highlighted that:

"Australia's government is riddled with public distrust and cynicism and the politics of populism - Australia's democracy never seemed weaker. The decency of our society is also under pressure - not just from the politics of downward envy but from the loss of social capital and trust. Public mutuality has given way to a scramble for scarce public entitlements" (p. 2).

The resolve, according to Lockie (2000) is for politicians to regain the trust and confidence of their electorate before attempting to persuade them of the merit of their policy ideas. Latham (1998) however, empathizes with governments who face complex demands: "...the core tasks of public life have become doubly difficult. Not only do our leaders firstly need to comprehend the complex economic and social changes of recent decades, but they also need to overcome the public's scepticism about the capacity of the democratic process to produce real solutions (Gleeson & Low, 2000; Wiseman, 2000).

### *Neoliberal Reform in Australia - Political Rationality Perspective*

If one incident could capture Australia's transition towards an emergent supra-national order, it was Paul Keating's suggestion (then Treasurer) in 1986 that Australia was in danger of becoming a "banana republic" (Beeson & Firth, 2000). Keating's statement came to be seen as a warning that "the key institutional structures of Australia's unique historic compromise, particular

arbitration, protection and reliance on commodity exports – structures which flowed from the conception of the economy as a national system – needed to be revitalised or swept aside” (Kelly, 1992, p. 197). In short, reforms were instituted into Australian institutions to accommodate the belief that economic security depended on securing a share of the prosperity generated by international restructuring (Jones, 2002). Since the 1980s Australia has witnessed a remarkable transformation in the rationale that informs public policy. Beeson and Firth (1998) conceptualised this change of direction in Australian public policy as a specific neoliberal ‘political rationality’. The authors clarified that the notion of ‘political rationality’ is a useful way of understanding how a number of contemporary governments approach the management of economic security. Furthermore, the term may also be employed to explain transitions in governmental practice either within individual countries (Larner, 1997) or to distinguish broad approaches to governance across regions (Beeson & Jayasuriya, 1998). Australia’s transition toward a neo-liberal project is also better understood from this political rationality perspective as it is a broader framework, incorporating a multitude of actors involved with governing (Rose & Miller, 1992).

By exposing Australia’s economic space to internationally competitive pressures further impetus was generated to new strategies of government to shape individuals. The imperative of international structural adjustment became a discursive device with which to legitimate domestic reforms premised on the necessity of inculcating more competitive, economically efficient behaviour in the Australian workforce (Dodson 1996; Yeatman, 1990). A key policy initiative in this regard was the ‘Garnaut Report’ (Garnaut, 1989, cited in Beeson & Firth, 1998). This report represented something of a watershed in Australian policy-makers’ moves toward a new political rationality. As the authors portrayed, it represented a major shift in thinking about the way the ‘Australian economy’ was integrated into an increasingly inter-connected international system, especially the need for domestic reform to respond to and be driven by international competitive forces. Furthermore, bodies like the Industry Commission and the East Asia Analytical Unit, were instrumental in entrenching

the new understandings, the constraints placed on national policy-makers and the benefits of using market forces to achieve particular social and economic ends (Beeson & Firth). The 'Hilmer Report' sanctioned 'competition policy' as the principal rationale underpinning economic reform in Australia and as the centerpiece of Australian public policy (Hilmer, 1993, cited in Beeson & Firth). The report argued that Australia had no choice but to improve its 'international competitiveness' and become 'more innovative and more flexible' (Hilmer, 1993, p. 1). In short, competition was seen as the central mechanism, with Hilmer recommending the establishment of 'National Competition Council' to oversee the process. In Hilmer's words " 'The Council' would be directed to take a *pragmatic, business-like approach* to the reform process" (p. 319, cited in Beeson & Firth, p. 214).

What is of great interest here is the way in which the Hilmer Report reflects and attempts to operationalise a neo-liberal political rationality in Australia. Its assumption that all areas of national life must be harnessed to the pursuit of economic efficiency also resonates with the Garnaut Report and the Business Council of Australia's (BCA) policy document Australia 2010, which argues that 'Australia's economic problems require effective government leadership and getting the 'fundamentals' right (Beeson & Firth, 2000, p. 221). "The fundamentals" are the 'attitudes and practices that are a prerequisite to establishing a competitive economic climate in which enterprise and individuals operate in an open environment with incentive to compete, to innovate and to manage the risks they face" (BCA 1993, p.7). Providing a blue print for the reform agenda, particularly at the micro level, the Karpin Report may be seen as a logical extension of Garnaut and Hilmer in attempting to consolidate neo-liberalism at the individual level (Dodson, 1996). For example the Karpin Report has been attributed with directing public policy towards health, education and the public service in re-making 'Australia' as a globally competitive economic space (Beeson & Firth; Pusey, 1991).

While the underlying rationale is the merging of boundaries between state, society and economy, a critical element of Karpin's strategies involved

promoting greater use of individual effort (Beeson & Firth, 2000). In short, Karpin's solution to Australia's perceived economic problems also relied on inculcating 'enterprising' attitudes and values amongst the population at large (Hunter, 1993). More specifically, Australians, be they employees or managers, needed to be enterprising 'in the broadest sense of the word, not only in business but also in social community organisations and *in terms of their own personal lives* in a changing world (Karpin, 1995, p. 77, emphasis added, cited in Beeson & Firth, 1998, 222). Resonating the dominant neoliberal political rationality Karpin views the market as the best mechanism to 'achieve optimum allocation of resources and quality [sic] outcomes' (p. 75). Furthermore, it is most effectively achieved by dissemination and inculcation of enterprising values, so that the 'culture of enterprise would be threaded through the entire socialisation process' (Karpin, 1995, p. 100).

An idea embraced by the former Labour government and echoed in the Working Nation statement, 'The Karpin Report' (Keating, 1994) symbolised the new approach to governance. According to Beeson & First (1998) the 1980s Labour leadership became increasingly technocratic, steeped in the discourse of managerialism and imbued with the idea that economic policy is no longer 'ideological', but a question of finding optimal, technically correct solutions to economic problems (Keating, 1993a, p. 58, cited in Beeson & Firth). The Australian people came to be seen as requiring transformation to play a greater role in national economic development and government policy concentrated on areas where it may exert the greatest influence. The Karpin Report provided a blueprint for "individually oriented strategies, in particular, the education system would be harnessed to craft a flexible, self-reliant, reflexive population capable of responding swiftly to the stimulus of market signals" (p. 101).

Beeson & Firth (1998) argued that reports such as Garnaut, Hilmer and Karpin, which are informed by a neoliberal political rationality, reject the belief that the economy can provide the resources for state and society without adverse effects on its own propensity to grow. Consequently, previous levels of expenditure on health, welfare and education were seen as unsustainable. In

response, governments in Australia since the 1980s have been dedicated to a comprehensive program of domestic reform to reduce such expenditure (Wailes & Ramia, 2004). Looking at the competitive pressures at work within the education system, Australian universities were encouraged to develop a commercial mentality and mimic the organisational structure of corporations (Henry, 1992). This demonstrated by the greater reliance on fee-paying students and the necessity of making courses more economically 'relevant' both in terms of the fees they generate and the needs of industry (Marginson, 1993). Thus, educational 'efficiency' is increasingly being defined in terms of narrow economic criteria, rather than the broader social and cultural agenda of previous times (Marginson).

The transition also comprised a new emphasis on managerialism that was structurally embedded within the bureaucracy by the creation of senior administrative elite. According to Yeatman (1990) their chief goal and attraction to civil service resided in their managerial capacity and technical expertise – that can be generically applied to solve problems regardless of the values and issues specific to a portfolio. Reforms also enhanced the authority of central agencies as they undertook a coordinating budgetary and review function over other agencies. The impact of which resulted in subordinate agencies having to adopt the language and guise of a particular form of economic rationality that “... derived its authority from and reinforced the position of new conceptions of the economy and the best ways of making all aspects of Australian economic and social existence more competitive” (Yeatman, cited in Beeson & Firth, 1998, p. 227). Labor's reforms have however, been extended by the Coalition government with the introduction of corporate sector values and organisational structures including 'outsourcing' of core activities (Dodson, 1996, p. 33).

Most prominently, now it is individual productivity that is acclaimed as the path towards a more competitive 'Australia'. Economic and social management according to Beeson & Firth (1998) also extend to those outside the workforce. At one level this is part of an international move to 'reduce' unemployment by “developing new methods of calculation and promoting



administrative strategies that present the unemployed as a distinctive object of governance" (Walters, 1996. p. 199). At another level, as Dean (1995) outlined, successive Australian governments have developed increasingly elaborate strategies to engage the unemployed as 'clients', and draw them into processes of self-management by attempting to cultivate specific attitudes and patterns of behaviours. This process of change has been achieved by privatising the entire apparatus designed to assist the unemployed in finding work, and which the Coalition government has accelerated (Dean). However, as Beeson & Firth highlight within this dominant approach the outcome is predictable. The unemployed are caught up in web of interventions by state and non-state agencies informed by an overarching neoliberal political rationality, and which are "designed to reconstitute individuals in line with a new conception of economic activity and security" (p. 219).

What is clear however, is that public policy under both Labor and the Coalition have consolidated a new style and rationale for government intervention based on neo-liberalism. Although this has had an impact on a range of public policies, its impact is most apparent in the economic sphere (Gleeson & Low, 2000). The most dominant change is that economic policy takes precedence over all areas of public policy (Beeson & Firth, 2000). In total, the neo-liberal political rationality increasingly informing Australian public policy is a strategy for extending market mechanisms to areas of individual and organisational activity previously considered as non-market spheres, causing major implications to behaviour in private and public life (Wailles & Ramia, 2004). In short, "the dominance of a neo-liberal approach to governance combined with a discourse of 'competitive individualism' has profoundly affected our understanding of economic processes and of our own places within them" (Beeson & Firth, p.228). This in turn has rapidly come to shape our 'common sense' understanding of the world, and is therefore, as Bourdieu (1991) reminds us, all the more powerful for that reason.

*Impacts of Australia's Neoliberal Agenda*

Concerned about the fading social rights of vulnerable Australians arising from neo-liberal institutional reform, Meagher (2000) reported that one reason for a more unequal society is the progressive decentralization of wage-fixing since 1987. In 1993, this process was entrenched in the Industrial Relations Reform Act, which allowed changes in minimum wages and conditions of workers to be determined at the enterprise level, without involvement of trade unions and State arbitration institutions (ACIRRT, 1999, 41). The Coalition government also established a pattern of policy-making that continued Labor-established directions in macroeconomic, microeconomic and industrial relations policies, while undermining Labor initiatives in some crucial labour market and social policy areas (Meagher, 2000). However, as Meagher emphasized, the most disturbing aspect of the subsequent policy structures is that it provides Australian governments with fewer means of enhancing social development than they might otherwise have had.

There are clearer links made between industrial relations reform and the negative consequences in Australia. Meagher (2000) emphasized why it is imperative to focus on the social development of Australia with policies that go beyond the criteria that economic growth will lead to poverty reduction. Firstly, as Hunter (1999a) argued, Australia contains three 'Nations', the rich, the poor non-indigenous Australians, and indigenous Australians'. This is based on the reality that living standards for indigenous people are both qualitatively and quantitatively different to those of other Australians. Altman & Hunter (2000) calculate that almost half Australia's indigenous people (47.7 per cent) compared to (25.8 per cent) live in households with income below 60 per cent of the Australian median income.

Based on this statistics, indigenous people are nearly twice as likely to be poor as non-indigenous Australians. The authors further rationalized that conventional income-based measures misrepresent the nature and extent of indigenous poverty: "income disadvantage is a critical problem for many

indigenous households, but asset poverty (specifically, extremely low levels of home ownership, lack of inherited wealth or a capital base and lack of insurance policies and superannuation) is also important both in itself, and as a cause of income poverty" (cited in Meagher, p. 64).

Altman & Hunter (2000) report that indigenous people also have lower rates of labour force participation, vastly higher rates of unemployment, and lower average levels of education than non-indigenous Australians. Moreover, they conclude, these factors combine with increased likelihood of long-term health problems; high levels of arrest and victimization in the criminal justice system; and the forced removal of many children from their parents, to produce multi-dimensional poverty for many Aboriginal people (Altman & Hunter). Such non-economic problems also contribute to the income and asset poverty that undermines material living standards for this population (Meagher, 2000).

Most pertinent to the analysis is the juxtaposition of claims that economic policies can reduce poverty given "...history of dispossession and exclusion of indigenous Australians from society's mainstream institutions are the primary causes of this population's limited access to economic and social resources" (Fincher & Saunders, 2000, p. 74). Also significant, current institutional and statutory frameworks continue to affect indigenous people's prospects for attaining economic and social security because: " indigenous poverty has complex, long-standing and persistent causes, policy solutions require long-term bipartisan commitment and will need to tackle economic and social problem simultaneously" (Altman & Hunter, 2000, p. 73). Instead, much policy directed at reducing indigenous poverty aims either at expanding employment opportunities, or redressing the profound social exclusion many indigenous Australians will suffer (Meagher, 2000).

Although absolute poverty in Australia may be largely restricted to Indigenous Australians, relative poverty remains a problem for many non-indigenous people. For example, there are several non-indigenous groups at particular risk of poverty: " the unemployed, especially the long-term

unemployed (Gregory & Sheehan, 1998); sole parents (Shaver, 1998, Travers, 2000); and those who suffer combinations of 'disability' including unemployment, sickness or invalidity, large family size, and recent migration (King, 1998). Writing about the difficulties facing those with a 'disability', Kalisch, Aman & Buchele (1998) highlighted "...comparatively low pension and benefit levels, coupled with a declining social wage provision, leave many households relying on income support in relative poverty and also put many at serious risk of social exclusion" (p. 65). Australia has both one of the most unequal distributions of market *income* and one of the most progressive overall distribution of transfers in the OECD (Meagher, 2000). These are not unrelated: the primary focus of Australia's social security system is 'safety net' protection against absolute poverty, and the overall level of social protection spending is low by International standards (Whiteford, 2000).

The literature indicates that lack of access to adequate and appropriate labour market opportunity is the primary cause of income poverty among both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians (Shaver, 1998). Indeed changes in the structure of the labour market and in the distribution of work between households in recent decades mean that poverty rates have increased markedly since the renowned Henderson studies of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Fincher & Nieuwenhuysen, 1998). Watson & Buchanan (2000) argue that these changes indicate that *inequality* rather than poverty is emerging as Australian society's most pressing distributional problem.

The authors report several trends in poverty and unemployment in recent decades. In 1972-73 the poverty rate for the unemployed stood at about 17 per cent, but by 1996, the figure was 74 per cent. During this period, unemployment increased from 1.8 per cent of the labour force to 8.5 per cent. Moreover the rate of long-term unemployment had increased from about one-quarter during the 1980s to around one-third in the 1990s. The average duration of unemployment more than doubled during the last two decades, settling at over 50 weeks in the late 1990s. While the rate of unemployment has been falling

since it peaked at more than 11 percent in 1992 it remains at unacceptably high levels (Watson & Buchanan).

The most important point to emerge is not the high levels of unemployment rates but that the 1980s saw an emerging gulf between households with no breadwinners and those with two. "The more extreme poverty was to be found in households afflicted by long-term unemployment and households headed by single parents" (Watson & Buchanan, 2000, p. 66). This bifurcation has implications for both child poverty rates, and what might be called the 'intergenerational transfer' of poverty and social exclusion (Travers, 2000). While people at the bottom of the labour market have been experiencing declining fortunes, as Watson & Buchanan highlighted that 'those at the top have been moving in the opposite direction' (cited in Meagher, 2000, p. 66). For example, Kryger (1999), found that in the ten years to 1998, the total remuneration level of a private sector chief executive officer rose by 111 per cent, compared to a 51 per cent increase in earnings of the community generally. In fact according to the Australian Financial Review between 1993 and 1998, the number of millionaires in Australia increased from 71, 700 to 188, 200 and their share of wealth doubled to 21.5 per cent of total wealth (AFR, 1999).

Most disturbing, Williams (2006) reported that Australians were not necessarily complacent about the changes in income distribution they were just unaware of how much top chief executives were being paid. "It is startling to realize that one CEO in one of these companies made 92 times the average wage in 1992 and in 2002 it was 98 times the average wage" (AAP, 2006). In their conclusion, the Australian Financial Review poignantly point out that inequality in the labour market is not just a contrast between rising levels of unemployment and looming numbers of millionaires, 'inequality also concerns the *quality* of available jobs' (AFR, 1999).

Contributing further insights underlying the divide between rich and poor, Watson & Buchanan (2000) justified that one of the great disappointments of the

1990s has been the failure of the economy to generate sufficient full time jobs. In April 1999 approximately 44 per cent of women and nearly 13 per cent of men worked part-time (ABS, 1999). Of women in paid employment, 41.9% worked part-time with nearly a quarter (23.4%) of these wanting either more part-time or full-time hours (ABS 2002). The majority (56.6%) of underemployed paid workforce were women (ABS 2002). The trouble with this pattern of employment growth is that it leaves many workers underemployed, part-time work creates poverty traps for the unemployed and reduces their likelihood of returning to the workforce (Watson & Buchanan, 2000). The part-time workforce reported needing more hours of work because the majority of new part-time jobs are casual, offered in the service sector and mostly taken up by women (ABS 2001).

While the largest employment group continued to be employees with some paid entitlements, the other large groupings were the self-employed (14%) and self-identified casuals (18%) of whom two-thirds were women (ABS 2001). These work arrangements are characterised by greatly reduced entitlements, including access to both holiday and sick leave, superannuation contributions and so on (Shoebridge & Shoebridge, 2002). Jobs growth since the 1990s has offered few opportunities to the core of (mostly male) long-term unemployed blue-collar workers displaced from manufacturing and infra-structure industries.

Watson & Buchanan (2000) further emphasize the accompanying proliferation of non-standard forms of employment, as former 'traditional' full-time jobs (standard employment) had been converted into 'precarious' jobs (non-standard employment). For example, traditionally, many firms employed in-house casuals who were often recruited into permanent jobs over time. However, these avenues to permanent work are closing as companies increasingly turn to the contracting out of work to agencies and labour hire companies (Watson & Buchanan). In terms of poverty and inequality the growth of non-standard employment is important for two reasons. Watson & Buchanan outlined that firstly, "the precarious nature of the employment relationship erodes both full-year and life-time earnings potential. Secondly, "the bargaining position of precarious workers is much weaker than those employees working

under standard employment relations" (p. 67). As a consequence of workplace changes since the 1990s, employment conditions have eroded, particularly concerning hours of work and patterns of work intensification moreover, casual workers are amongst the least able to resist this deterioration (Watson & Buchanan).

*Employment policy: more and better jobs?*

To combat the social impacts of globalization, both Labor and Coalition governments in Australia have argued that increasing the flexibility of the labour market by reforming industrial relations system is crucial for sustaining economic and therefore employment growth (Meagher, 2000). However, the Coalition Government has aggressively pursued decentralization and deregulation that is clearly different from Labor's reforms. As Buchanan, Callus & Briggs (1999) point out, the raft of provisions enacted by the Coalition's Workplace Relations Act 1996 are specifically "...designed to reduce union influence, increase managerial prerogatives and individualize the employment relationship" (p. 18). The more recent 'second wave' industrial relations reforms is also designed to move the system further down this path (Meagher). So far, the impact of Coalition reforms shows up not so much in aggregate measures of wages and working time, but in the growing fragmentation of the labour market and dispersal of earnings between individuals and households (Buchanan, Callus & Briggs, 1999).

Part of the problem is the assumption by governments that increases in employment result from reducing labour costs. On the contrary, Watson (1999) argued that increasing labour market flexibility is a 'blunt instrument', and may not be effective. One reason is that under decentralized bargaining, employers can now meet their need for additional labour by intensifying the workload of their workforce, rather than by employing new workers. This is clearly evident by under-employed workers reporting that they want more hours of work than their employers currently offer them and also by over-employed workers who report working longer hours required by their employers (ABS, 2003, cited in Healy,

2004). Moreover, even with low levels of unemployment resulting from reductions in labour costs, this is employment generation by the 'low-wage job' path, it is unlikely the resultant jobs will reflect the goals of social development with respect to job quality (Meagher, 2000).

One argument used to promote the benefits of decentralized bargaining for workers is that workers may trade wage increases for better working conditions, and so be better off, despite apparently modest pay outcomes (Meagher, 2000). However, new evidence shows that low-paid workers are more likely than high-paid workers to achieve small wage increases as well as losing working conditions in the bargaining process, particularly if unions are not involved (Healy). Also pertinent, low-paid work is strongly associated with poor access to training and earnings mobility at the bottom of the labour market in Australia is already very limited (Burgess & Campbell, 1988).

More importantly, while many believe that the more punitive program structures initiated by the Coalition Government will not be effective in combating poverty (Kerr & Savelsberg, 1999; King, 1998). Coalition reforms to employment assistance are a key element of the restructuring of the 'social contract' between state and citizenry, towards a concept of social citizenship based on free market ideology (Kerr & Savelsbert, 1999). As a consequence: "The new rights and responsibilities of citizenship serve to divide groups and communities further, socially and morally demarcating the welfare recipient (dependent) from the self-reliant (independent). Ironically, exercising one's social citizenship entitlements results in increased social inequality and adds to the other cleavages of class and race" (Meagher, 2000, p. 76).

### *Declining Levels of Social Sustainability*

It is evident that the language and practice of Australian public policy have become increasingly organized around the assumption that economic development in the form of more competitive and dynamic markets will achieve all national economic and social aims (Meagher, 2000). Nevertheless, evidence



suggests that public sector cutbacks themselves, setting aside the loss of particular benefits or programs, are detrimental both to economic growth and gender equity in the labour market (Jones, 2002). For example, research has shown that public sector services such as education, health and community services have what economists call very high 'multipliers'. This means that any decrease in the provision of these services will have greater flow-on effects for economic growth and employment than decreases in the provision of most other goods and services (Gleeson & Low, 2000). Thus, inversely, in addition to fulfilling a range of unmet social needs, expanding public sector industries might help maintain growth and reduce unemployment (Bell, 1997). Furthermore the impact of public sector downsizing

"tends to be particularly severe for women because, ... it is often the largest single employer of women ... [and] wages and employment conditions are better ... and gender wage differentials are smaller ... than in private waged employment" (Reynolds, 1996, p. 75).

Meagher (2000) is adamant that the challenge of integrating economic and social development has not been well met in Australia since the late 1980s. While governments have embraced globalisation largely with market-oriented solutions, Falk (1999a) argued that profound changes resulting from globalization have impacted greatly on levels of social capital – of intrinsic value for a healthy society. The negative effects have manifested in the declining role of the traditional family unit and community life, and where old norms and guarantees appear to be lost forever. However, the most worrying aspect of neo-liberal progress, is that governments have also found it difficult to keep pace with the acceleration of economic and social change and the institutional making of public policy has fallen well behind the pace of change (Falk 1999a). As a result, politicians are left responding more to specific events rather than long-term trends, which is further aggravated by the short-term nature of the electoral cycle (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2002). If governments are serious about promoting a fair and just future for vulnerable Australians then policy programs that reconcile the electoral tensions between globalism and parochialism are vital.

Latham (1998) noted several impacts requiring urgent action by governments. The first is the dislocation effects of economic restructuring, whereby, even though globalisation creates many new jobs in new industries, these positions are rarely in the same location, requiring the same skills as the jobs displaced from old and declining industries. As a consequence, the new economy is tilted towards even greater inequality, where the labour market strongly rewards those with internationally competitive skills, while seemingly leaving behind those without skills (Wiseman 1999). The second issue concerns the fiscal crisis of the state, whereby governments are struggling to fund both industry assistance and social welfare off an internationally competitive tax base. While it remains unclear how an efficient and fair taxation system might evolve, Latham concedes that governments face a contradictory role in the new economy. While they are expected to spend less to improve national savings and balance the external account, they also need to spend more on both business and social welfare to respond to the growing costs of economic restructuring. In view of the antagonistic forces faced by governments, Latham (1997) predicts a downwards envy to emerge in society: "...whereby in the rationing of scarce government entitlements, those citizens facing job insecurity tend to look down the social ladder - at those excluded from the production process - and argue that the rules of public distribution have become fundamentally unfair" (p. 29).

Latham (1998) paints a pessimistic picture concerning the ability and motivation of governments to promote a fair and just structural transition in Australia, particularly when considered in light of the short-term nature of electoral cycles. For example, preparing vulnerable workers through the development of new skills and insights is not conceivable, as education budgets are likely to suffer by virtue of their investment in the future. Political reality would thus encourage politicians to give greater priority to immediate 'answers', and most often accede to sectional subsidies and interest group concessions. In view of this it is less probable that governments would invest in long-term visions to address labour dislocation and obsolescence caused by neo-liberal structural

change (Latham, 1998). The level of structural impediments is so deeply entrenched in the new economy that the post-war welfare state, whereby transfer payments and the passive delivery of services are no longer viable solutions to the issue of long-term poverty and social mobility (Latham, 1997).

In view of the cumulative effects of the decline of social capital and social cohesiveness, the effects of neoliberal restructuring presents major concerns for family and community functioning (Falk, 1999a; Gleeson & Low, 2000). As Falk & Kilpatrick (2002) highlighted the issues are vitally important particularly when the ideals of public mutuality and trusts are being displaced by popular belief that social problems can only be solved with victim blaming solutions including more prisons and harsher penalties. Latham (1997) also expressed concern over the widening spread of life's responsibilities. For example, international citizenship will need to be reconciled with the more traditional sources of personal identity and citizenship: the nation state, regional ties and local communities (Rudolph, 2005). In particular, nations will need to find new ways of expressing their sovereignty, as a replacement for crude border controls and limits (Rudolph, 2003a). Globalization also confronts states with difficult choices about the appropriate level of engagement with regional organizations and about the current relevance of national sovereignty (Linklater, 1998). It is not surprising that central governments are finding it increasingly difficult to generate a commanding consensus about national identity and national purpose as a result (Rudolph, 2005, p. 120). All these issues need greater reflection by policy actors and civil society sectors if the transition towards a new global order is to be embraced within a social justice framework.

### *Seeking a Broader Framework*

While many advance the inevitability and in particularly both the positive and negative impacts of global restructuring, Taylor (2002) claimed: "globalization is less pervasive and more fragile than is widely believed by both its supporters and its opponents" (p. 26). For instance, while the evidence emerging from "normative" analytical framework contributes some important

understandings to the dissemination of an economic consensus, it does not explain how consensus can be changed. Nor can it explain why and how particular communities might vary within the boundaries of the consensus itself. Given the diversity of possibilities, it is important to understand how might policy actors still exert "agency" both in their actions and in their own justifications for a neoliberal revolution. For example, a number of scholars have questioned the extent to which markets are becoming globalized (Hirst & Thompson, 1999). Boyer (1996) also suggests that the simple globalization framework is structured around a convergence hypothesis that views national policy regimes as becoming increasingly similar under the pressure of g. Indeed at its extreme this approach predicts an end to the nation state and an end to geography. This simplistic globalization framework has been widely criticised and as such offers less scope to be theoretically meaningful to locally specific cross-community level analyses.

To embrace globalization as a useful theoretical construct, it needs to be grounded in a specific substantive domain. To capture the realities occurring within a specific social context, the research methodology needs to be located within broader theoretical frameworks encompassing multiple levels of analysis. A broader theoretical framework is vital to capture evolutionary changes taking place within a community setting involving diverse social relationships. Since globalization does not affect all actors in a society evenly, a natural question is which actors find globalization a particularly coherent or attractive explanation for what is going on in their lives, community, society and world. Qualitative research within an eclectic theoretical framework will enable more holistic understandings of the discourses relating to rural and regional community change influenced by globalization and other social forces. Despite prolific literature on globalization, few studies examine the implications of the processes grounded in detailed examination within particular historical and geographical times and places. Following Anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai's direction, this study "... is a site for the examination of how locality emerges in a globalizing

world, of how colonial processes underwrite contemporary politics ... of how global facts take local form (1977, p. 99).

While globalization is a powerful force guiding the economic development of societies around the world, it is equally poignant to embrace broader conceptualisations of development incorporating a social justice perspective based on equity toward those marginalized from the economic structure and respect for the environment (Meagher, 2000; Syme, Kals, Nancarrow, & Montada, 2000). Clearly there are dire consequences for both the environment and people when the dominant model of accumulation of wealth (Sachs, 1999) is promoted to the exclusion of other considerations (Jenkins, 1998; Sachs, Loske & Linz, 1998). In this regard the discourse underlying sustainability to advance a more holistic framework toward societal development and aspects pertaining to the Australian context is reviewed below.

### Sustainability – A Holistic Framework for Development

Zaoual (1998) noted: "The utilitarian and productivist paradigm of development is like a telescope through which the West sees only itself" (p. 38). Where the prioritising of growth and the underlying assumptions that every nation has the right to unlimited progress and unrestricted exploitation of natural resources – and by extension, that every person has the right to unlimited consumption – cannot stand up to scrutiny (Jucker, 2004). The first fallacy is the assumption that unlimited expansion is possible: in other words that the economic sphere can have primacy over any other sphere (Jucker, 2002). Since the "life-support-system Earth (Costanza, Segura & Martinez-Alier, 1996, p. 2) is the sphere on which everything else depends – it defines the possibilities and limits (p. 13). To ensure economic development proceeds in balance with the environmental and social goals, the global United Nations' initiative "*sustainability*" has been embraced as a universal goal to guide progress in societies globally. To gain a holistic understanding of rural community development the theoretical concept of sustainability provides a macro-level

understanding of the global forces influencing public policy and decision-making processes underlying sustainable development.

### *The Sustainability Vision*

For democracy to thrive, internationally citizens need to move from being 'users and choosers to makers and shapers' of the future (Beer, 1974; Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999, 2001). Also linked, is a vision that can 'reach out to society as a whole' addressing its wants, needs and insecurities' (Ward, 1994). There is now consensus that such a vision can emerge from what has come to be called *sustainability* (Davoudi, 2000; Gillies, 1998). Having gained wide theoretical and political acceptance in the global community *sustainability* has now been embraced as a sound basis for integrating environmental, social and economic decision making at all levels of society (Blowers, 1993; Low & Gleeson, 1998; Tippet, 2005). Sustainability then, seems to be a straightforward widely accepted concept for making decisions about development from a holistic framework. Nevertheless, for some authors, it merely reflects political opportunism and lacks any real substance (Szarka, 2004; Vlachou, 2004). For example, definitions of sustainable development have been criticized as vague, inoperative, and technocratic (Lidsky, 2000; Newton & Freyfogle, 2005; Tobin, 1999). Nonetheless, the concept of sustainable development can represent a meeting point for groups and sectors representing diametrically opposed interests (e.g. environmentalist v industry) (Gillies, 1998; Pinter, 1997) and its incorporation is facilitated as a positive social value in society (Meadows, 1994). Also supporting this vision, Merchant (1992) spoke of a global "sustainability movement" that "encompasses mainstream and grassroots environmental organizations, scientists and political activists, and First World and Third World concerns and peoples (cited in Rather, 2004, p. 52).

Whilst the notion of sustainability has an indeterminately long history, the impetus, to associate sustainable development and policy-making practice arose from the Brundtland report (WCED-Brundtland, 1987), leading to two 'world summits' organized by the UN in Rio (1992) and Johannesburg (2002) (Szarka,

2004, p. 17). The Rio Declaration and the blueprint for sustainable development *Agenda 21* (UNCED 1992) certainly provided a broad set of political principles intended to guide the global community in its task of ensuring ecological and social sustainability (Dobson, 2003). It provided both a conceptual framework for the elaboration of SD policy and imposed practical (if somewhat limited) requirements, inter alia to publish and implement national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) (Low & Gleeson, 1998). More explicitly, Agenda 21 (UN 1999) stressed the need for a specific strategy to combat poverty, promoting education, empowerment and awareness to reinforce attitudes and values that are compatible with sustainable development (McIntyre, 2004).

### *United Nations Vision*

In promoting a universal vision for future development, the UN (2001) set out guidance and core principles for the preparation of NSDS, including firm political commitment spearheaded by a strong institution, a nationally owned and country driven process; building on existing expertise and capacity; widest possible participation; sound technical analysis; integration and balance across sectors and territories; linking the short to the medium and long term; coherence between budget and strategy priorities; realistic but flexible targets; establishing mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and feedback and ensuring continuity of strategy development (Szarka, 2004). As the author acknowledged, operationalization of those principles relied on four processes: a political process (requiring strong leadership); a technical process (developing methodology and SD indicators); a *participatory* process (to be 'multi-layered and inclusive') and a *resource mobilization* process (appropriate budgetary and investment decisions) (UN 2001). Although the discourse is enthusiastically embraced on a global scale, critics of the SD concept have pointed to its vagueness (Dobson, 2003; ; Newton & Freyfogle, 2005; Reed, 2002).

A thought provoking consequence highlighted by Hopwood, Mellor & O'Brien (2005) is that the ambiguity allows business and governments to embrace sustainability without any fundamental challenge to their present

course: by using Brundtland's support for rapid growth to justify the phrase 'sustainable growth'. Rees (1998) points out that this allows capitalism to continue to advance economic growth as its 'morally bankrupt solution' to poverty. As its basis rests on the modern parlance of the trickle-down theory, if the economy grows, eventually all will benefit (Dollar & Kraay, 2000). Daly (1993) instead argued for the term 'sustainable development' to reflect more qualitative, rather than quantitative improvements. Development however, is open to confusion, with some seeing it as an end in itself, so it has been suggested that greater clarity would be to speak of 'sustainable livelihoods' the aim that Brundtland outlined (Workshop on Urban Sustainability, cited in Hopwood, et. al., 2005). Many advocates seek common ground and clarity of purpose in the now canonical definition provided by the Brundtland report as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED-Brundtland, 1987, p. 43; Miller, 2003). Additionally, while it is now customary to point to the 'three pillars' of SD: namely, economic development, social equity and environmental protection (Mihalos, 1997; Agyeman & Evans, 2004). The most important theme however, is that the spirit of SD necessitates deliberate integration of all three pillars (Szarka, 2004).

### *Critique of Sustainability*

At face value, the concept offered little room for direct opposition: who could argue for "unsustainable" development? Indeed the critiques have been more nuanced (Fitzpatrick, 2004). One line of critique focuses on the political motives and consequences of diverse groups joining forces with the apparently common goal of sustainability. Writing at a time when the language of sustainability was new in development discourse, Norgaard (1988) lamented, "Environmentalists want environmental systems sustained. Consumers want consumption sustained. Workers want jobs sustained... With the term meaning something different to everyone, the quest for sustainable development is off to a cacophonous start" (p. 607). Redclift (1987) was more piercing, arguing that



prominent advocates of sustainability held manipulative intentions, seeking to deny poorer groups their share of material rewards in development.

In a similar vein, Lohmann (1990) argued that sustainability rhetoric would serve to introduce incremental changes while containing “threats to the way power is currently distributed and held”. O’Riordan (1988) lay blame on many sides; developers, he argued, “seek to exploit the very ambiguities that give sustainability its staying power. Similarly “environmentalists abuse sustainability by demanding safeguards and compensatory investments that are not always economically or socially just” (p. 30). Many case studies seek to substantiate the claim that sustainability rhetoric masks destructive practices by corporations (Kimerling, 2001) and environmentalists (Lohmann, 1999), especially with regard to indigenous peoples and other politically marginalized groups (Low & Gleeson, 1998). Other critiques related to human-nature relations in industrialized societies emphasize structural characteristics and institutional sources that normalize current environmental degradation (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Murphy, 1994) or their links to social inequalities and relationships of domination (Brookchin, 1989; Reed, 2002 ).

### *Rhetorical Consensus on Sustainability*

A second line of critique focuses on the underlying values that motivate different visions of sustainability. As Ratner (2004) delineated, many authors extract specific features to articulate a particular, positive vision of sustainability that they advocate. For example Sachs (1999) takes aim at sustainability programs rooted in utilitarian values tied to the overriding imperative of economic growth. As well as programs based on scientific principles that inform an agenda of technocratic management of societies and ecosystems. Both of which Sachs contrasts with a “home perspective” on sustainability that prioritizes local livelihoods and aims to reverse global inequities between North and South. Likewise, Petrella (2000) argues against the inevitability of global economic integration and invokes the language of sustainability to describe a counter agenda that is “people-centred” and “democratic”, seeking to avoid further

consolidation of “islands” of political and economic power. Other writers prioritize a gender perspective, such as Palmer-Jones and Jackson (1997), who argue that the labour-intensive technologies commonly promoted to boost rural economic productivity and welfare as an alternative to dependence on fossil fuels, agrochemicals and mechanization frequently place an unequal burden on women. The message being raised by Ratner (2004) is that despite the rhetorical consensus around general notions of sustainability, bridging competing interests among a diversity of actors comprising development agencies, environmental organizations, social justice groups and the vast array of disciplinary analysts is becoming increasingly difficult. The most fundamental challenge to advocates is that these actors are “faced with a climate of widespread discontent about the poor progress of translating earlier policy proclamations into joint action” (p. 53).

#### *Resolving the Integration Predicament*

To promote a path that would embrace conflicting conceptualizations as a positive challenge, Lele (1991) suggests distinguishing between trivial conceptualizations of sustainability and meaningful ones. For example, the author highlighted that conceptualizations that focus on growth in material consumption signifies little meaning. More meaningful interpretations on the other hand capture multidimensional frameworks, often distinguishing among social goals (including justice, participation, equality, empowerment, institutional sustainability, cultural integrity, etc.), ecological goals (include biodiversity preservation, ecosystem resilience, resource conservation, etc), and economic goals (including growth, efficiency, and material welfare) (Devkota, 2005; Laituri, 1996; Lele). However, even with meaningful, multidimensional conceptualizations, efforts to integrate all three easily yield to conflicting interpretations (Miller, 2005).

Not discouraged by the conflictive perspective, Ratner (2004) outlines an alternative path to sustainable development both in theory and organizational practice by recognizing the relationship between social values and collective

action. To elaborate, in Max Weber's analysis, individuals hold "value orientations", while "value spheres are social phenomena. Examples of value spheres are the moral prescriptions of a religion, the authority encoded in civil law, or the dictates of financial success in a capitalist marketplace (cited in Brubaker, 1984, p. 62). Thus, each value sphere represents an internally consistent framework of decision-making and action that, when juxtaposed with others, may introduce value conflict at the individual or collective level. Weber (1949) used the concept of value orientations and value spheres to depict the inherent or dominant tendencies in different value perspectives (p. 323, cited in Ratner, p. 55).

### *Technical & Ethical Consensus*

When multiple values impinge on decision-making, as is the case with the goal of sustainability and other multidimensional notions of development. Ratner (2004) identified technical consensus and ethical consensus as the alternate approaches that shape a coherent framework for social action. Many authors acknowledge the difficulty of optimizing all three dimensions of sustainability simultaneously. However, there is optimism - the task framed as a technical issue can be resolved by finding the appropriate balance rather than associating it as a substantive problem of inherently conflicting goals (Agyeman & Evans, 2004; Low, et al., 2000; Pretty, 1995). Consequently, the decision-making framework is informed by scientific technique although many concede that judgements are ultimately made from moral principles and beliefs (Calderon, 2000; Pinter, 1997).

There are other implications involved when adopting technical and ethical consensus approaches to the decision-making framework. Elaborating further, Ratner (2004) established that within an ethical consensus framework ethics refers to the reasoning behind actions and judgements, regarding what is right and good. An ethic, therefore, is a decision-making framework grounded and guided by a coherent set of values. In this regard, Holdgate elucidated that (1996) "sustainability is not a technical problem to be solved, but a vision of the future focusing our attention on a set of values, and moral and ethical principles

to guide our actions" (p. 138). Despite the elusiveness of a unifying ethic for sustainability, the search remains compelling. For example, both mainstream sustainability advocates and radical social critics (e.g. Bookchin, 1989) make the call for a new ethic of social action that serves as a guide for navigating through social conflict (Sandberg & Sorlin, 1998; Prades, Crocker, 1990). For many, building such an ethic is an imperative, even as specific development goals "must be flexible and open to community definition" (Maser & Kirk, 1996, p. 165).

### *Clash of Values & Dialogue of Values*

In the third alternative approach to decision making, neither ethic nor technique is adequate to overcome the full range of value differences that divide social groups (Barbier, 1987; Reed, 2002). Particularly, when sustainable development is based on integrating all three pillars, the action specified by the different value spheres must necessarily at times conflict (McIntyre, 2004). Depicting the clash of values perspective, Weber (1949) contended that problems of economic and social policy "cannot be resolved merely on the basis of purely technical considerations which assume already settled ends.

"Normative standards of values can and must be the objects of dispute in a discussion of a problem of social policy because the problem lies in the domain of general cultural values" (p. 56, cited in Ratner, 2004, p. 61).

Even where consensus exists among the different value perspectives, Ratner maintained it is not merely a technical issue unless there is synchronization on the "specific ends". Alternatively, if ends of action are disputed, technical consensus is unlikely to appropriate a means for resolution. Finally, regardless of group unity, if significant conflicts cannot be resolved by resorting to a system of values held by all, then ethical consensus is also curtailed.

Among the first to articulate the inherent conflicts in pursuing competing goals, Barbier (1987) posited that there exists no systematic means for resolving such conflict. Furthermore, that sustainable development requires trade-offs

among the human-ascribed goals of three distinct “systems” – biological, economic and social (p. 459). This was later included in the World Bank’s report Making Development Sustainable (Serageldin & Steer, 1994). Barbier also added that, as many of the qualitative dimensions of the various trade-offs could not be quantitatively measured, “...precise analysis of all benefits and costs cannot be assured...” (p. 460).

Offering an option to this conflictive view, Ratner (2004) proposed that when sustainability is construed as a ‘dialogue of values’ among competing actors, then the diversity by which the idea is applied and contested in practice is embraced (p. 51). Therefore, sustainability is meaningfully endorsed “... for the way it brings differences in goals such as economic growth, cultural autonomy, physical welfare, spiritual meaning and biological conservation into a common field of dispute, dialogue and potential agreement as the basis of collective action” (p..). Aligning with Weber’s view that “no objective means can exist for making tough social choices (cited in Diesing, 1962, p. 237) Ratner concluded that by interpreting sustainability as a dialogue of values, where “...technical and ethical consensus are desirable but not adequate means of reaching collective decisions in complex disputes, places an emphasis on social actors, their dynamic processes of interaction, and the characteristics of governance that structure those processes” (p. 62).

From this third, pluralistic conception as a dialogue of values, identifying and strengthening social institutions to manage value conflict is accentuated. From this view, a focus on alternative forms of governance for meaningful and equitable involvement by diverse social actors in decisions over a collective future becomes salient (Ratner, 2004). “... enhancing participation of actors in deliberating the ends and means of development not only as instrumental for realizing specific development goals but as *constitutive* of the very meaning of sustainable development practice” (p. 57). Also important within this model of collaboration is a greater focus on governance structures to evaluate how they affect the quality of collective decision-making and the character of development decisions from local to global scales (Ball, 2002).

*Governance Structures & Just Outcomes*

Hempel (1996) for example, advocates a “deliberative democracy” in which “citizens are directly engaged in the challenge of self-rule through an open engagement in a contest of ideas in order to make informed choices about policy or about representatives who are delegated to make policy” (1996, p. 219). While conceptually attractive, the evidence that such norms promote sustainability beyond the community level is at the least uneven (Jenkins, 1998). As evidence shows the world’s wealthy industrialized democracies are (on a per capita basis) the greatest consumers of global resources and have often managed to protect environmental quality at home by exporting polluting industries abroad (Sachs, 1999). In view of these unjust outcomes, methodologies of participatory decision-making, conflict mediation, and stakeholder negotiations are not suitable for all types of disputes, particularly when dominant groups may use such processes to co-opt demands of historical opponents (Edmunds & Wollelberg, 2001). Also poignantly echoed by O’Neill (1997) “environmental conflicts are not only about values, they are also about power and interests” (p. 85). It is therefore imperative that reducing inequities in power are often a necessary pre-requisite or an integral component of initiatives demanding inter-group cooperation for sustainability goals (Calderon, 2000; McIntyre, 2004).

*Public and Private Collaboration*

Analyzing the inter-group relationship between democratically elected governments and popular social movements, Lemos & Looye (2003) articulated that social movements affect and are affected by the relationship they build with government institutions. For example, Evans (1997) distinguished two kinds of relationships formed between public and private institutions. The first complementarity, “...is the conventional way of conceptualizing mutually supportive relations between public and private actors (p. 1120). Where, two kinds of inputs together results in greater output than either public or private sectors could deliver on their own. The second type synergy, “...may be based

on 'embeddedness' – that is, on ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide" (p. 1120). The most valuable association developmentally, synergistic relationships are repositories for social capital (Putnam, 2000).

A potent source for civil society action, social capital has the capacity to prevent traditional practices of inclusionary politics, encourage accountability, and improve decision-making processes (Li, Pickles & Savage, 2005). However, as Evans (1977) revealed the factors affecting state-society synergy can vary widely and discusses the role of four: a) strength of bureaucratic institutions, b) political competitiveness and 'rules of the game', 4) complementarity and most importantly, d) endowment of social capital. Starting with endowment of social capital, Evans argued that contrary to Putnam's (1993) proposition that previous endowments of social capital are critical to the process, his study showed that synergy is possible even when it is scarce. It is however necessary to distinguish between micro level social capital and the development of trust across the state-society divide (Li, et al., 2005). The former, defined as: "ties among friends and neighbours" is essential for synergy to exist (Evans, 1996, p. 1125). Elaborating further on the other kinds of relationships, the author suggests that in strong, less corrupt and 'clientelistic' bureaucracies and more competitive political environments, this configuration is more conducive to state-society synergy. Additionally, where existing institutional arrangements encourage community mobilization, then transparency and accountability should fare better in building synergistic relationships.

Finally, complementarity is essential between the private and public sectors to be valuable for both groups to engage in a relationship. For example, when examining the relationship between natural resource management agencies and environmental groups, it is often conflicting, but it can at times also be cooperative (Viola & Leis, 1992). As Lemos & Looye (2003) elucidate, while both groups may question each other's efficacy in protecting the environment, where environmental groups accuse governmental agencies of being lenient and taking too long to investigate environmental violations and

degradation. "Agencies, in turn, perceive environmental groups as naïve in their posture against development, technically incompetent and disrespectful of the agencies' technical expertise (p....). On the other hand, as the authors suggest there is substantial overlap between them to promote mobilization of environmental groups, for example, *complementarity* also involve environmental groups indirectly contributing to the design and implementation of specific policies and in turn the existence of environmental protection agencies may act as an impetus for the mobilization of environmental groups (Lemos & Looye).

### *Ecological Modernization and Risk Society*

As already outlined, the discourses on sustainability offer a variety of interpretations each leading to a distinctively different development path. In spite of the diversity, Davoudi (2000) characterizes the sustainability discourse as falling into two major groups. One discourse draws on the ideology of 'ecological modernization', and the other is based on 'risk society' theory. Accordingly, they reflect the underlying conflicts between those who believe that society can achieve sustainability without seriously impeding economic growth, and those who argue that society cannot achieve sustainability unless alternative modes of production compatible with their social forms are pursued (Blowers, 1997).

As ecological modernization theory suggests the economy and the environment are not in conflict and indeed economic prosperity is essential for achieving environmental improvements (Davoudi, 2000). As the authors highlighted it represents environmental politics as a 'positive sum game' in which the concerns for environmental degradation no longer endanger the profit margins of business and industry (Hajer, 1992; Weal, 1993). Risk society, on the other hand, advances an irreconcilable conflict between the contemporary mode of production and ecological needs. It suggests that 'environmental risks are produced industrially, externalized economically, individualized judicially, legitimized scientifically and minimized politically' (Beck, 1994; Reeve, 1990). Within ecological modernization, environmental degradation is not



conceptualized as an anomaly of modernity . In fact, the ecological modernization approach relies on science and technology to 'refine production' in order to achieve better environmental performance (Kamuango, Swallow, Sigue & Bauer, 2001). It is a strategy based on the 'fundamental belief in progress and the problem solving capacity of modern techniques and skills of social engineering' (Hajer).

Risk society on the other hand sees the development of modern technologies as the cause of risk to ecosystems. From this perspective, "the consequences and devastations caused by the chemical and nuclear industries can no longer be limited spatially, temporally or socially" (Davoudi, 2000, p. 125). Mirroring this view, Beck (1994) argued that in the face of such hazardous side effects, all the fundamental concepts of risk management in business, law and politics fail. Championing divergent policy making arrangements, ecological modernization draws on modernist policy instruments, risk society highlights the inherent conflict of rationality and knowledge among diverse actors, particularly when non-scientific knowledge systems are often discredited and falsified by key institutions of state, business and politics (Beck, et. al., 1998).

Within risk society, sustainability is a radical and moral imperative to constrain human activity within the confines of ecological systems (Holdgate, 1994). Also integral is a greater emphasis on democracy and societal participation (McIntyre, 2002). Ecological modernization on the other hand relies on an elitist techno-corporatist approach where the state plays an enabling role to facilitate market operation (Johnson & Wilson, 2000). In this configuration, the state provides the technocratic regulatory framework to direct environmental standards and criteria to mitigate developmental impacts (Hajer, 1992). In contrast risk society promotes an interventionist state - one based on the power of collective action and founded on environmental democracy and the deliberative processes necessary to achieve that (Beck, 1992; 2000). While ecological modernization accepts the status quo, risk society calls for fundamental social transformation.

*Sustainability & Social Justice*

Blowers & Evans (1997) argued that risk society is a 'utopian and idealistic' approach, which highlights the social consequences of technological changes but offers little solution beyond the quest for a 'new Enlightenment'. Ecological modernization, on the other hand, is a pragmatic and seemingly 'rational and realistic' approach which provides a fairly clear direction (Bartelmus, 2003). However, if the scientists' predictions regarding, for example global environmental changes are to be believed, ecological modernization will fail to provide a solution beyond its mitigating attempts (Jenkins, 1998) or, as Beck (1998) put it, beyond 'indulgence in cosmetic ecology on a grand scale'.

Given the plurality of cognitive and normative systems that has evolved between and within cultures and countries, it is apparent that it is neither productive nor desirable to force agreement on the empirical and/or normative meaning of sustainability (Jenkins, 1998). It will remain a contested concept and as Dryzek (1997) and Ratner (2004) stated, it should be regarded as a discourse, rather than a concept to be defined with any precision. In spite of these drawbacks the UN's sustainability principles provided a holistic and coherent approach to policy-making, by combining environmental objectives with social equality and economic well-being. It provided the impetus for each nation to confront the specific question of how to decide between those industries and activities that are sustainable and those that are not when conflicting social and ecological interests are at stake (Gleeson & Low, 2000). Inevitably these issues will necessitate altering both the use and allocation of social and ecological resources (Smailes, 1995). Any fundamental change to resource allocation will have social distributional consequences (Stretton, 1976) and the issue of justice therefore becomes a critical element of any sustainability formulation (Pol & Castrechini, 2002). Sustainable development therefore, is not possible without a broader concept of social justice based on an equitable economic structure and respect for the environment (intergenerational solidarity) (Meagher, 2000; Syme, Kals, Nancarrow, & Montada, 2000).

As cited in the literature, there are not enough natural resources to extend western world levels of welfare to the whole world (Jenkins, 1998; Sachs Loske & Linz, 1998). Accordingly, the conception of quality of life needs reassessment away from the dominant model of accumulation of wealth (Sachs, 1999). The concept of quality of life can no longer be applied to the defense of achieved privileges (Sachs, et al, 1998). It has to do with solidarity and equity (Pol & Castrechini, 2002) and 'a fair go for all' (Meagher, 2000, p. 75). Sustainability, then, has to do not only with ecological concern but also with solidarity and equity, which implies a socio-physical structural network – for example a nation, a city or a community and a social fabric with formal and informal social support (Jucker, 2003; Pol, 2002). In this regard Australia's path towards sustainability will be reviewed to enhance the contextual understanding driving socio-political and cultural changes occurring within the Australian landscape. The review below will inform the case study analyses of the research communities within rural regional Western Australia undertaken by this study.

### *An Australian Approach Toward Sustainability*

For over a decade, like many countries Australia has adopted sustainability as the cornerstone of its efforts to address environmental challenges. Writing about Australia's approaches to sustainability, Buhrs & Aplin (1999) classified the path ways into three distinct categories: a) green planning; b) institutional reform and c) social mobilization. The authors confirmed that none of these courses on its' own is likely to achieve sustainability and integration of all three is vital. Most relevant however, is that Australia appears to reflect the paths dominating other countries, and is experiencing the same difficulties in integrating all three approaches (Miller, 2005). As the authors highlighted combining all three approaches is problematic because each approach is associated with different, often conflicting, rationales (Buhrs & Bartlett, 1993; 1997). One reason identified for the divergences between different regions is "that governments tend to follow a path of least resistance, a course that is perceived to be politically least problematic, rather than what is deemed ecologically rational or necessary" (Aplin, 1998 p. 316).

### *Green Planning*

One of the principal means by which sustainability has been implemented in Australia and in many other countries is the development of green planning (. As Buhrs & Aplin (1999) outlined, this approach focuses “on the formulation and implementation of longer-term sustainability policies or strategies (under a variety of labels, including green plans, sustainable development strategies and National Environmental Action Plans) that portend to be comprehensive, covering a broad array of environmental problems and integrative, formulating goals and means of achieving them across policy areas or sectors” (p. 317). By 1994, it was estimated that more than 100 countries had adopted some form of green planning (Carew-Reid, et al., 1994). While green plan strategies are applauded in principle, they have been found to be highly problematic in theory and practice (Bartlett, 1990) and definitely faltering in some countries, for example Canada, one of the pioneers (Dalal-Clayton, 1996).

In appraising the green planning approach, Buhrs & Aplin (1999) found that despite emphasis by advocates on the importance of public participation, there is the tendency for plans or strategies to be formulated in a technical and top-down manner, which is more in line with the nature of the rational policy tradition. As a result, the extent of societal participation is often rather limited or even completely lacking and control is retained by politicians and bureaucrats at the national level, who de facto initiate and ‘own such plans’ (Carew-Reid, et al., 1994, p. 41). For example in a typical green planning scenario, what is sustainable is determined largely in a top-down manner by the government of the day, within the realm of bureaucratic and political feasibility (Buhrs, 1996). A related problem of this approach is that it lends itself to symbolic politics. The rhetoric of green plans and strategies may be impressive, but their implementation minimal or non-existing (Wintle, 1994; Buhrs & Bartlett, 1997).

In Australia developing strategies has been the preferred means of addressing environmental problems. Since the 1980s, many national strategies have been adopted, including ones dealing with conservation, greenhouse

response, waste minimization and recycling, ozone protection, drought, biological diversity and water quality (Fowler, 1993a). In addition, many other policy statements, guidelines, codes, standards and measures have been adopted at federal and state levels, indicating the popularity of the green planning approach (Gleeson & Low, 2000). Endorsed by the Commonwealth and all state governments in 1992, is the Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy has been the most comprehensive strategic effort addressing developments in 33 sectors as well as cross-sectoral themes (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999).

In evaluating its success, its limitations inevitably showed up in its implementation. The relative lack of specific objectives, targets, timeframes and indicators make evaluation of progress difficult and more open to selective and subjective assessment (ESD Steering Committee, 1993; OECD, 1998). Lack of transparency, specificity and co-ordination in implementation has led various commentators to conclude that the ESD process is "dead" or "moribund" and "floundering" (Doyle & Kellow, 1995, p. 149-150; Aplin, 1998). Various reasons have been put forward for its apparent demise, including change in political leadership and economic climate, bureaucratic jealousies, lack of support by some players and systematic obstacles placed in its path (Dovers, 1997). Above all, the all-pervading presence of economic rationalism, with its very strong emphasis on, and faith in, neo-classical economics and free-markets, in Australian public life makes progress extremely difficult (Aplin, 1997a; Meagher, 2000).

Despite this apparent demise, the ESD Strategy may hold promise to tangible results via hundreds of more specific policies and programmes introduced in its wake at federal, state and local levels, in the sense that they appear to enjoy a high level of commitment and support (Diesendorf & Hamilton, 1997). It is however, argued that it is neither realistic or desirable for the Federal Government to formulate specific objectives and targets for policy areas under the control of the states and territories – as often, it is simply legally and constitutionally impossible for it to do so (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999). The main role and significance of the ESD Strategy, may lie in its catalytic effect for the

development of more substantive policies and actions by states, territories and local governments. It should also invigorate scope for the Federal Government to play a vital role in developing a more co-ordinated and integrated approach by ensuring that local and state efforts meet objectives and obligations agreed on at national and international levels (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999).

### *The Institutional Reform Approach*

A second approach to sustainability executed by national governments is through institutional reform (O’Riordan & Voisey, 1997). Institutionalizing sustainability in the form of rules (for instance, in legislation and regulations) can encourage or enforce environmentally responsible behaviour and deter or constrain environmentally damaging practices (Gibbs, Jonas & While, 2002). Organizational reform that strengthens the role, position and power of environmental agencies can be significant means of reinforcing environmental values and interests, and/or the advocates of sustainability within the institutional framework (Kenny & Meadowcroft, 1999). Institutional reform therefore is seen by many environmental analysts and advocates as a key to changing the political, economic and social structures that stand in the way of a more sustainable world (Knoepfel, 1995; Papadakis, 1996; Janicke & Weidner, 1997).

Institutional reform, in fact, has become a kind of ‘philosopher’s stone’ in governance issues, and is often advocated by people across *the* ideological spectrum as the means of resolving problems of all kinds (March & Olsen, 1984, 1989; Lane, 1990; Lowndes, 1996). This clearly reflected in the major public sector reforms inspired by institutional economics (New Right) theories and the New Public Management approach, which have the declared purpose of increasing efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability (Boston, 1991; Bridge & Jonas, 2002, Hood, 1991; Self, 1993). The fact that institutional reform is sought and practiced from different and often conflicting, positions is one aspect of the difficulty of the ‘sustainability by institutional reform’ pathway (Brinkerhoff, 2000). As Buhrs & Aplin (1999) enlighten proposals for institutional reform to strengthen environmental values and environmental advocacy inevitably face institutionally

entrenched interests, and often face conflicting agendas for reform, as well. To some extent, reforms introduced under the New Public Management umbrella may be compatible with those advocated by environmentalists, particularly where the state has been involved in sponsoring environmental vandalism, but views diverge when it comes to belief in the relative importance of markets and participatory mechanisms for making collective choices (Dryzek, 1999, p. 102-119).

Also highly implicated in the analysis, is that "a reform of environmental institutions may be more of a by-product of a broader programme of reform directed at rolling back the state and devolving responsibilities to the market, rather than motivated by environmental considerations" (Buhrs & Bartlett, 1993, p. 90-112). When viewed more broadly, the extent to which a concern about sustainability acts as an energizing force behind institutional reform in its own right appears to be rather limited (O'Riordan & Voisey, 1997). Even if formal institutions are reformed for sustainability reasons, there is no guarantee that such reforms will have the desired result. For example in highlighting the complex process involved in social change, March & Olsen (1983) articulate that, entrenched human behaviour and resistance to change are not simply overcome by changing formal rules or organizational structures. Furthermore institutional change is usually unsettling and costly, in human and financial terms, often has unintended consequences and may bring a temporary or even permanent decline in organizational capacity. It has also been shown that, in many instances, institutional and organizational reform did not achieve the expected or desired result (March & Olsen; Sharpf, 1986). In parallel with green planning there may be a symbolic element to it, institutional change may be used to give the impression that something positive is being done without any real change occurring (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999).

### *Federal State Relations and Governance*

In Australian, institutional reform as a pathway towards sustainability has been much less relied on. Although institutional change has occurred, these

changes seem to be driven more by the political dynamics of Australia's federal system of government than by a desire to redesign the institutional framework on the basis of challenges inherent in sustainability (Aplin, 1997a). The federal system of government and the fact that the states and territories fiercely guard their powers and responsibilities in the environment area give rise to many obstacles to the development of environmental policy (Buhrs & Alpin, 1999). While Labour Federal Governments did take a more assertive role during the 1970s and early 1980s (Fowler, 1993a), much to the concern and cost of considerable conflict and tension in federal-state relations, interventionism was based on ensuring policy coordination (Doyle & Kellow, 1995). In the early 1990s under the Hawke Labour Government, the trend towards a more co-operative approach was formalized in 1992 with the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE) (Australia, 1992b). Even more perplexing, while this state driven agreement assigned even greater decision-making powers to the states, it was formulated behind closed doors, and not subjected to public discussion or comment (Diesendorf & Hamilton, 1997).

Another key reform strategy that followed, the National Heritage Trust was a 1996 federal election promise made by the Liberal-National Coalition. While it did promise funds for environmental programs, the cynical view of many was that it took the place of more meaningful commitments and that it was largely a sweetener to gain support for the partial sale of Telstra, the public communications company (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999). The authors, further revealed that while the A\$1.25 billion Trust set up by the Coalition Government had considerable potential to promote sustainability, the outcomes have so far been disappointing, and the way in which the funds have been distributed has drawn much criticism. Despite this innovation, the capacity for the Federal Government to advance sustainability policy in a co-ordinated manner remains weak, and subject to fluctuations in political climate and preference (Buhrs & Alpin). Overall, at the federal level, the extent of institutional reform directed at the promotion of sustainability has been limited. Sustainability has continued its



downward slide off the public agenda, with research showing politicians, voters and the media no longer believing it is a 'big ticket' issue (McManus, 2000).

#### State and Local Government Initiatives

Possibly more significant institutional change directed at advancing sustainability occurs at state level, as in South Australia, where an Environment and Natural Resources Cabinet Committee was established, in Tasmania, the inclusion of sustainability as a principle or goal in legislation (e.g. Sustainability Roundtable and Office of Sustainability in South Australia), and the setting up of agencies with the prime role of advocating sustainability (e.g. State Sustainability Strategy, Western Australia and WA Collaboration which plays a key intermediary role between the civil society sector and the State Government in the implementation of the Strategy, (Hodgson, Buselich & Halpin, 2005, p. 27). Various other states have also incorporated ESD principles and at the metropolitan level, a more comprehensive and integrated approach towards environmental planning is developing (Dawkins, Searle & McGrath-Cyamps, 1994). While the effectiveness of these institutional changes and mechanisms at the state level is yet unknown, the intensification of focus on sustainability by all levels of governments has been a major step forward, in establishing a much better knowledge base from which to make decisions and gauge progress (Doyle & Kellow, 1995).

Another intensely controversial area of late 1990s institutional reform in Australia involves the National Competition Policy. As Buhrs & Aplin (1999) outlined, in practical terms it has involved much privatization of formerly public utilities, and while in some cases prices have fallen it sends a wrong signal to consumers about the importance of the environment, as there are already indications that environmental performance has deteriorated. While such reforms, are clearly in line with the economic rationalist approach to policy formation, it may well be acting against the best interests of sustainability (Gleeson & Low, 2000). These issues clearly highlight the political nature of

institutional reform inevitably involves a reallocation of power and affects vested interests (Hemmati, 2002).

### *The Social Mobilization Approach*

A third pathway towards sustainability is *social mobilization*, where advocates put their faith and hope in communities, (the grassroots) (Keating, 2000). As communities are closest to the action in terms of implementing sustainability, this approach can be seen as a more direct means of effecting real change (Labonte & Laverack, 2001; Kitchen, et. al., 2002). Local knowledge and experience, as well as community ownership of initiatives or projects, are seen as essential conditions for effectively translating sustainability into action (Richardson, Yencken, & Porter, 2001). When communities adopt the sustainability challenge, they are likely to link social (equity and quality of life), economic and ecological concerns, and therefore take the integrated approach that is often argued as essential to achieve sustainability (Crawshaw, et al., 2003; Nocon, 2004). From this view, the green planning approach may be labeled 'top-down', and the social mobilization approach is usually characterized as 'bottom-up' (Barbier, 1987, p. 102, 107; WCED, 1987).

Alternative to 'top down' social mobilization emphasizes the importance of public participation and the role of communities in initiating and guiding development and aspiring to empower people to be able to meet their own needs in ways that are ecologically and socially sustainable (Brinkerhoff, 2000). Community development however, requires devolution of power over resources and economic decision making to the community (Durning, 1989; Wuyts, et al., 1992, Colchester, 1994); it is the community that determines the direction, type and scale. Although, social mobilization, is not necessarily defined as a government initiative, it is at times embraced by governments to invoke community collaboration, as it is based on the recognition that policies require support, action and change at the grass-roots level to be effective (Nocon, 2004). This top-down form of social mobilization officially sets out to empower

groups or communities to bring about sustainable practices and development (Crawshaw et. al., 2003; Evans, 1996).

In practice, social mobilization is often a mixture of the two basic forms (often referred to as a partnerships approach), as governments tap into bottom-up initiatives to develop new policies, or when communities seek government support (Nocon, 2004). Social mobilization can also involve people adopting particular attitudes and becoming politically active to bring about change in the national philosophy and more practically, through the ballot box and many less-direct forms of influence on policy making and institutional reform (Aplin, 1996, Richardson, 2000).

Although the importance of public participation has now become a new orthodoxy, its practice varies greatly from tokenism to genuine power sharing (Arnstein, 1969, Marsh, 2000). Even with firm commitment to public or community participation, it is fraught with difficulties (Hodgson, et. al., 2005; Maddison, Denniss, & Hamilton, 2004), and has its limitations, for example: "with regard to the ability to tackle factors external to communities; to the availability of resources; and to the time and effort that can be realistically expected from people on an on-going basis" (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999, p. 321). The authors further highlighted that even in the most generous and genuine forms, public participation may lead to participation fatigue. Another vitally important consequence is that devolving responsibilities to the community may also have an element of 'passing-the-buck', and divert attention from the inability and unwillingness of governments to deal with the issues (Kapoor, 2004). And that it may be inspired first and foremost by cost-cutting motives (Buhrs & Aplin).

Although devolution or decentralization of responsibilities and power to local communities is often depicted as ecologically rational and desirable (Dryzek, 1997; 2000), it can also be problematic in terms of regional disparities in resource endowment and levels of development, local power structures and intolerance of social diversity and alternative lifestyles (Reason, 2002, McIntyre, 2002). Many people now have stronger ties with functional communities than

with local communities (Crawshaw, Bunton & Gillen, 2003). To elucidate, smaller political communities are not necessarily more democratic than larger ones, as larger more diverse communities offer greater scope for people to raise issues of concern and provide a stronger basis for plurality of interest and values to be represented in the political arena (Edgar, 2001; Schattschneider, 1960).

### *Collaborative Processes*

Australia however, is widely regarded as a leader in applying community-based approaches (Dovers & Williams, 1997; Halpin, 2002) of which Landcare is a most notable example. Landcare with its roots in concerns shared by farmers and conservationists about land degradation, is a widespread movement consisting of over 42 community-based self-help groups through Australia, is an initiative established with federal government support and encouragement and does not conform to any institutional pattern (Roberts, 1992). Owned by a broad range of stakeholders, the approach is inclusive, participatory, holistic and focused on causes rather than symptoms. By various accounts, it appears to have been an effective means of mobilizing time, effort and monetary contributions from local people, as well as of making effective use of their shared knowledge (Campbell & Siepen, 1994; ESD Steering Committee, 1995).

The partnership approach used in Landcare has become a basis for a range of other community-based or community-oriented programmes (Barron & Gauntlett, 2002). In some cases, the initiative has come from government, but in others it has come from local communities or interest groups, such as farmers. However, it is the top-down initiative that is more vulnerable to the withdrawal of government funding and support (Martin & Woodhill; Dovers & Williams, 1997). While these programmes have been successful in summoning public support, commitment and activity, their effectiveness in terms of outcomes is less clear (Marsh, 2002).

While these initiatives appear desirable as a pathway towards sustainability, based on extensive research, Buhrs & Aplin (1999) state that there is

insufficient evidence that Australian governments have adopted this as their main approach. In fact, there seems to be fear on the part of at least some governments and some arms of their bureaucracies of losing control over the policy process by allowing too much local involvement (Keating, 2000). This 'guarding the turf' attitude can stifle grass-roots initiatives, dampening local enthusiasm (Diesendorf & Hamilton, 1997; Maddison, et al., 2004). It appears that the importance of social mobilization is still is not sufficiently recognized in Australia (Buhrs & Aplin, 1999). On the other hand, within local communities and at the local government level, social mobilization as a pathway towards sustainability is becoming an increasingly important phenomenon in Australia, as in many other countries (Pye-Smith, et al., 1994). Social mobilization at the local level with regard to environmental issues seems to be genuine and growing, often resulting in concrete improvements in environmental quality are offering the greatest scope and hope for environmental improvements (Duggie & Hodgson, 2003; Eckersley, 1996).

### *Integration of Three Pathways*

Buhrs & Aplin (1999) concluded that these three approaches are based on different rationales and foci: on a recognition of the need for policy integration (Bartlett, 1990; Johnson, 1995); on the idea that changing institutions may be a more effective (but roundabout) way to influence behaviour and achieve objectives (Majone, 1989); and "on a belief in the power of the people and the importance of practice as a guide for policies, rather than the other way around" (Friedmann, 1987, p. 225-308). Accordingly, each approach is associated with, if not driven by, a different political constituency or constellation of interests. For example, the green planning approach tends to be dominated by political and bureaucratic interests. The institutional reform approach is associated with conflicts between vested interests and/or strong advocates of market-oriented change on the one hand, and demands for a strengthening of the ecological rationality of institutional frameworks by environmental advocates on the other. Lastly, the social mobilization approach (in its bottom-up form) is

driven by local (social, economic and environmental) needs and citizens' aspirations (Buhrs & Alpin).

Elaborating further, the authors Buhrs & Alpin (1999) noted, that the three approaches are selected for different reasons and operate in different realms of governance (policy, institutional, local/practical), therefore, it is unlikely that any of these on its own will achieve sustainability. Their extensive analysis revealed that, green planning without supporting institutional reform and practice amounts to nothing more than symbolic policy. Furthermore, that institutional reform does not automatically produce policies or outcomes, in spite of claims to the contrary. And lastly, local and practical action directed at achieving sustainability may be frustrated or undone by institutional obstacles and conflicting policies. While it is tempting to argue that these pathways are complementary, ideally all three work in concert with one another. However, as the authors acknowledged, the reality is that, different approaches will dominate at different times depending on the political, economic, social and environmental conditions and developments in a country (Buhrs & Aplin).

### Multi-Dimensional Research Approach

While the pursuit of sustainability represents a shift in understanding of humanity's place on the planet it is also open to interpretation of being anything from almost meaningless to of extreme importance to humanity. Whatever view is taken, it is clearly an area of contention. Whilst recognizing the deep debates and ambiguities about the meaning of sustainability and sustainable development, this research uses the phrase 'sustainability' to describe attempts to combine all concerns related to the environment, with economic, social and governance issues. It is clear from the extensive literature reviewed that considerations of equity, resource distribution and power are not adequately addressed within dominant theoretical and applied concepts of sustainability (George & Sabelli, 1994; Redclift, 1987; Saul, 1997). Furthermore that an integrated approach where environmental, social and economic considerations are simultaneously pursued is inherently conflictive.

This research adopts a multi-dimensional framework that includes understandings related to the integration of the three pillars of sustainability in the decision making process. Along with analyses related to equity, resource distribution and power in order to evaluate social justice outcomes for those most vulnerable in society. Houghton (1999) has usefully summarized the ideas of sustainable development in five principles based on equity: futurity- inter-generational equity; social justice – intra-generational equity; trans-frontier responsibility – geographical equity; procedural equity – people treated openly and fairly; inter-species equity – importance of biodiversity. These principles help give clarity to the ideas of sustainable development, link human equity to the environment, challenge the more bland and meaningless interpretations and provide a useful basis for evaluation of the different trends of sustainable development being pursued.

By adopting a multi-dimensional framework this will facilitate broader citizen and local government understandings about local development based on these ethical considerations of sustainability. The rationale for such an approach is based on arguments that a foundation for moving towards a sustainable community may be achieved through local citizens empowering themselves to take responsibility and action for their own 'backyards' (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Friere, 1970, 1973; Mustakova-Possardt, 1998). To gain a contextual understanding of community action at the intersection of the dual forces of neo-liberal globalization and sustainability, following is the theoretical framework of sense of community that guided this study's exploration of community functioning and impetus for change.

### *Sense of Community - Holistic Foundation of Community*

Critical to the analytical framework of this study, are the communities in which bonds are built - people's sense of community, defined as: "their sense of belonging to their community, their caring about the people who live there and their belief that people who live there care about them are critical attitudes that can nurture or discourage [civic] participation" (Portney & Berry, 1997, p. 633).

Following is an exploration of the concept of community and the elements underlying the sense of community concept, specifically as an impetus for individual and group participation, as it is particularly relevant in this case to deal with the multiplicity of issues threatening rural and regional community sustainability. By adopting a more holistic framework where community forms the foundation, a way forward is forged towards identifying a “vision for what is a good community?”.

For decades now social scientists have focussed attention on defining community and conceptualising the impact of social change including other forces on community. Beginning with Durkheim who argued that: “solid social ties are essential to one’s well-being; the absence of ties with family, community and other networks increases the risk of anomie and other negative psychosocial outcomes” (cited in Sonn, Bishop & Drew, 1999, p. 206). Tonnies (1957) also wrote about the dichotomy between community and society, where *Gemeinschaft* relationships refer to groups with a commitment to a common good achieved through traditional ways and a sense of obligation to work and participate for the community’s well-being. While *Gessellschaft* groups have a set of more or less agreed upon rules and conventions, which if isolated, could have serious consequences for any individual within a social organization (cited in Bishop, Colquhoun & Johnson, 2006, p. 5). Others like Marx, Mead, and Weber have also contributed to the field with their analyses of social systems and the changing nature of these systems (Worsley, 1987). Most significant to the field, however, is that the rich diversity of ideas reflect the changing nature of society (Sonn, et al) and from which much insight can be gained.

### *Field of Community Psychology*

Contributing significantly to understandings of community is the field of community psychology where serious investigation of neighbourhood bonding was initiated in the 1970s and early 1980s. Pioneering the field with the notion of sense of community, (SOC) Sarason (1974) argued that it should be the defining principle of community research and action, as it reflects ‘the sense that one



belongs in and is meaningfully part of a larger collectivity... the sense that there is a network of and structure to the relationships...' (Sarason, p. 41). In coining the term psychological sense of community Sarason attributed SOC as a central aspect of human functioning and wellbeing. Essentially he argued that if people are integrated into networks in which they can experience belongingness, they have meaningful roles and relationships, and will be less likely to experience alienation. Sarason also showed that removal from families and communities accentuates feelings of rejection and differences and that the separation attenuates feelings of belonging (cited in Sonn, et al., 1999). On a positive note though, Royal and Rossi (1996) contend that loss of family and neighbour ties can be replaced with alternative networks of relations such as through school and work contacts.

Intense research interest has been generated by SOC and in fact four special issues of the *Journal of Community Psychology* have been devoted to theory and research of the SOC construct, and more recently, an edited volume (Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002, cited in Long Perkins, 2007). At one level a special issue of the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (Wandersman & Florin, 1990) explored empowerment as it relates to citizen participation, voluntary organizations, and community development. SOC has also accomplished interdisciplinary status with its integral connection to social capital (DeFilippis, 2001; Perkins, Hughey & Speer, 2002). Social capital is defined as "the norms, networks, and mutual trust of 'civil society' facilitating cooperative action among citizens and institutions" (Perkins & Long, 2002, p. 291) and has shown to be intricately tied to SOC (cited in Long & Perkins, 2007).

Many theorists have correlated SOC with a strong sense of identity and psychological well-being; (Pretty, 2002; Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003) iSonn et. al. (1999) highlighted that oppression and other processes of cultural and community rejection can have devastating effects on SOC. Calling for more a complex understanding of this multilevel, multifaceted phenomena, Long and Perkins (2007) also argued that despite acknowledgement by researchers of its community-level interaction, little attention has been focussed on the role of

place and place attitudes (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). In view of the concerns highlighted thus far, it is imperative to continue to embrace more holistic conceptions of the concept, in order to understand the positive and the negative aspects including community level understandings substantiated in specific contextual domains (Bishop & Vicary, 2003; Long & Perkins, 2007).

### *Definitions of Psychological Sense of Community*

Sarason (1974) suggested that the construct includes, "The perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure" (p. 157). While Sarason's conception is foundational to the field of community psychology, development of this concept has been most closely associated with McMillan and Chavis (1986) conceptually, and Chavis, Hogge, McMillan and Wandersman (1986) and Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman and Chavis (1990) for measurement (Bess, Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002; Chavis & Pretty, 1999; Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Long & Perkins, 2003, cited in Peterson, Speer & Hughey, 2006). In the field of community psychology the most-cited multi-dimensional construct by McMillan and Chavis composed of four elements: (a) *needs fulfillment* – a perception that members' needs will be met by the community; (b) *group membership* – a feeling of belonging or a sense of interpersonal relatedness; (c) *influence* – a sense that one matters, or can make a difference, in a community and that the community matters to its members; and (d) *emotional connection* – the belief that members have and will share history, place and experiences (p. 9).

When the authors offered their definitional framework for sense of community, they also highlighted Gusfield's (1975) distinction between two major uses of the term community. The first is the territorial and geographic notion of community, relating to a place such as neighborhood or town. The second is "relational," relating to the quality of human relationships. However, Gusfield (1975) underlined that in modern societies, communities develop more around interests and shared goals than territories. While McMillan and Chavis suggested

an equal emphasis to places and people, they nonetheless uphold that it is the nature of human interactions within those boundaries that create a sense of community (cited in Plas & Lewis, 1996) . While McMillan (1996) rearranged and renamed these four elements as Spirit, Trust, Trade and Art, theorists emphasized that these four elements should not be studied separately but as mutually interrelated, since they can be understood only by using a relatively cohesive construct (Pretty, 1990, Chavis, Hogge and McMillan, 1986).

In related work, Unger and Wandersman (1985) suggested three components of sense of community: the *social component*, including emotional and instrumental support and social networks; the *cognitive component*, including cognitive mapping of the physical environment and symbolic communication; and the *affective component*, or the emotional attachment individuals have to persons living around them (cited in Plas & Lewis, 1996). In addition to theoretical development, several researchers have tested the construct empirically in settings of various sizes ranging from small neighborhood blocks (Buckner, 1988; Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman, 1986; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Glynn, 1986; Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, & Chavis, 1990) to mid-sized foreign and domestic communities (Glynn, 1981) to large cities (Davidson & Cotter, 1986).

Additionally, community psychologists have studied sense of community in a wide variety of contexts and with various specialized populations. Issues and factors linked to sense of community include: community identity (Puddifoot, 1995; 1997); adolescents (Pretty, 2002; Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003; Pretty, Andrewes, & Collett, 1994), immigrants (Regis, 1988), the elderly (Minkler, 1985), the workplace (Catano, Pretty, Southwell, & Cole, 1993; Klein & D'Aunno, 1986; Price, 1985; Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994), and crime and jurisprudence (Fox, 1993; Levine, 1986) (cited in Plas & Lewis, 1996). While MacMillan and Chavis' (1986) framework is highly popular with researchers, it is also subject to critique (Colombo, Mosso & DePiccoli, 2001) and revision (Brodsky, O'Campo & Aronson, 1999; Kingston, Mitchell, Florin & Stevenson, 1999, cited in Peterson, et al., 2006 ).

Drawing on literature and interviews with community building experts, Burroughs and Eby (1998) identified six dimensions in their psychological sense of community at work construct. It comprises: (a) *Co-worker Support* – where the workplace community are willing and eager to help one another complete a project; aid one another through personal problems and use humour as a way of reflecting acceptance of others' flaws; (b) *Emotional Safety* – occurs when you count on co-workers and leaders for support and honesty which inspires feelings of mutual trust and security; (c) *Sense of Belonging* - occurs when workers identify with one another and have feelings, beliefs and expectations that they fit in the organization and have a place there; (d) *Spiritual Bond* - occurs when members find ways to embody or invoke guiding principles based on spirituality, ethics and values which in turn translate into daily actions and decisions; (e) *Team Orientation* - occurs when members are engaged, involved and mobilized until there is a group that moves together with a clear, shared vision and overall strategy in common; (f) *Truth Telling* - occurs when members openly and honestly respond to one another; actively listen to each others concerns, hopes and fears; resolve conflicts, express emotion and do not say only what they feel others want to hear.

Also contributing a more complex, multi-level interdisciplinary understanding of SOC, Perkins and Long's (2002) conceptual model views SOC as one of four dimensions of social capital, including collective efficacy/empowerment, informal neighboring behaviour, and formal citizen participation. As the authors elaborated while *social capital* is closely linked to SOC, unlike SOC, social capital has been more often conceived as a group level phenomenon. Nevertheless, the authors believe that many questions remains unanswered - do they operate independently, additively, within a nested structure or another relation altogether?

While Perkins & Long (2002) studied the concept from an individual level of analysis they advocate a multi-level focus. The first dimension of their multi-level construct, *neighbouring* defined as "informal mutual assistance and information sharing among neighbours" (Perkins & Long, p. 295) may also involve

instrumental or noninstrumental social support/contact (Unger & Wandersman, 1985) has also been associated to SOC. Also related to SOC, *citizen participation* is characterised as any grassroots community organization where formal civic action reflects ideal forms of social capital behaviour. Many community psychologists offer key insights on the processes of social capital that have been linked to empowerment, social cohesion and grassroots action (see Speer, et al., 2003; Speer, Jackson & Peterson, 2001; Speer & Hughey, 1995). The third dimension, *collective efficacy*, or trust in the effectiveness of civic action, is similar to empowerment but conceived differently from self-efficacy or locus of control. As Perkins & Long (2002) outlined, *collective efficacy* is "an appraisal of group behaviour, that is, as the term suggests, both collectively organized and efficacious (p. 295). Zimmerman & Rappaport (1998) also offer pertinent background with their research on citizen participation, perceived control and psychological empowerment. The fourth dimension (or the cognitive-informal component) of Perkins & Long's model is *sense of community* and great emphasis is placed on this component as it represents the key "bonding" ties aspect of social capital. While this concept has been studied at individual and community levels of analysis, as Long and Perkins (2007) highlighted gaps in the literature can be filled by multilevel and longitudinal analyses.

Clearly, a number of critical issues requiring closer attention have been highlighted in the SOC literature. One is the conceptualization of community as a collective rather than individual experience (van Uchelen, 2000, cited in Peterson, et al). Also pertinent, is that most research has been done in White North Americans and White Australians (with exceptions such as Brodsky, 1996; Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Although the field of community psychology has devoted extensive effort in developing the SOC concept, many express the sentiment that "SOC may be temporarily ired in a stage of construct refinement and measure validation" (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Long & Perkins, 2003, cited in Peterson, et. al., 2006, p. 478).

Also expressing concerns over methodological issues, in their critique of research into the psychological SOC, Bishop & Vicary (2003) highlighted that it

has been largely based on an idealized form of community (Dunham, 1986) and viewed from a functionalist perspective. Additionally few researchers have “examined the conflicts and tension of community living ... with little critical analysis of what community is and what our sense of it is” (p. 1). As a way forward Steer et al. (2006) suggests embracing Sarason’s (1986) original assertion that SOC is somewhat setting specific, including Hill’s (1996) conclusion that “SOC was probably multidimensional and included extra-individual processes” (p. 478).

Elaboring on the necessity to embrace broader frameworks incorporating Wicker’s (1980) notions of substantive theorizing, Bishop & Vicary (2003) added that as SOC in community psychology has been largely positivistic, it has not been particularly instructive. Furthermore, while a resurgence of qualitative approaches signalled a call for contextualist methodologies, progress has been slow in spite of community psychology’s orientation towards ecological principles (Bishop & Vicary). Many in the field concur that positivistic methodologies are restrictive (Cronbach, 1975; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Pokinghorne, 1983; Sarason, 1981; Smith, Harre & van Langehove, 1995; Pretty, Bishop & Fisher, 2006) and as a consequence lead to further conceptual problems. For example, Bishop & Vicary highlighted, that sense of community relates to our place in local communities, (or relational communities) and furthermore, defining SOC in terms of post-modern communities (according to Newbrough, 1992) has not been contemplated.

A further issue identified by the authors is that SOC measures have not been devised to discern those who do not have a sense of community or who vary in their levels of SOC. As they stated: “scales are only meaningful to those who have at least some modicum of SOC ... Those who are alienated are qualitatively different from those who score low on a SOC scale” (p. 35). The authors concluded that if the field is to develop along Sarason’s (1974) vision for SOC as “the foundation of community”, then these issues need serious consideration. Furthermore, if the field is to play a critical role in society, the key

lies in conceptualising what the “good community is?” (Bishop & Vicary; Pretty, et al., 2006).

*Seeking a Broader Conception of SOC*

Community psychology attributes great importance to sense of community and, in fact, many interventions utilize strategies that are aimed at increasing sense of community (Anoni et al., 1993; Martini and Sequi, 1995), on the basis of two assumptions: (a) If a greater sense of community is present, it is more likely that people will mobilize and launch participatory processes for the solution of their problems (Francescato & Ghirelli, 1988); (b) Sense of community contributes to quality of life, subjectively perceived, and also to individual well-being; it encourages a greater sense of identity and greater self-confidence, facilitating social relations (Martini and Sequi, 1995) and opposing anonymity and loneliness. Both assumptions have been confirmed by empirical studies (Botta, 1994; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Davidson & Cotter, 1991; Prezza & Constantini, 1998). However, there is a need to investigate the concept at multiple levels of analysis by linking sense of community to the broader socio-political context within a specific locational context.

In line with some of the issues previously highlighted, the objective of this study therefore is to seek a better understanding human interaction in the context of the two previously stated assumptions associated with the concept of sense of community. Most importantly this research specifically focuses on the elements that underlie a “good community”. Given the social forces of globalization and neo-liberal reform contributing to rural economic decline it is therefore imperative to identify the mechanisms operating to ensure the social justice needs of those most vulnerable in the community are also being met. To gain a clearer understanding of what is a “good community” it is vital to identify those who may be excluded from the social system. In view of this aim a brief definition of the sources and dimensions of marginalization are considered below.

*Marginalization*

Marginalization has been described as a slippery and multi-layered concept. In clarifying its ambiguity, Kagan, et al. (2004) delineated that while societies can be marginalized at the global level, classes and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order. According to Burton & Kagan (in press) marginalization is a shifting phenomenon, linked to social status, where at certain stages of the life cycle the risk of marginalization increases or decreases. For example, while the marginalized status of children and youth may decrease as they get older; the marginalized status of adults may increase as they become elders; and the marginalized status of single mothers may change as their children grow up and so on. Nevertheless, there are different risks associated within particular social groups. AS Eldering & Knorth (1998) demonstrated, the risks of marginalization of immigrant youth in Europe vary with ethnicity, irrespective of the particular host countries, or of degree of acculturation.

Leonard (1984) also defined social marginality as 'being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity' (p. 180). As the author discerned, this includes two groups, firstly a relatively small group of people who are voluntarily marginal to the social order, for example, new age travellers, certain religious sects, commune members, some artists. However, most pertinent to this research, is the second group, those who are involuntarily socially marginal. According to Kagan, et al., the experience of marginality can arise in a number of ways. For some people, those severely impaired from birth, or those born into particularly marginal groupings (e.g. members of ethnic groups that suffer discrimination – Indigenous people in Australasia and the American continent), this marginality is typically life-long and greatly determines their lived experience. For others, marginality is acquired, by later disablement, or by changes in the social and economic system. As global capital extends its reach, bringing more and more people into its system, more communities are dispossessed of lands, livelihoods or systems of social support (Chomsky, 2000; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Potter, 2000; Pilger, 2002).



While marginalization is at the core of exclusion from fulfilling full social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Kagan et al, argued that people who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them; they may become stigmatised and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitude. Also significant, the authors stressed that the impacts of marginalization, are similar, whatever the origins and processes of social exclusion, irrespective of whether these are to be located in social attitudes (e.g. towards impairment, sexuality, ethnicity, etc) or social circumstances (e.g. downsizing, lack of affordable housing, etc). On the other hand, people react differently to marginalization depending on personal and social resources available to them. Nevertheless, Burton & Kagan (1996) highlighted, that while some common social psychological processes can be identified, the processes that facilitate or prevent collective social action is the focus.

For people who are marginalized, poverty, dependency and feelings of shame are everyday aspects of economic dislocation. Also exacerbating their experiences, however, is the relative or complete exclusion of marginalized people from social networks. For example, Kagan, et al. outlined that people born into marginality will be, at best, able to access resources through strong social networks (e.g. a person born with impairments into a rich family). Others will be able to access weaker networks, such as neighbourhood, or church based organisations. But often these sources of support will be weak or overburdened and processes to empower them to participate in decision making over their lives are integral. On the other hand, the situation faced by oppressed people is also characterised by resistance and resilience (Kagan & Burton, 2005) .

As the authors highlighted, with resilience there is the potential for an enhanced, reclaimed and re-invented identity. For example, being oppressed, having one's fundamental rights denied or diminished, elicits attempts to remediate the situation (Kagan, et al., 2004). It is clear however, that attempts at solving human problems can lead to positive effects - such as collective

action to improve social arrangements for those marginalized (Huygens, 1997). Potential or actual resilience and resistance therefore can be key resources in community psychology praxis (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). For example, people who take collective action describe how their sense of belonging and personal worth change for the better through their political engagement, and it is important for community psychologists to understand these processes if they are to be helpful in supporting community based movements for change (Kagan & Burton, 2005). To capture the nature and development of political networks emerging in communities to address community needs following is the concept of civil society that serves as an appropriate theoretical framework from which pertinent understandings can be gained about the political culture evolving in communities.

### *Civil Society Resurgence*

The inspiration leading a civil society resurgence, is eloquently portrayed in the sentiment highlighted by a number of authors: "...the world [became] too complex and our leaders too fallible for anything approaching a universal good even to exist, let alone be reliably located (Lane & Morrison, 2006, p. 235). The new political culture no longer places much faith in solutions imposed from above, increasingly relying instead on a network of decision-making relationships that link government and civil society across many scales (Van Driesche & Lane, 2002; Healey, 1997; Rhodes, 2001; Rose, 2000). In *Community in Public Policy: Fad or Foundation*, Adams & Hess (2001) identified that while the social capital literature has focused attention on the role played by social ties in economic activity. The new understanding elevates the importance of network of relationships between decision-makers, stakeholders and clients in the policy process.

Two contending trends have attracted policy-makers and commentators to the idea that community might play a central role (Giddens, 2000). One is that communities can fill gaps in service provision, policy and particularly social policy created by the shrinking of the state. "Voluntarism seems particularly

attractive to politicians and administrators whose shrinking budgets make them desperate for alternative sources of service provision" (Adam & Hess, p. 15). The other trend is the suspicion that communities are not merely cheaper alternatives but offer a qualitatively better source of policy ideas and processes (Giddens, 2000). This 'beneficiary participation' reflected in international development theory, (Bryant & White, 1982; Paul, 1983) its universal proposition is that policy processes that involve those who will impact are more likely to gain the support necessary for successful implementation (Tam, 1998).

### *The Third Way Neo-Communitarianism*

The second reason for the re-emergence of community in public policy, emanating from both radical and conservative commentary is the 'third way' approaches (Giddens, 1998, 2000). Third way political philosophy represents an attempt to combine neo-liberalism with neo-communitarian as a model of development that stresses the importance of civil society for social cohesion (Fyfe, 2005). To address the social costs and political repercussions of economic polarisation and social exclusion associated with a globalised neo-liberalism, democratic governments worldwide have experimented with policies based on neo-communitarianism. This involves emphasizing the contribution of the "third sector" to improve social welfare and reinvigorate a sense of civil society (Fyfe). Politically, the global movement to deliberately (and in some cases, radically) decentralize territorial governments has been vigorously pursued as a means of enhancing governance through civic engagement (Hutchcroft, 2001; Ribot, 1999).

According to neoclassical economic theory, as a result of government and market failure, central in the development and role of civil society actors is to either: (i) fulfil demand for public goods left unsatisfied by government (ii) partner with government in the provision of public goods, and/or (iii) make public policy demands of government and to ensure accountability in public governance (Wagner, 2000; Young, 2000). Civil society therefore, acts as a challenge to state autonomy and market power (Eberly 2000). Governance

through civic engagement therefore appears to be the centre of this conceptual convergence. Hence, decentralisation of policy control to local (and preferably non-state) actors is being pursued in order to enhance democracy and efficiency in governance (Adams & Hess, 2001). Following is the diverse perspective on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin civil society. This sociological concept is ideal for understanding the delicate balance between the three sectors of society and the forces governing social change and developmental processes and outcomes within and between democratic nation states.

### *Definitions of Civil Society*

Civil society is described as having both institutional and qualitative dimensions. Institutionally, it consists of all the social groups and social relations in which we are embedded: families, communities, religious organizations, social movements, ethnic identity groups, schools, neighbourhoods, sports leagues, labour unions, PTAs and other voluntary associations, professional or occupational associations, clubs, support groups, coffee shops, barber shops, bridge groups, and so forth (Cohen & Arato, 1992). The term also refers to the quality of our social life, including safety, mortality, civility, respect for diversity and social order.

Elaborating further, Persell (1977) argued that social order and civil society are not fully coterminous. Social order maintained by police, military states or single monolithic political parties are not most people's ideal of civil society because values of civil liberties and civil social relations are also highly prized. Civil society then is much more than simply social order at any price. It is also a broader concept than the idea of social economy or the third sector, used by Rifkin (1995), because it includes informal social relationships and networks as well as formal ones, the family as well as institutions in the non-profit sector, and it includes trust, anomia, tolerance and other social attitudes.

Within a liberal model, civil society is construed as the private sphere between the state and the markets and is the locus of individual autonomy. Comprising a plethora of groups with distinct ways of life and conceptions of the good life who voluntarily associate with no political thrust and where public expressions are secured by democratic rights (Dominelli, 2004a). "Political life is securely located within political society; it takes place on the terrain of the state in the form of the legislature, complemented by the usual apparatus of elections, parties, interest groups, and constitutionally articulated procedures" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p 12).

A civil society exists when individuals and groups freely form organizations and function independently of the state to mediate between citizens and the state (Hann, 1996). It has been specifically acclaimed as containing elements necessary, if not sufficient for the development of the liberal-democratic basis of modern – or "post-modern socio-economic life. Thus, a central focus of scholarly interest has been captured by Robert Putnam's general theory of the link between civil society and the workings of democracy (Letki & Evans, 2005). In his *Making Democracy Work*, published in 1993, Putnam stressed the importance of 'concerted action' for democracy, focusing not only the explicit principles of participatory democracy, but on their 'by-products', i.e. norms of generalized reciprocity and trust. In his more recent work Putnam insists that social trust is learned from participation in various types of associations. Social trust and associational membership that form 'social capital' is fundamental to the development of political institutions as well as economic activity (Letki & Evans, 2005). This aspect of the link between civil society and social capital will be discussed later.

### *Contested Nature of Civil Society*

Despite a proliferation of discourse on civil society, Cohen & Arato (1992) distinguish three debates to tower above all the rest. The first continues an older controversy within the field of democratic theory between defenders of elite vs participatory models of democracy (Manley, 1983). The second has come to be

labelled rights-oriented liberalism and communitarianism, occurring between empiricists and normativists (Sandel, 1984). The third debate pits neoconservative advocates of the free market against defenders of the welfare state (Offe, 1984, see Cohen & Arato, 1996 for detailed accounts). These theoretical moves have served the cause for a more differentiated analysis, but the state and the capitalist market economy are indispensable to the analysis of civil society if we are to understand the dramatic changes of globalisation. While acknowledging the diversity of perspectives on civil society, this thesis places particular emphasis on the humanitarian approach (Dominelli, 2004a; Ife, 1997).

### *Civil society and historical global standards*

Although civil society is a contested concept it is supported by both the Right and the Left. As expanded on by Cohen & Arato (1996) for the Right a civil society supports neo-liberal tenets, which shifts state responsibility onto organs of civil society and rejects the notion of universal citizenship entitlement. Within a Rightist position, the middle class has also, at times, appropriated civil society to further the agendas of middle class elitism. The Left on the other hand, supports a vibrant and active civil society based on emancipatory, democratic ideals, which actively engages in formulating and developing policies rooted in the principles of social justice and of human rights. Organs of civil society from this position act as watchdogs for the poor and marginalised by regulating the forces of the state and the market; a civil society that, in the view of Howell and Pearce (2001), 'articulates a critical approach to the global economy' (p. 17).

Also of great importance to the analysis is that a society ruled by a single sector is inevitably dysfunctional. Vital is democratic pluralism to meld the forces of the market, government and civil society to maintain a dynamic balance among the often competing societal needs for essential order and equity, the efficient production of goods and services, the accountability of power, the protection of human freedom, and continuing institutional innovation (Korten, 1999). In effect, the institutions of the civic, governmental and market sectors each have their necessary roles to play in serving the needs of a well-

functioning society. However, as Korten emphasized, the order of precedence among these three primary sectors is fundamental to a healthy and balanced function of society. For example, a civic sector without government and an organized market is anarchy. This is why civil societies create governments and organized markets. However, civil society is the first sector that must take precedence. When national economies become globalized and corporate power is given free reign, the natural order becomes inverted. When the market is the first sector, governments become subordinated to corporate interests, and the ability of civil society to hold government accountable to the public interest is seriously weakened – when the market reigns, the corporation is King (1999).

*History - Political Paradoxes – ‘Individualists Versus Moral Community’*

Most scholars trace the origins of civil society back to early modern European political thought, and more specifically to the concept of a private legal realm as it emerged in the work of Hobbes and Locke in England (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Hall, 1995; Keane, 1988; Kumar, 1993; Seligman, 1992). Beginning with the perspectives of the Scottish Enlightenment period, in the work of Ferguson for example, the tensions and paradoxes of that era are critically appropriate to present day debates (Hann & Dunn, 1996). The fundamental tension is that between particular and universal interests, between the selfish goals of individual actors and the need for some basic collective solidarity in a moral community (Gellner, 1994). Ferguson resolves this tension by taking the view of human nature that amounts, in the words of Seligman, to a “naive anthropology of moral sentiments and natural sympathy” (1992, p. 205). However, as Hann & Dunn’s analysis revealed, this view became highly implausible and unrealistic for the much larger and more differentiated societies of the industrial age. Also implicated is that the extension of citizenship in the modern world is based on the notion that individuals have sacrosanct rights, this universalism is deeply detrimental to the maintenance of trust and sociability in the realms where individuals interact (1996).

*Universalist Discourse of Modernist Individualism*

Placing less emphasis on 'moral affections' and 'natural sympathies', later thinkers stressed instead the virtues of a pluralism founded on equal and autonomous individual citizens (Hall, 1995). Seligman pointed to the negative effects of this shift away from a moral constitution of society as "...a universalist discourse of citizenship undermines concrete mutuality and shared components of the moral community upon which trust is based" (1992, p. 12). Hence today's call for a return to civil society. The paradox according to Seligman's is that the "... universal (i.e. ethical) solidarity of a community of citizens rests on the moral inviolability of each individual", rather than in some shared realm of sociability (1992, p. 146). In spite of these distinctive qualities, the individualist model with its impoverished understanding of social relationships increasingly dominated intellectual discourses in the nineteenth century (Hann, 1996). The individualist construction clearly exemplified in neo-classical economics, but similar rational choice foundations have underpinned wide areas of social sciences and psychology itself has not been immune (Tester, 1992).

The dominance of this modernist position to draw a very sharp dichotomy between civil society and the state was laid out in the philosophy of Hegel (see Cohen & Arato, 1992). Adam Smith, followed by Marx also identified civil society primarily with economic interaction through the market (Cohen, 1983). But in contrast to Smith's view, Marx saw civil society as an illusion that needed to be unmasked: The apparent freedom of action it grants to the individual serves in reality to disguise underlying realities of class exploitation (Hann, 1996). The capitalist state, instead of resolving the tensions of civil society, merely cements the power of the ruling class, thus: "Citizens are hopelessly fragmented, alienated from each other and from their species-being as well as from the means of production and the product of their labour" (Hann, 1996, p. 4) .

Significant contributions also came from De Tocqueville. A democrat who extolled the virtues of the "habit of association", Tocqueville is the key figure in the modern 'liberal-individualist' approach (p. 19 ). He also offers a narrower



specification of 'political society' with matters of government and power. In this approach, both political society and the state are distinct from civil society, that is, the private relationships between citizens and their myriad non-political associations (Hann, 1996). Recent literature contains many shades of opinion, but most contributions draw on the two central strands that took shape in the nineteenth century (Hann & Dunn, 1996). The Marxist strand was creatively reworked by Gramsci, who argued that the struggle to transcend the inequalities of class society can only proceed following careful analyses of culture and ideology among the masses of civil society (Cohen, 1982). But it is the liberal strand that has become almost hegemonic in the most recent debates (Hann & Dunn, 1996).

These two strands in western thinking about civil society appear sharply opposed, in that one emphasises the reality of class exploitation while the other privileges freely associating individuals, they also have a good deal in common. Cohen & Arato (1996) delineate that both identify civil society with realms outside the power of the state, and emphasise economic life as such a realm (1996). Even more important, both strands assume the universality of modern western notions of the person, what Seligman calls the 'autonomous agentic individual' (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 5); the Marxist tradition merely allows these atoms to be aggregated to form social classes. The tripartite schema elaborated by Cohen and Arato (1992), distinguishing civil society equally from the market and from the state, offers a fresh synthesis of these strands (Anderson, 1996). But none of these accounts leaves room for the exploration of alternative forms of social relationship to those assumed by liberal-individualism, of culturally specific patterns of generating trust in human communities that are growing ever more complex. (Letki, 2004).

### *Liberal Individualism*

From this brief outline it is apparent that civil society has meanings today that are quite different from those of the eighteenth century. The dominant meaning - referred to as the 'classical' meaning, even though the key elements

are post-enlightenment - has come to be that which ties civil society to liberal individualism and sees it in opposition to the state (Hann & Dunn, 1996). The standard definitions of civil society explain it as a space between families and kin groups on the one hand, and the modern state on the other. As Seligman shows, it emerged at a particular moment in the history of western societies, strongly marked by Protestant thinking, when the scale of social organisation was much larger than could be managed by kin groups alone, but still small enough to permit trust and solidarity between individuals (1992). Although the individual is the privileged moral agent, the social context is none the less crucial.

Since the eighteenth century, the precarious social balance which produced the idea of civil society has, according to Seligman (1992) been destroyed in one of two ways. In the west, universalism of modern citizenship has made trust too 'abstract', and therefore unworkable. Elsewhere, exclusivist nationalism and sectarianism are the factors that make social trust impossible. The result is an impasse, from which sloganising and nostalgia for the eighteenth-century scale of social organisation offer no prospect of escape (Hann & Dunn, 1996).

Obviously the debates about civil society are closely linked to other debates: about modernity itself, and (only slightly less grandiose) about individualism, pluralism, the boundaries between public and private, etc (Hann & Dunn, 1996). The ground of these debates has shifted, sometimes dramatically. For example, *civil* was classically opposed to the religious, however, recent studies point to close connections between civil society and religious culture. This is clearly illustrated in Dunn's (1996) anthropological examination of civil society among American Mormons.

"Their moral doctrines on the family and on gift-giving, Mormons create a ... space which is not only apart from the American state, but which rejects state action. Through the gift, and its powers of social reproduction, Mormons make a civil society which is not based on

private individuals, but rather on a moral system of community interaction" (p. 28).

### *Gendered Conception of Public and Private Sphere*

Again civil society has historically been cast as a private realm in opposition to the public realm of the state, but for many modern feminists the private is equated with the domestic and the familial - leaving civil society firmly in the public sphere (Rabo, 1996). Contesting the gender-neutral ideas of civil society, Rabo insisted on a gendered perspective to reveal the impact of these unquestioned assumptions. As Pateman (1989) observed the meaning of 'citizen' is constructed from the attributes, capacities and activities associated with men. These include independence, the ability to reason and the capacity of people to participate as 'free individuals' who are social equals. Also supporting this argument, Cass demonstrated that women with care-giving responsibilities provide informal social welfare and this means that they are either partially or totally excluded from participation as citizens (1994).

Although their access to public institutions is now formally granted, substantively women remain both symbolically and practically connected with the private sphere (Putland, 2000). According to theorists such as Cox (1994), this exclusion is a metaphor for what is missing from civil society. Theories of citizen participation are conceived in terms of public ('political') concerns that are sharply divided from private ('non-political') concerns. Cox's point is that women represent both the exclusionary tendencies, as well as the potential for inclusion of diversity and differences, in concepts such as citizenship. Since the 'private life' of citizens is seldom considered in a gender perspective, but rather a domain in which men and women do their 'private' things. This results in a "lack of focus on how the development and penetration of state agencies into the daily lives of gendered citizens affects the cultural construction of categories such as state and civil society, public and private, and male and female" (Hann & Dunn, 1996, p. 156). In other words, what is missing from current conceptualisations of civil society is the scope for social values drawn from

experiences in the private and informal arenas of association, to offer new perspectives on how we, as individual citizens can live together (Putland, 2000).

*Decline in Civil Society*

Many commentators across the political spectrum have commented on the decline of civil society (Putnam, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, Sampson, McAdam & MacIndoe, 2005 ). The reigning image of American civil life in both the popular and scholarly press has been portrayed as largely bleak. The dominant view is that participation in collective aspects of civic life has plummeted dramatically. As indicators of decline, some focus most heavily on growing numbers of out-of-wedlock births, single-parent families, drug use, and crime rates (Putnam, 1995a, 1995b). Others document declining associational memberships, reduced socializing with friends and neighbours, plummeting rates of voting, the erosion of trust in others, and sinking confidence in societal institutions such as government, education and science (Paxton, 1999, Rotolo, 1999). Other indicators such as soaring rates of teen suicide, relatively low life expectancy in the US, growing numbers and percentages of people, especially children (40%) in poverty (the highest rate since 1962), and rapidly rising rates of incarceration, among others (Persell, 1997).

Of course, not all hold to this view. The most common dissent is against Putnam's analysis of the numbers. Some observers have argued that individuals have not, in fact, declined in certain forms of institutional trust and traditional organizational memberships (Paxton, 1999; Rotolo, 1999). Others have argued that the organizational locus of civic engagement is what has changed – the Americans have turned to looser but still effective associations in the form of social support or self-help organizations (Wuthnow, 1998, Ray, 2002). Still other critics contend that American civic life, which was formerly organized around traditional membership-based voluntary associations, has been restructured around membership in advocacy organizations and other professional civic groups (Skocpol, 2003, 2004).

Nevertheless, as Sampson, et al, (2005) highlighted, the position of Putnam and his critics each have merit but tend to reinforce the way in which the debate on civil society has unfolded. Most of the data in dispute reflect concerns with individual level trends rather than collective political action or public civic events. The alarm bells set off by Putnam's analysis can be more accurately allied to Tocqueville's classic insights – "a concern with the negative consequences of civic engagement for democratic capacity and the health of the American polity" (Sampson, et al., 2005, p. 2). From this view concerns for the capacity of a healthy civil society to emerge are warranted.

### *Interdependence of Social Justice and Civil Society*

Offering alternative understandings of the declining levels of civil society within established liberal democracies, Caroline Persell (1997) advocated economic distress and social injustice as key underlying causes. In essence, the author portrays the interdependence of civil society and social justice in understanding the decline of civil society. Firstly, it requires understanding the distinct conceptions of social justices central to the economy, state and especially civil society, as each sphere of normative orders is based on their dominant values. For example, within modern industrial capitalism the ultimate value is greater productivity and greater efficiency where just distribution of rewards are linked to merit or performance, e.g. "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work". Those who add the most value – should get the most rewards. This view resembles the functionalist view of social stratification. In such a metric of social justice, inequalities are not necessarily considered bad because they offer incentives for people to work hard and make themselves more valuable in the market (Persell).

Secondly, in the political sphere, justice is, ideally derived from somewhat different ultimate values, such as universalism, equality before the law and equal rights, perhaps within a protective constitutional framework that applies to all citizens. In the political sector, considerable attention is paid to rights, opportunities and procedures but less to outcomes. Finally, civil society provides

fertile seedbeds for still other ultimate values, such as commitment, responsibility, trust, solidarity, caring, love intimacy, companionship, protection and extra help when needed. While civil society offers multiple concepts of social justice, in general these ideas are more particularistic than those found in the economy or polity. They may, for example be focussed more on need than on contribution and on outcomes as well as opportunities.

As Persell (1997) suggested, when there is a vigorous interplay between all three arenas of social justice, these complementary conceptions both thrive and compete, forcing trade-offs between different ultimate values and contending frames of justice (Gamson, et al, 1982). It is conceivable then, that in a strong values system, no single conception of justice prevails to exclude the others. However, when one or more spheres are weak, social justice may not be debated or even considered, and relative advantage or sheer power will dominate the actions taken. However, power without moral legitimacy is neither as authoritative nor as effective as legitimate power (Persell).

The second aspect of the authors's contention is the link between social injustice and civil society. Outlining an alternative explanation, she advocates that civil society is declining as a direct result of economic injustice and distress. Furthermore, that this drop produces many consequences for tolerance, for the next generation, for crime and a just social order, for political democracy and for a healthy economy. The key argument rests on the analysis of the processes and outcome of structural economic transformation in the US and how it has been managed. Specifically, economic restructuring has been accompanied by the social creation of vast changes in the distribution of income and wealth.

For example, during the post-war period 1947-1973 the US experienced broad-based prosperity, these gains were shared fairly evenly across all five income quintiles in the work force. In 1973 to 1979 much slower growth was experienced and twice as much of the gain went to the top quintile. However, the slow growth period of 1979-1989 saw the bottom quintile of earners experience a net decline in the share of earnings, while 70% of the rise in

average family income went to the top 1 percent and 97% of the gains went to the richest 20% of the households (Krugman, 1992; Mishel, 1995; Wolff, 1995a). Also contributing significantly to the decline of social capital is the perception of workers with regard to their job security and future employment prospects in the context of corporate restructuring. Between 1990 and 1995, 2.5 million Americans lost their jobs due to down sizing, and since 1979 more than 43 million jobs or one third of jobs in the country have been extinguished.

While the liberal minded might find these inequalities within the economic realm including their rapid increase outright unjust. Ryan (1996) offered a more poignantly ethical perspective to the issue:

*"The misery of the world of "eat or be eaten" is not to be measured in income statistics. It is a moral disaster. The United States has always been built around a work ethic. We do not go to work only to earn an income, but to find meaning in our lives. What we do is a large part of who we are. To see ourselves as nothing more than a means to profits reaped by others is a blow to our self-respect. To be thrown out of work after twenty years with the same firm, as if we were of no more value than a piece of worn-out machinery, is indeed, to feel like a piece of junk" ( p.11).*

Ryan eloquently captures how economic dislocation denies our other social roles and identities and abandons non-market normative standards. Also consistent with this view, is Walzer's argument that economic inequalities become unjust when they invade other spheres of life. As the author stated it is particularly significant when the relative dominance of the market over other realms of distributive justice is considered more important than the relative equality or inequality within the market itself (1983; 1991). Therefore, for injustice to be serious 'inequality' not only needs to be increasing within the economic realm but it also needs to impinge on other realms of social life as well (Walzer, 1999).

Emphasizing the seriousness of this development for the US, Persell cogently portrayed how the magnitude of growing economic injustice undermines civil society. Her research on the relationship between material conditions, social capital and intolerance revealed that people's perception of "economic distress to be increasing since 1972" had increased from 56% in 1973 to 69% in 1994 (Persell, et al, 1996). What was more enlightening is that the economic situation of white Americans has come to resemble that of African Americans more than in the past. For example, African Americans in 1973 were much more likely than whites to agree to the view that: "officials are not interested in the lot of the average man". While African Americans moved from 76% agreeing in 1973 to 81% in 1994, an increase of only 5 percentage points. The views of whites, however, had risen more dramatically from 57% in 1973 to 75% in 1994.

Reflecting on the negative consequences of these survey trends, Persell, et al. (1996) argued that people who have experienced economic distress are thus *less* likely to belong to one or more associations and to trust others. These results are consistent with Granovetter's observation that trust is generated and malfeasance discouraged when agreements are "embedded" within a larger structure of personal relations and social networks (1985). Viewed from this embedded perspective, Serpell et al's study provided empirical evidence that economic distress is negatively related to social capital (1996). Another valuable source of evidence is Julius Wilson's work (1987) that documented how the economic backbone developed osteoporosis when major manufacturing jobs left the inner city and then community institutions began crumbling as well. For example, when the number of jobs paying "family wages" declined, marriage rates declined as well, and out-of-wedlock birth rates soared (p.16).

Anderson's work (1989, 1990) also showed the importance of family-sustaining jobs for forming economically self-reliant families and how the lack of job prospects may lead to sexual prowess (and fatherhood), rather than the capacity to support a family as a marker of manhood. While these and other studies underscore the importance of economic security and strong family and



community networks for human development, it is clear that civil society plays an essential role, but *civil society cannot flourish without economic sustenance* (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1994). Economic injustice and distress left unchecked will continue to lead to declines in civil society and this in turn will lead to many negative consequences for tolerance, for the next generation, for crime and a just social order, for political democracy and for a healthy economy (Persell, 1997). The real challenge remains in how to nurture, sustain and enhance various conceptions of social justice, and strong political and civil societies while experiencing sustainable gains in economic productivity.

### *Implications of a Collective Generalisation*

Some argue that the concept of civil society hovers uncomfortably between diverse cultural ideas about 'public and private' to produce insights of general theoretical value and practical political significance. Reflecting on this contention, aspects closely related to the neglect of gender perspectives require closer examination. As Hann & Dunn highlighted, civil society is often perceived as including only 'nice' voluntary associations outside state repression. Secondly, 'public' and 'private' are treated as concepts that lack historical moorings. Fittingly, these assumptions are considered both endrocentric and ethnocentric by the authors. In view of these concerns, care is needed not to create a dichotomy between state and society in which the state is simply a locus of repression. Instead focus should be placed on the interdependencies between state and civil society.

Also requiring critical examination, theories of civil society are frequently regarded as developing from communitarian thought, in which citizens are defined by attachment, social relationships, community ties and historical context (Friedman, 1993; Elshtain, 1995; Onyx, 1996). As such, a communitarian framework brings family, community and social relationships to the foreground, prioritising the local community setting with which volunteering is often associated. Voluntary activity tends to be seen as a source of social capital precisely because of its association with the community sector and its separation

from formalised politics and the market place. The concept of social capital, therefore lends itself predominantly to a focus on 'collectives' rather than individuals (Baum, 1999). An emphasis on communal and collective interests, however, also runs the risk of masking differences within society. Civil society theory is frequently criticised by feminists in America because of its links with the more conservative versions of communitarian and neo-republican thought (Cohen, 1996; Skocpol, 2004). In such formulations in which the 'common good' is paramount, hard won individual rights may be sacrificed. The concern is that women's unpaid and largely unrecognised contributions will therefore be justified in the interests of raising the community's stocks of social capital (Onyx, 1996).

Also concerned about the social justice outcomes of marginalized groups, Pinkerton & Campbell (2002) emphasized the dark side of civil society. Based on research conducted in Northern Ireland, many authors revealed that both neighbourhoods and families can be the sites of desperate oppression and a forced silence (Chapman & Pinkerton, 1987; McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993; Smyth, 1996). In a report on the needs of lesbian and bisexual women (Quiery, 2002) it was noted that 'the strength of family ties has served to restrict the development of lesbian identity and community' (p. 22) and that 'the mainstream community response tends to be negative' (p. 23). Only since the 'cease fire' in 1994, have matters concerned with ethnic minorities been deliberated in the wider public arena (Mann-Kier, 1997).

### *New Public Management to a 'New Governance'*

Offering a critique on the re-constructed relations between state and community, Rose (1996) suggested that: "...in the current reconfiguring of welfare state regimes, we are witnessing the death of the social and the emergence of ... community as a new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence" (p. 331). The consequence of which is the acceptance of a diminished role of government; silence regarding the dangers of community elites and merging of the concepts of state and community

(Reddel, 2002). Also underlying the Third Way politics, is the implicit descriptions "...that the 'big state' of large public bureaucracies, publicly owned enterprises and a broadly based welfare state is redundant in the new environment of competition, privatization and global capitalism" (Sbragia, 200, p. 244). Promoting a more fundamental role of government, Di Palma (1997) argued that: "There is no democracy without a national constitutional state, in the development and operation of a democratic civil society. Thus the antinomy between state and civil society (less state, more civil society; and vice versa) is a false one: a mere slogan without connotations (Di Palma, 1997, p. 290).

Critical therefore, is the balance between the various institutions of the state and civil society to ensure political stability and democracy (Orchard, 1995; Berman, 1997). With this in mind, contrary to the debate claiming the 'diminished role of government', Everington (2001) proposed that the 'active state' has an obligation to work with and through civil society in managing the social impacts of forces such as globalization (Everington, 2001, p. 110). As Dryzek (2000) says the state can no longer be simply equated to a set of government institutions but must be seen as a broader set of 'imperatives for collective action' (p. 82). In this regard, the notion of an 'active state' in which governments play an essential leadership and strategic function in collaboration with social movements and other less organized forms of civil society, offers a potential signpost for a more viable expression of participatory democratic organization (Reddel, 2002). Underpinning this reconceptualisation is a more dispersed and distributed form of democratic organization centred on the inter-linked concepts of dialogical, deliberative and associative democracy (Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Brown, Kenny, Turner & Prince, 2000; Cooke, 2000;). Such a view of the state is alternative to what Pixley (1998) has called the 'bureaucratic state' and the 'market oriented state' (149). Fundamental to this configuration of state and civil society is an informed, inclusive and discursive citizenry that promotes the democratization of decision-making mechanisms of the state and supplements and extend traditional expressions of representative democracy (Reddell, 2002).

While implementation and administration of this new policy framework is challenging, it appears that the variety of policy methodologies and technologies capable of dealing with the conceptual complexity also appear limited (Mayo, 1997). Nevertheless, generating much interest "...is 'place management' as a new form of governance, that can institute new structural arrangements to deliver improved outcomes for a particular spatially defined community" (Croft, 1998; Latham, 1998; cited in Reddell, p. 58). While there are a number of variations to the place management approach, straddling communitarian, competitive market and more traditional hierarchical public administration perspectives (Reddell, 2002). The concept of 'governance' has been promoted as a policy template to promote innovative multi-sector institutional arrangements. The governance literature reflects a number of themes, including distinguishing between 'governance' as the processes and structures of strategic guidance and management and 'government' as concerned with the institutions and agents charged with governing (Edwards, 2000).

Insights offered by writers such as ....have also highlighted some key developments relevant to the new 'governance' framework, including innovation, negotiation, transformative partnerships, and re-invention of government based on system wide information exchange, knowledge transfer, democratization, decentralization of decision making, institutional dialogue, and the shift of the state towards relations of reciprocity and trust within governance institutions. While translation of these ideas remain a critical challenge, Gleeson and Low (2000) have applied the principles of deliberative and dialogical democracy to urban and regional policy development and governance (p. 211-216). Specifically, their approach draws attention to the need to deal with issues such as power differentials, relationships between participatory and representative democratic systems and adequate closure to the deliberative process. Also resonating these concerns, OECD studies promoted formalized agreements between stakeholders and clearer processes of policy learning, monitoring and evaluation, including incorporation of local strategies as sources

of innovation and ideals to inform national policy (198, p. 101-14). Clearly then further work is needed to build on these ideas, especially to define the spatial and place dimensions of a new governance framework. As a number of writers have reminded, the meanings of terms such as governance, networks, partnerships, social capital, collaboration and coordination are contested requiring careful analysis and further theoretical development (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; Peters, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

In view of the contradictions outlined in this review of civil society, the way forward lies in a multi-perspectivist post-structuralist/ modernist perspective of community functioning and change. An adequate framework on the constraints of women's and other minority groups' participation needs to move beyond liberal democratic notions of freedom, equality, and justice, based on a 'rational' model of human behavior, and to take into account the way in which these discourses inevitably produce exclusions (Lennie, 1999). For an inclusive theory of citizenship, a re-evaluation of the relationship between public and private is necessary. At a minimum this requires a re-appraisal of alternative social values drawn from the private sphere, as well as sites on the borders of public and private, to unsettle the privilege currently afforded 'public' values (Putland, 2000). To promote utility of the concept in both theory and practice, critical methodologies that are conducive to domain specific, contextually grounded, multi-perspectivist understandings of community relationships are imperative.

### *Importance of Social Capital*

The application of social capital as a community level concept along Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner & Proththrow-Stith's (1997) notion: "as an ecologic variable whose counterpart at the individual level is the social network" (p. 1491) is promoted by Kagan, et al. (2000) as highly relevant to the field of community psychology. In particular, its exploration both in terms of its utility at different levels of analysis and its value as an organizing principle for community psychology. "The role of community psychology in enabling the development of

bridging capital, as well as bonding capital is one that could be usefully clarified" (Kagan, et. al., p. 18). Most pertinent also and in keeping with the theoretical framework guiding this study is Kawachi, et al.'s call for more holistic understandings of social capital to include: "...a growing array of potentially related notions, including community competency collective efficacy, sense of community and civil society (cited in Kagan, et al., p. 18). Following is a review of social capital - a pertinent and related concept that enhances a complex understanding of community action and resilience.

While Putnam (1993) advanced the importance of concerted action' for democracy, it was the 'by-products', i.e. norms of generalized reciprocity and trust that was the primary focus. As Putnam insisted social trust is learned from participation in various types of associations (1995). Social trust and associational membership form 'social capital', which is fundamental to the development of political institutions as well as economic activity (Letki & Evans, 2005). In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) also outlines the key role played by voluntary organizations in promoting civic engagement and collaboration. These tight knit relationships between those sharing the same goals and vision, he suggests are significant components in civil society (Foster & Meinhard, 2005). On the other hand, Florida (2002) points out that when homogenous organizations develop a bonding relationship. They become inwardly focused. Given the current challenges in society, he suggests we may be better served by organizations that bridge, that focus on networking and linking across diverse groups (Foster & Meinhard). As such, integral to the analysis of rural and regional communities adapting to the impacts of neo-liberal reforms is the concept of social capital. Following is a review of social capital to promote a clearer understanding of the elements vital to individual and collective action for the benefit of community and society. The review begins with a brief overview of the origins of the concept of social capital, identifying the two main theorists as James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu, and linking Robert Putnam's later analysis with Coleman's theory. The subsequent section then follows with a new conception of social capital as a micro-meso-macro resource that can be

harnessed for social justice opportunities. In particular, it is argued that a broader theoretical and methodological framework is needed to guide a multi-perspectivist, multi-level analysis of human agency and community functioning.

The concept of social capital has been depicted as seductive yet infuriating because leading social scientists like John Coleman (1988, 1990), and especially Robert Putnam (2000) hold out a promise that it can explain a remarkable range of social phenomena. Understandings extend from educational performance, children's welfare, economic prosperity, democracy and even 'health and happiness' (Li, Pickles & Savage, 2005). While the scope of the concept remains over general, the mechanism by which it operates is under specified. Furthermore, in terms of scope of the concept, there is conflict between writers such as Bourdieu (1986) and Lin (2001) who place importance with how social capital benefits individuals, while others notably Putnam (2000) focus on how it generates collective goods. In regard to the mechanisms, there is a divergence between those who see the experience of engagement in civic organizations as crucial to the beneficial effects of social capital (Putnam, 2000, Anheier & Kendall, 2002) and those who emphasize that network processes (rather than associational involvement) produce social capital (Lin 2001, Burt, 2002).

### *Application of Social Capital*

Social capital has also emerged as a much-discussed and critiqued topic in government, bureaucratic and academic circles (Boneham & Sixsmith, 2005; Edwards & Foley, 1997; Porte's, 1998). It is said to underpin health and wellbeing (Lomas, 1998; Kawachi et al., 1997; Cooper, et al., 1999; Campbell, 1999; Baum, 1999) and to provide protection for children in contemporary society (Jack & Jordan, 1999). It is also becoming seen as a vital mechanism and outcome of community development practice (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). While current discourse reflects a general concern that so-called traditional values and the institutions of society are becoming eroded in a time of rampant economic rationalism and the shrinking of government services and state responsibilities of social services

(Lindsay, 1998,). Politicians, have seized the idea of social capital as a complex and acceptable panacea to modern social ills, without regard to the true meaning of the concept (Cattell & Evans, 1999; Lindsay, 1998). Most significant to this study is delineating the components of social capital that will cushion against the negative impacts of rapid social capital in order to deliver just and equitable outcomes for individuals, communities and nations.

### *Historical Background*

Although the concept of social capital is often hailed as a new idea, the ideas behind it are not new. For example, conditions under which cooperation occurs, the benefits of group membership both for the individual and wider society and the characteristics of social networks have been under investigation by sociologists since the beginning of the discipline (Wall, et al., 1998). It is interesting that given rich history of thought and multiplicity of insights, many of the ways in which the concept of social capital is now employed are profoundly atheoretical (Gleeson, 1999). One of the many problems encountered with the application of social capital is its contradictory definitions and explanatory frameworks (Leeder & Dominello, 1999). Despite the diverse meanings ascribed to the concept, the usage of the term “social capital” assumes a common understanding (Wall, et al., 1998). As a consequence, it can lead to the potential misuse of the concept for supporting a conservative agenda for economic rationalism, the reduction of social infrastructure and the shifting of responsibility from social institutions to families and communities (Boneham & Sixsmith, 2005; Legge, 1999; Flora, 1998).

Both Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993) record the economist Glenn Loury, as the first to apply the term social capital. His treatment was based on a relatively simple and descriptive economic model that described resources from family and community networks for assisting children in their development (Coleman, 1990). However, for decades, economics applied a limited definition of social capital to describe various collective forms of capital such as physical infrastructure and social expenditure by the state (Wall, et al, 1998). While,



contemporary literature on social capital attempts a somewhat uneasy marriage of these ideas from sociology and economics. The notion of social capital referring to 'the resources that emerge from one's social ties' (Porte's & Landolt, 1996, p. 26), derived exceeding popularity. Which according to Wall, et al. (1998) reflected the fact that many sociologists impressed with the conceptual clarity of microeconomic models of human behaviour, incorporated an actor's position in the social structure as an important influence on choice processes (Cook, 1991; Granovetter, 1985). Suffering from fuzziness and inconsistency, a critical aspect of this stemmed from conceptual confusion about whether social capital is an attribute of an individual or a group (Astone, et al., 1999). To clarify the issues underlying the controversy, the theoretical frameworks of Coleman, Putnam and Bourdieu will be critiqued as the course of direction is set for a new contextually grounded ecological model of social capital.

Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, both educational sociologists, were largely responsible for developing the theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary concept of social capital (Gleeson, 1999). James Coleman conceptualizes it as networks of civic engagement, which constitute a resource for "getting things done." Unlike other forms of capital, it inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors, it can be drawn upon by individuals but is not simply an attribute of individuals (Coleman, 1990). Participants of these relations demonstrated trust and confidence in each other, which enabled them as a social group to become successful in social, cultural and political terms. Thus, social capital refers to sociability and consequently to social status of the individual, which are seen to provide the main foundations for successful social relations (Erben, et al, 1999).

Following Coleman, Robert Putnam, redefined social capital as a key characteristic of communities, rather than of individuals. For Putnam, social capital consists of the following components (Morrow, 1999). Firstly, networks, constitute the civic community (institutions, facilities and relationships) in the voluntary, state and personal spheres; and the density of the networking between these three spheres. Secondly, people's sense of 'belonging' to the

civic community, together with a sense of solidarity and equality with other community members. Thirdly, it includes norms of cooperation, reciprocity and trust that govern the functions of networks (this links with Coleman's formulation, and Fukuyama, 1996). Fourthly, social capital consists of positive attitudes to the institution, associated facilities and relationships constituting the civic community, as well as civic engagement, which involve participation in the process of sustaining and/or using such voluntary, state and interpersonal networks.

For Putnam, levels of social capital are a causative factor in explaining economic growth (or decline). His conceptualisation of social capital has been taken further to explore how economic development impacts upon the levels of health in communities (see Campbell, 1997), the premise being that people's sense of self-efficacy in relation to their social networks, neighbourhoods and local or national civic structures (their 'social capital') will have some effects on health and well-being (Lomas, 1998; Kawachi et al., 1997; Cooper, et al., 1999). Although Putnam's work has been influential, it suffers from the same rationalist flaws as Coleman's theory. Following is an illustration of the conflicting dimensions of social capital theory.

### *The Nebulous Nature of Social Capital*

As these key theoretical formulations show, 'social capital' is a rather ambiguous concept that can include anything from interaction between parents and their children, to the level of how much they use their 'networks', and to measure how much they trust their politicians (Boneham & Sixsmith, 2006). Such critiques have also identified the problematic ambiguity of a 'vague, slippery and poorly defined' concept (Baum, 1999). Furthermore, the operationalisation of the concept in survey research has varied considerably (Blaxter & Poland, 2002, Blaxter, 2004) from the examination of civic engagement (Cooper, Arber, Fee & Ginn, 1999), perception of crime (Kawachi, Kennedy, & Wilkinson, 1999), and mistrust (Smith, 1997) to the structure of family and friendship ties (Rose, 2000). Not surprisingly, survey research has failed to yield consistent and coherent results concerning the manifestation of social

capital within local communities (Morgan & Swann, 2004). Morrow (1999) established that Coleman's conception in particular is not adequately contextualised in socio-economic history; and in both Coleman's and Putnam's formulations, it is gender-blind, ethnocentric and arguably a theory imported from the USA without due attention to cross- and inter-cultural differences.

Although Bourdieu and Coleman define social capital as a resource residing in social networks which accrues to its members, (Portes, 1998; Coleman, 1990 & Bourdieu, 1986) their theories are underpinned by very different perspectives. Coleman's concept is based on rational choice theory, where social capital is conceptualised as the result of self-interested behaviour of interconnected individuals - the assumption underlying is that individuals are rational agents, who choose actions according to their goals and purposes (Gleeson, 1999). Rational choice theory has been subjected to vigorous criticism for its narrow conceptions of human motivations and relationships (Mansbridge, 1990). More importantly, its failure to deal with the complex relationships between structure and meaning which dominate much of the current sociological and anthropological literature makes Coleman's conceptions highly contestable (Gleeson, 1999)

In Coleman's exploration of the relationship between the individual and society, meaning is constructed through the interactions of people. It echoes Weber's theory of 'social action' - a position that social institutions are the product of the actions of individuals and their interactions (Cheek, 1996). A popular misconception is that Weber takes the orientations of individuals as the starting point (Gleeson, 1999). Instead his theory attempts a balance between individual agency and the collective meaning that shapes and constrains the choices of individuals as evidenced in his analysis of class and power (Cheek, 1996). Gleeson (1999) points to the lack of awareness of the interplay between social structures and social action displayed in the rational choice literature. By focussing solely on individual agency, the assumption is that social life is comprised of no more than the sum of the actions of individuals. It does not

allow for the way in which individuals' decisions are shaped by social forces and discourses (Hindess, 1987).

Specific criticisms pertain to Coleman's ahistorical theorising (Elder, et al., 1993): his 1961 study, on which he bases his notion of social capital, paid no attention to historical context; most of the young people in his study were born in World War Two and this must have had some effect on their lives (eg stress of adjustment on father's return after 3 years absence). His more recent claims (and indeed those of Putnam, 1995) about the erosion of 'community' in the US communities are also ahistorical and hark back to a romanticised 'glorious past' (Levi, 1996).

Hall and Wellman (1984) writing about social support and health are implicitly critical of the 'loss of community' argument: "Pahl has noted that bemoaning the lack of social cohesion of contemporary times in comparison with some putative golden age a couple of generations before, has a history of at least 2000 years" (1998). However, as Campbell (in press) notes, if people's subjective accounts of their communities reflect this, we need to pay attention to it because it is likely to have important consequences for their sense of belonging and self-efficacy (cited in Morrow, 1999). Coleman and Putnam also ignore the effects of gender, except to portray the consequences of women's employment as negative, both for community cohesion and for their individual children (Putnam, 1995; see also Frazer & Lacey, 1993). This should alert us to the invisibility of women's work in creating or sustaining social networks and hence social capital (Morrow, 1999).

Rustin (1997) questioned assumptions about transposing these arguments from the USA to UK context. Adding to this debate, Bourdieu has warned of 'persistent and serious misunderstandings in the international circulation of ideas' (1991, p. 382). As Morrow highlighted, there are many obvious cultural differences between and within these two nations, ranging from levels of violent crime in the US (which undoubtedly have an effect on 'social capital' and how people feel about where they live) to different levels of (and norms about)

business involvement in community activities and fundamentally different notions of citizenship, civic participation and local democracy (1999). The history and nature of race politics are also radically different (Wilson, 1996). Whether or not it is possible to transpose policies from market-driven systems to those in welfare states needs careful examination (Heinz, 1994).

Morrow (1999) is critical of the US research derived from Coleman: “largely focussed on ‘family structure effect’ rather than community-effects...much of the US work is based on large-scale quantitative analysis, with a focus on ‘quantity’ of social capital not the quality” (p. 6). The problem goes much deeper, as she elucidated, many studies focussed on children, with an assumption that individual children are only influenced by family structure and school. An account of the broader social context in their communities are in effect ignored. Nor is there much attention paid to structural constraints and how these impact on social capital, and these constraints may be differentiated according to gender, ethnicity and location (Morrow, 1999).

As a result, without reference to context, Coleman’s account of youth unemployment is ultimately due to individual failings, rather than external labour market processes. Morrow concluded that Coleman’s conceptualisation is generally undynamic and wooly, a ‘catch-all’ to describe rather than explain the effects of inequality (it cannot explain change or social mobility) and ultimately individualistic. Finally, it is premised on a model of the nuclear family norm and narrow definitions of family that ignore wider kin relations (1999).

### *Broader Perspectives of social capital*

Stemming from the work of Bourdieu, (1984, 1986, 1993) the application of the concept of ‘social capital’ found in European sociology and anthropology stand in marked contrast to the North American definitions. Bourdieu’s theory takes a more conflict-structural approach to how people’s access to resource shapes their position in society (1999). Bourdieu’s is a more complex and contextualised account of different forms of capital: he distinguishes between

cultural capital and social capital. Cultural capital can exist in various forms: institutional cultural capital (that is, academic qualifications); embodied cultural capital (particular styles, modes of presentation, including use of language, forms of social etiquette and competence, as well as degree of confidence and self-assurance) and objectified cultural capital (material goods such as writings, paintings, and so on; see Shilling, 1993 who refers to some aspects of this as 'physical capital').

Social capital for Bourdieu consists of social networks and connections: 'contacts and group memberships which, through the accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities, provide actual or potential support and access to valued resources' (1993:143) and sociability, in other words how networks are sustained, which requires necessary skill and disposition. For Bourdieu, 'economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital' (1986: 252) and he is primarily concerned with how economic capital underpins these other forms and how forms of capital interact with wider structures to reproduce social inequalities (see also Jenkins, 1992; Willis, 1977).

Bourdieu posits men and women, at least, as agents: as does Giddens, who has argued that the day-to-day activities of social actors draw upon and reproduce structural features of wider social systems (1984). However, there are some limitations to Bourdieu's analysis. First, as Nowotny (1991) speculates, there may be different rules for the conversion of capital for men and women, which relate to women's (historical) concentration in the private sphere. She develops the notion of 'emotional capital': knowledge, contacts, and relations as well as emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterised at least partly by effective ties' (1991, p. 148). Secondly, Bourdieu's understanding of social capital has been criticised for being implicitly elitist, though this may be a misunderstanding, because the concept can (and should) be expanded to include working class as well as middle class children (Morrow, 1999). However, as Jenkins (1992) suggests, despite limitations, Bourdieu is 'good to think with'.

Interestingly, in contrast to Coleman and Putnam, Bourdieu does not focus on 'community' in his formulations of social capital and the networks (which incidentally may inhibit economic success and social mobility) (Morrow, 1999). It is not unusual for different authors to champion different interpretations of social capital, however, as Morrow deduced, the US formulations have their roots in De Toqueville's ideas about the forms of horizontal associations being a cause and an effect of US citizens' civiness. Thus people's involvement outside the political and economic spheres in activities such as sport and other recreations may have an effect on how they behave not only in political spheres, but also economic and social spheres (Evans, 1996). In contrast, European sociology adopts a more structural approach to understand how different forms of social interactions underpin and explain class and other phenomena of modern capitalism (Renata Serra, personal communication, cited in Morrow, 1999). However, the author is surprised to find that despite these contradictory standpoints, this difference is not acknowledged in much of the later social capital literature.

### *Negative Aspects of Social Capital*

As we have seen work on social capital has originated from several different research traditions, however, the concept does offer one way of integrating issues of community participation, change and empowerment within one expansive framework. To recapitulate, Bourdieu (1986) characterises social capital in terms of the benefits of community membership, Coleman (1988) concentrated on the benefits to individuals of social ties within interpersonal relationships. Putnam originally focussed on civic engagement and the impact this had on economic and political life in community settings (1993). However, his more recent work offers an inclusive perspective involving social norms, networks and ties, trust and reciprocity and community participation (Putnam, 1995; 2000). Therefore, from this perspective, participation in social groups and activities generates access to social capital. Thus, a community or neighbourhood rich in social capital has been described as socially cohesive, cooperative and caring, a place where people work together for mutual benefit (Boneham & Sixsmith

2006). Accordingly, social capital has been seen as "...both a glue that bonds society together and a lubricant that permits the smooth running of society's interactions" (Smith, 1997, p. 170). However, this rather romanticized notion of social capital has been challenged (Boneham & Sixsmith).

### *Social Capital and Social Deprivation*

While emphasizing the benefits of strong social capital, Jack & Jordan (1999) also issued a warning that it may not necessarily work for the common good. For example, social capital is produced through specific human interactions, and thus available only to members who share in certain ways of life (Jordan, 1998a) and is freely available for the benefit of all members who take part in the community's interactions. However, as Jack & Jordan point out the beneficial effects of norms, traditions and networks of trust and co-operation are as just as accessible to rogues and confidence tricksters, fraudsters and felons, as they are to the sociable, active or altruistic members of that society whose interactions sustain it (p. 243). Offering a more complex analysis of social capital social critiques have questioned implicit assumptions that it is a lacking resource in low socio-economic areas and that it will necessarily lead to economic gains (Kagan, Lawthom, Knowles & Burton, 2000). For example, Forrest & Kearns (1999) dispute the idea that poor and deprived areas necessarily lack social capital. Indeed, their studies of social cohesion show the exact opposite: "close family ties, mutual aid and voluntarism are often strong features of poor areas. It is these qualities which may enable people to cope with poverty, unemployment and wider processes of social exclusion" (p. 9, cited in Kagan, et al, 2000, p.3).

As Portes & Landolt, (1996) emphasized, just because social cohesion, or even social capital is present, the assets obtained through it seldom enable participants to rise above their poverty. In fact, as they suggest close knit ties can create 'downward levelling pressures' to conform to sets of norms and values which make it difficult for individuals to enter mainstream society (p. 20). Although poor neighbourhoods may have weak and inward looking networks, it nevertheless offers strong support in adversity. Also highly pertinent to the



analyses, is that in poor neighbourhoods the preoccupation of everyday life is dominated by 'getting by'. And often, those who can, get out, further weakening the social and physical infrastructure. This form of social capital is clearly reflected in Putnam's (1998) and Briggs (1998) distinction between bridging and bonding social capital. According to Gittel & Vidal bonding social capital enables residents to 'get by', it is the kind that brings people closer together who already know each other (1998). Whereas, Putnam's bridging concept is the social capital by which residents establish connections outside their neighbourhood, enabling them to 'get ahead' by 'importing clout' (cited in Kagan, et al, 2000, p. 4).

### *The 'Dark Side' of Social Capital*

As already outlined, social capital is generally viewed as a positive resource, and many researchers have challenged this view in the following ways. Firstly, the 'dark side' has been identified by giving prominence to the negative consequences of highly developed social ties and norms that can constrain community development and well-being (De-Filippis, 2001; Muntaner, Lynch, & Smith, 2000; Portes & Landholt, 1996). Secondly, social capital has been criticised because of close overlaps with existing, well-researched areas of social networks and social support, (Muntaner, et al) thus leading to the problematic ambiguity of a 'vague, slippery and poorly defined' concept (Baum, 1999). Thirdly, also of concern, the 'operationalisation' of the concept in survey research has varied considerably (Blaxter, 2004; Blaxter & Poland, 2002) from the examination of civic engagement (Cooper, Arber, Fee & Ginn, 1999), perception of crime (Kawachi, Kennedy & Wilkinson, 1999), and mistrust (Smith, 1997) to the structure of family and friendship ties (Rose, 2000). Not surprisingly, survey research has failed to yield consistent and coherent results concerning the manifestation of social capital within local communities (Morgan & Swann, 2004).

Also problematic is that Putnam's concept treats all communities and people within them as homogenous groups; yet research suggests the importance of age and gender in the construction and development of social

networks (Boneham & Sixsmith, 2006). In particular, Scott and Wenger (1995) suggested that in comparison with older women, the social networks of older married men are smaller and even more reduced if they are widowed. Moreover, data on social participation also indicate gendered differences in that women in older ages are more active than men in terms of voluntary work, group membership and attendance at social events (Davidson, Daly & Arber, 2003; Wilson, 1995). Given these differences, it might be expected that men and women of different ages and living in disadvantaged communities create, maintain and develop social capital in different ways (Saegert, Thompson & Warren, 2001). Despite this, the gendered and age-related reality of social capital has received little research attention (Sixsmith et al, 2001).

### *Conclusion*

In the light of such criticisms, Foley and Edwards (1999) suggest that researchers might disinvest in the concept of social capital. However, many disagree, discarding the concept is rather premature given that its operationalisation in surveys has predated more rigorous exploratory work (Boneham & Sixsmith, 2006). The way forward for this study therefore, lies in qualitative perspectives that may allow the complexities of social capital to merge, including possible negative consequences such as social exclusion and social control. Qualitative work may also help to clarify the overlap between social capital and related concepts as well as revealing the ways in which trust, reciprocity, control and most importantly, community participation are related in understanding social change towards sustainable development from a social justice perspective.

In this more heuristic approach, ambiguity may be viewed positively, as Moscovici (1984) claimed the value of ambiguity allows a concept to develop more freely and contextually without the constraining blinkers of a rigid theoretical framework. Rather than disinvestment, what is required now, is more exploratory qualitative work, sensitive to age, gender, culture, power and status in the real-world contexts, evaluating the relevance of social capital in specific

geographical regions and social relations. For example, qualitative research has already begun to reveal some of the complexities of the relationships between social capital and health within community settings (Campbell, Wood & Kelly, 1999; Cattell & Herring, 2002; Morrow, 2002; Sixsmith, Boneham & , 2002, 2004). This study suggests that social capital is constructed differently within the Australian context and different types of social capital networks vary in their potential to be individual, community and nation enabling. For instance, Campbell, et al. (1999) concluded that inward-looking narrowly focused bonding networks were less effective than diverse outward-looking bridging community networks.

Clearly then, if social capital is to offer new ways of exploring the social and personal consequences involved in healthy community living, then more context-specific, gendered and power sensitive qualitative research is required to elaborate the processes and mechanisms relating social capital and community health and well-being for diverse groups. A deeper understanding of this relationship would go some way towards preventing a simplistic development of social policy where social capital is advocated as a community panacea at the expense of addressing the broader structural, resource and financial issues of disadvantaged communities (Lynch, Due & Muntaner, 2000; Saegert, Thompson & Warren, 2001; Saegert & Winkel, 1996; 1998; Zippay, 2001).

### *Moving Beyond Modernist Approaches*

The most important general points to emerge from the literature reviewed so far is that, globalization, sustainability, civil society, social capital, and sense of community debates hiterto have been too narrowly circumscribed by modern western models of liberal-individualism. The exploration of the social impact of globalization for rural and regional communities within modernist theoretical notions will not reveal the post-modern, (Gergen, 1985; 1994; 2001b) the diverse or the local perspectives otherwise indulged by adopting a multi-perspectivist (Tebbes, 2005) social ecological (Broffenbrenner, 1979) approach to research. Taken together, these studies signal that research concerned with issues of social

justice have much to contribute in the investigation of the moral aspects of power, cohesion and social order in contemporary communities. At the end of the day, debates about globalization, sustainability, sense of community, civil society and social capital lead us to a renewed awareness of the fusion of the moral, the cultural, the social, the economic and the political in the constitution of all human communities.

Instead of searching for the replication of one particular western model, this study abandons the universal yardstick and understands the impact of globalization, government response and community action from diverse perspectives where emphasis is on capturing the 'contextualist voice' (Gergen, 1984; 1995; 2001b; Morley & Hunt, 2004; Pepper, 1942; Rosnow, 1988). In line with this goal, the perspectives of globalization, sustainability, sense of community, civil society, and social capital outlined above will function as heuristic theoretical tools from which more diverse understandings of the social impact of the globalization and the social justice dimension of government and community action will be examined.

## CHAPTER THREE – Grounded Methodological Approach

*In chapter three the theoretical and conceptual methodological framework adopted for the study is described. Also following is the criteria underlying the selection of the approach advocated by community psychology as most suitable for community research to expose oppression and promote social change towards liberation. The research is situated within a social constructionist epistemology that explores community transition from a holistic perspective emphasizing the importance of the social, cultural, historic, and political context in which the various sectors of the community interact to influence social change within and outside their local communities. The study draws on aspects of a number of qualitative theoretical traditions: grounded and narrative theory. Including social constructionism where emphasis is on capturing the multiple constructions of reality involved when a diversity of community groups interact towards community goals. This research also adopts a critical theoretical perspective to identify the mechanisms by which marginalisation and exclusion operate, including hierarchies of power in order to promote reform towards more egalitarian structures.*

*This chapter also outlines the rationale for adopting a grounded theoretical approach to gain contextual data and for incorporating an eclectic multi-level conceptual framework as a heuristic guide to analyse the data emanating from the domain. This is followed by a detailed description of the research context and an explanation of the research methods used and the reasons surrounding these decisions. The research design is elaborated and this chapter also demonstrates the strengths of the three-stage data collection process that offered the opportunity to refine and develop understandings of community transition. This process facilitated the researcher to understand community transition from a multiplicity of perspectives and to identify how structural change can be promoted towards more egalitarian processes and socially just outcomes for those who are marginalized and alienated by the process of community governance. In keeping with the tradition of grounded theory tradition and reflective iterative generative process, the multiple stages of data collection process enabled the testing of emergent hypotheses to arrive at an ecological level contextual analysis of community transition based on the experience of the Denmark community.*

## **CHAPTER THREE – Methodological Approach**

### *Sustainable Communities – A Vision or Pretext*

It is becoming increasingly clear that damage to the natural integrity of major ecosystems on every continent is seriously threatening the security of societies that depend on these ecosystems (Brown, et al., 1998). Many international gatherings have agreed:

“The best predictions available indicate potentially severe economic and social dislocation for present and future generations, which will worsen international tensions and increase risk of conflicts between and within nations” (Roseland, 2000, p. 73).

In Australia the combined impact of economic recessions, the subsequent decline and restructuring of industries, the globalization of local markets and public policies promoting open competition complemented by reduced government intervention have had a devastating impact on vulnerable communities particularly in rural and regional locations (Sumner, 2003).

The concept of sustainable development that emerged in 1987 (UNSD, 2000) has heavily influenced planning and decision making of local communities around the world. In Australia most significant are local governments, as elected representatives they are accountable for community decision-making (Agyeman & Evans, 1996). Charged with community planning and development, this makes them critical players in the movement toward sustainable communities (Roseland, 1997, 1998).

There is however, no single accepted definition of “sustainable communities” it is anticipated that communities will be involved in defining sustainability from a local perspective. The dilemma also, is encouraging democracy (e.g. participatory local processes) within a framework of sustainability (Henry, 2005). As Roseland (2000) highlighted, elements of a sustainability framework include minimizing consumption of essential natural

capital, multiplying social capital and more efficient use of urban space. Most important is the fourth element, that is, to co-ordinate and balance the other three. Vital also is that the costs associated with sustainability measures are distributed fairly across society (Rose). To ensure that both the gain and pain of adjustment is shared fairly by community members, participation by affected groups in the decision process is imperative (Gran, 1987) as it "...can help make the attendant redistribution of costs and benefits fairer and more widely understood" (Roseland, p. 104).

Bottom up approaches such as democratic mobilization are favoured for promoting increased equity, equality and empowerment (Brohman, 1996). Thus, promoting communities towards sustainability inevitably requires cooperation among those concerned with environmental protection with others in meshing environmental critiques, goals and strategies with those of peace, social justice, equality and economy, etc (Gibson, 1991; PCSD, 1996). In general achieving sustainability strategies also requires the following: "... redistribution over "trickle-down"; self-reliance over dependency; a local rather than a regional, national or international focus; and small-scale projects rather than grand-scale or megaprojects" (Roseland, 2000, p. 105).

In view of the multiplicity of actors and socio-political dynamics involved in understanding how rural communities adapt to globalization and pursue sustainability as a vision towards defining a 'good community' a broader framework is required to undertake this research enterprise. Responding to the call for more research into oppressive systems in order to bring about social change toward the equitable distribution of society's resources (Huygens, 1995; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996; Rappaport, 1977; Thomas & Veno, 1992) following is the conceptual and theoretical methodological model pursued in this thesis which seeks to understand how communities deal with adversities and promote appropriate processes in achieving just outcomes for all members of the community. In this regard this thesis pursues a quest for defining the elements of a vision constituting a good community.

*Emancipation & Social Justice*

While the call for psychological enterprise to respond to real life social concerns was made in 1899 by then President of the American Psychological Association, it took more than fifty years before the field acted (cited in Sarason, 1981). With the formal emergence of community psychology in 1965, Dewey's concerns were heeded with a shift in focus from individualistic psychology to ecological systems (cited in Contos, 2002, p. 10). Many psychologists have since signalled a great desire for psychology to become actively involved in social planning and social change (Reiff, 1968; Sarason, 1981; Gergen, 1990; Moghaddam, 1990; Bishop, 1993). While the field of community psychology has been instrumental in promoting the ideals of social justice, the field of critical psychology vocalized a clear message "fundamental human needs, values and rights must be met and upheld for a better and more just society to emerge" (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). To promote the ideals of liberation, the field contributes extensive understandings to combat oppression and advance emancipation (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Most notably, in adopting a "critical psychology" stance, Prilleltensky (1999) not only ratified the fields' academic *and* political pledge to resist oppression and promote emancipation and social justice. He articulated a cause in which we should strive to create a psychology that works for, and not against the oppressed.

Involving both psychological and political dimensions, Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) defined oppression as "a state of asymmetric power relations characterized by domination, subordination, and resistance, where the dominating persons or groups exercise their power by restricting access to material resources and by implanting in the subordinated persons or groups fear or self-deprecating views about themselves" (p. 129). Most significant to the concept, oppression involves structural inequality that is reproduced by the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal citizenry. As Young (1990) clarified, the causes of oppression "are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules" (1990, p. 41 cited in



Prilleltensky, 1999, p. 3). To tackle these barriers to equality, the principle of *emancipation* as promoted in the field, is characterized by "equitable and respectful alliances between persons, communities, and nations, free from internal and external sources of oppression and free to express and explore their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual human qualities (Prilleltensky, 1999, p. 5). It is modelled on Fromm's (1965) dual conception of *freedom from* social and psychological sources of oppression, it encompasses *freedom to* pursue one's objectives in life and liberation from class exploitation, gender domination, and ethnic discrimination (cited in Prilleltensky, 1999, p. 6).

Community and critical psychologists therefore embrace a set of values, (a) *personal values* (e.g., self-determination, autonomy, health and personal growth) (b) *collective values* (e.g., social justice, support for community structures), and (c) *relational values* (e.g., respect for human diversity, collaboration and democratic participation). Also crucial is balance between individual and social goals with dialogue for resolving conflicts of interests. To this end, Prilleltensky & Nelson's (2002) framework for a well society is ideal for examining social justice implications as individual wellbeing is linked to community and national contexts that may serve as sites of oppression. On the one hand, the dialectic relationship between personal and collective values has been abundantly acknowledged (e.g., Bauman, 1993; Melucci, 1996a, 1996b; Sandel, 1996), Prilleltensky however, emphasized that it is the relational values that act as the mechanisms for connecting between them (Habermas, 1990; Putnam, 1996). Although a balanced approach to conflicting values is a crucial message, Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997) stressed repositioning social justice values above western society's obsession with personal advancement. Also lending support, Giddens (1994) identified balance between values as vital for "an ethics of a globalizing post-traditional society" and in "recognition of the sanctity of human life and the universal right to happiness and self-actualization - - coupled to the obligation to promote cosmopolitan solidarity and an attitude of respect" (1994, p. 253).

*Criteria for Critical Action*

Elucidating further on the process involved in striking a balance between the voices of the powerful with the voices of the oppressed in specific social contexts, Prilleltensky (2002) calls our attention to four critical assumptions: (a) *power*, (b) *legitimacy* (c) *action*, and (d) *processes*. With respect to *power*, it is imperative that we respect the multiple voices vying for scarce social resources and cultural recognition. Particularly, when the implications are that the values that reflect the voice of the powerful perpetuate the status quo, whereas those of the powerless promote social justice (Jaggar, 1994). *Legitimacy* also requires striking a balance between deductive and inductive approaches to knowledge and ethics, and that we complement theoretical epistemologies with grounded input. As Prilleltensky clarified, an internally consistent theoretical framework of values is limiting if it does not reflect the living realities of most people. As such, theories of value have to be validated with lived experience, as moral philosophy combined with grounded experience reflects people's needs and aspirations with knowledge processed into principles and guidelines for action. Thus, we need philosophical critique of people's voices as much as grounded validation of conceptual frameworks (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

The third assumption categorized as *action*, calls for a balance between theory and practice to ensure that theoretical knowledge does not remain the sole object of intellectual play. This is resolved by paying careful attention to the impetus driving action in view of our own subjectivity and political aspirations including the risks and benefits involved. What is apparent from this brief overview of the imperative to broaden the scope of social research is that while psychological enterprise can be used for oppressive and regressive purposes, it can also be used for emancipatory goals. From this perspective psychology can be seen to promote emancipation when its belief in agency leads to personal empowerment, when participatory processes afford the oppressed a voice, and when it fosters a fair allocation of powers, resources and obligations in micro and macro contexts (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Prilleltensky, 1999). For this reason, clarity with respect to our epistemological assumptions is vital.

*Community Psychology & Prevention Focus*

The emergence of community psychology set the stage for contemporary critical psychology by centering round notions of community (Sampson, 1983; Sarason, 1981) and the paradigm of "prevention". Convinced of the centrality of sense of community, Sarason proposed that we evaluate interventions in terms of whether they enhanced or impaired a psychological sense of community. Also a persistent advocate of prevention, Sarason criticised psychology's individual orientation for its blindness to context: "... overlooking both the contexts in which people live their lives and the historical stream of events which inexorably, but to psychologists, invisibly, exert their effects (p. 2). To redress these limitations, he emphasized developing a broad social perspective to contemporary problems and to prevention (Levine, 1998).

The field also gained impetus for a prevention focus, from Albee's (1959) classic study of the flaws of a mental health model based on individual clinical treatment (Elias, 1994). Specifically, his insights demonstrated the incapacity that sufficient numbers of clinicians could be trained to provide services to all those in need. Also pertinent, that services to minorities, the poor and groups such as children and the elderly are significantly under-served (Kelly, 1966). This knowledge facilitated a campaign for a greater emphasis on prevention, and gave impetus to the field of community psychology (Albee, 1970; Bennett et al., 1966; Elias, 1994). In spite of this catalyst, psychology has not responded, this consternation clearly reflected in the paucity of prevention programs being implemented (Warner, 1989). While the case for prevention is overwhelmingly echoed by key figures (Albee & Gullotta, 1997; Prillentsky & Nelson, 1997) the field is marked by considerably more rhetoric than action (Rappaport & Stewart, 1997). Furthermore, current approaches to intervention is generally reactive rather than preventive, and even when it is preventive it is often directed at the individual rather than the social structure, the microsystem rather than the macrosystem (Mackay, 2000). Hence, the focus of intervention continues to be 'ounces of prevention and pounds of cure' (Ross, 1998).

In aspiring to accelerate psychology's pace of progress towards a prevention focus, Syme and Bishop (1993) summoned a major presence by psychologists in the public policy arena in creating and managing social change. Their rationale underlying the call is that: "Policy is forged in the marketplace of power and influence, and if psychology is not in that marketplace, it will not be able to protect its own interests, let alone the interests of clients (p. 1). This appeal is not new, Sarason in (1983) also espoused: "Public policy reflects and exposes community organisation, relationships and dynamics. For a ... psychologist whose explicit goal is to understand and influence community functioning (on the behavior of people), the area of public policy has to be part of his or her sphere of influence and participation" (p. 246). Many in the field have advocated the need for psychology to address the issues of public policy and to develop an appropriate body of knowledge. For example Goodstein & Sandler's (1978) conception of a public policy psychology model include the promotion of human welfare, while Imber, Young & Froman (1978) advocate an active involvement in the public service sector combined with multi-disciplinary training of students in policy development (cited in Syme & Bishop, 1993).

### *"Specialist Generalist" Psychologists*

Underlying the urgency for policy analysts to become a major attribute to decision makers, is that: "it requires 'Specialist generalist' psychologists skilled in conceptualising and dealing with the social and political context of social change" (p. 2). Consequently, also imperative is an appropriate theoretical foundation encapsulated best as a 'public psychology model' needs to be based on integrating psychological theory into the social and political realities. There are however, implications for psychologists keen on following this direction, this approach runs contrary to the methodological approaches dominant in mainstream psychology (Gergen, 1985, 1994, 2001b; Wicker, 1989). As a consequence, the discipline lacks the necessary experience for developing such a conceptual knowledge base. To accelerate the learning curve of psychologists, Syme and Bishop (1993) advocate applying the knowledge bases

of other professions involved in the public arena. This includes drawing on the valuable experiences of the multi-disciplinary fields currently contributing to the real world of politics such as sociology, politics, economics, planning, geography and so on.

*Eclectic Theoretical & Methodological Approaches*

By embracing more eclectic attitudes towards theory and methodology, psychology can advance towards a pivotal role in creating and managing social change (Barker, 1968; Blumer, 1969; Gergen, 1982; Syme & Bishop, 1993; Wicker, 1984; Prillentsky, 2003a). However, in lamenting for more appropriate epistemological frameworks to guide us in the public arena, the assertion is not that traditional psychological enterprises are cast aside. Alternatively, complementary opportunities are unveiled for psychologists to work towards advancing and broadening psychological insights in both the personal and public domains (Dokecki, 1992; Prillentsky & Nelson, 2002). Urgent calls for broader theoretical and methodological perspectives stemmed also from assertions that psychology's dominant paradigm is far from value-free, that in fact, as a product of its time, it affirms a particular set of values; those of liberalism, individualism, capitalism and male dominance (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986; Packer, 1985; Sampson, 1989). Echoing similar concerns Jahoda (1981) warned of the implications inherent in social scientists claiming value neutrality while legitimizing the value systems of those in power. She challenged the discipline to search for new methods that confronts the reality of politics. A crucial aspect of understanding and dealing with social issues therefore is dependent on acknowledging the political nature of the worldview guiding our professional enterprise (Dokecki, 1991; Prillentsky & Nelson & Prillentsky, 2004).

In light of this reality, the degree to which systematic research is able to make a public contribution is dependent on the profession resisting theoretical or fragmentary support for preconceived and entrenched positions (Gergen, 1994; Prillentsky & Austin, 1999; Sampson, 1993; Sarason, 1981; Unger, 1986). Rather,

the formidable task is to search for a way that recognizes the legitimacy of a variety of theories, counteracts fragmentation, and presents in an orderly and rational manner what we know, however irrational our own theoretical choices may be (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Cook, 1985; Dokecki, 1992; Jahoda, 1981).

Reflecting on their experiences gained by embracing models of research and practice based on inter-disciplinary collaboration, Drew and Bishop (1997) emphasized the potential for a communication pitfall to develop when crossing disciplinary boundaries. With regard to conflict at multiple levels – from intrapersonal to inter-collective and so on, Smith (1983) observed that conflict is often the result of different entities becoming locked into operating with different frames. “Creating a meta-frame that enables the conflicting groups to recognise their own (*relative*) framing process, is a central part of managing intergroup relations” (p. 153). Also adding pertinent insights for dealing with the issue, Throgmorton (1991) proposed that inter-group conflict and division could be circumvented by adopting communication strategies and roles depicted as an ‘active mediator’.

### *Throgmorton’s (1991) Interpretive Communities*

In clarying his position, Throgmorton (1991) drew attention to the differences in worldviews and imperatives underlying community groups, scientists, government bureaucracies and politicians – particularly when all groups may have an impact on particular outcomes at the community level. For example, community members belong to different interpretive communities, where each group shares a common perspective; language; conventions and rules characterised as *rhetorical persuasion*. Communication barriers occur because an interpretive community’s unique discourse may be characteristically exclusive and not readily understood by non-members. To bridge a flow of communication between different groups, the researcher adopts the role of ‘active mediator’ by building a trusting connection with all the interpretive communities.

As a mediator the professional is portrayed as occupying one of three roles, as scientist, politician, or advocate. Through the mixing of roles, practical sense is forged between diverse audiences in an effort to 'fuse horizons' with all parties. The outcome is a substantive discourse that is accessible by all interpretive communities (Bishop & Drew, 1997). The role of the analyst is not to privilege any *rhetoric* or attempt to synthesize all three, rather they: "... should 'actively mediate' the discourse between those three diverse audiences, and thereby help create a community that recognizes and accepts diversity" (p. 174). A vital role also involves policy analysts rejecting efforts to privilege the *rhetoric* of science and politics over the lay public (Throgmorton, 1991).

### *Community Mediators*

In view of their commitment to a values based practice grounded in post-modernist research methodologies, community psychologists exemplify the capacity for undertaking such 'active mediator' roles and communication strategies. In their willingness to forego disciplinary boundaries and involve themselves as participant conceptualizers, community psychologists demonstrate a more cooperative and potentially productive relationship with the community (Elias, 1994; Drew & Bishop, 1997). As such, the role of 'participant conceptualizer' and 'active mediator' share a similar goal in promoting social justice. In echoing these visions, Thomas and Veno (1996) and others (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005) summarized the core values of community psychology as commitments to empowerment, diversity and cultural pluralism, social innovation, evaluation, community development and participation, cooperation and collaboration. In modelling such philosophical commitments, community psychologists pursue a more intimate discourse by involving themselves in equal partnership with the community (Drew & Bishop, 1997; Drew, Bishop & Syme, 2002).

*Wicker's (1989) Substantive Theorising*

Also paving the way for the discipline to become more relevant to public policy goals, is Wicker's (1989) substantive theorising research strategy. According to Drew & Bishop (1995) substantive theorising added substance to a call for a marriage between principle and method. Furthermore, while his naturalistic approach is depicted as an alternative paradigm for departing from the dominant beliefs and practices in psychology, it does not necessarily challenge the core assumptions and values of science. For example, substantive theorizing entails close, empirically grounded scrutiny of assumptions, concepts and propositions (Drew & Bishop, 1995). Furthermore, the term theorizing is used to emphasize theory building as an evolving, continually developing process. Focusing on methodological pluralism, multiple levels of analysis, collaborative research relationships and the need to look "deep rather than broadly" (Wicker, p. 532). Wicker therefore, provided the field with innovation to investigate the realities of the public world (Drew & Bishop, 1995). In this way, substantive theorizing facilitates a more effective exploration and understanding of psychological and social processes underlying the substantive domain (Wicker, 1989).

Challenging the largely theory-driven research processes of the logical positivist paradigm, Wicker (1989) articulated an approach to knowledge development that is oriented toward generating domain-relevant knowledge. As such, substantive theorising elevates the domain of interest, the substantive domain above methodological and conceptual concerns (Drew & Bishop, 1995). This is compatible with Gergen's (1984) insistence to place theoretical work in the centre of disciplinary activity. Substantive theorising, then involves developing the methodology after having identified a socially important issue and becoming intimately familiar with that issue in its natural social and temporal context through methods that are appropriate to this objective (cited in Contos, 2002). The conceptual process may take place at any point along the way, because in actuality, there is interplay between the three facets (Wicker). However, community psychologists have often addressed conceptual and



substantive issues simultaneously so that each aspect is informed by, and influences the other (Drew, Bishop & Syme, 2002; Seidman, 1989).

*Brinberg & McGrath's (1985) Research Process Model*

Wicker embedded his approach on Brinberg and McGrath's (1985) three-stage research process model 'Validity Network Schema (VNS). Stage one the 'pre-study stage' involves activity directed towards laying the foundation; specifying the relevant methodological, conceptual and substantive areas of interest. This phase is both critical and complex and provides researchers with unique opportunities for circumventing problems commonly encountered in stage two (Drew & Bishop, 1997). Where stage two is equated to the traditional logical empirical stage of conducting a study or doing an experiment. Stage three represents the 'boundary search' where the limits and constraints of data are examined. The value of the pre-study stage is that it allows issues of ecological validity to be resolved through replication, or by embedding the exploratory analysis to subsequent stages. The merits of this model are encapsulated as follows: "stage one is 'generative' or 'constructive'; stage two is 'logical empiricist' or 'hypothetico-deductive'; and stage three ... reflects a 'generalisability' or 'credibility' paradigm for research" (Brinberg & McGrath, p. 19). However, as Drew & Bishop observed, the Validity Network Schema (VSN) is simply a vehicle used by the authors to discuss validity issues.

*Paradigms & Dokecki's (1992) Human Sciences Framework*

There is consensus in the field that embarking on research problems that examine the interface of the individual in his/her socio-cultural milieu, requires an appropriate framework for understanding the real world at different levels of analysis (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Fiske & Schweder, 1986; Gergen, 1982, Wicker, 1986). Scientific enterprise at the paradigm level however, requires further exploration. As many scholars (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997) have specified, paradigms of inquiry are worldviews that signal distinctive ontological (view of reality), epistemological (view of knowing and the relationship between

knower and to-be-known), methodological (view of mode inquiry), and axiological (view of what is valuable) positions. Most importantly, different paradigms, such as (neo-or post-) positivism, constructivism, critical theory, and participatory inquiry, entail contradictory vantage points therefore combinations at the paradigm level are not true combinations, mergers or reconciliations of worldviews (Sandelowski, 2000). It is therefore not possible to combine, merge, or reconcile a view of reality as singular and objective (positivist) with views of it as multiple and individually or culturally constructed (constructivist), or as historically contingent (critical theory) (Greene & Caracelli, 1997b).

However, this does not preclude the integration of different paradigms, as Green, Caracelli & Graham (1989) illustrated a critical theorist would frame the issues around hormone replacement for midlife women differently from a neopositivist. For example, each see different things and, therefore ask different questions that will, in turn, require the use of different methods and techniques to answer them. However, as the authors highlighted such "...a paradigm combination may be used to elicit two or more perspectives on hormone therapy, for the purpose of 'initiation' to surface paradoxes and contradictions that surround hormone therapy" (p. 259). In this way, two or more paradigms of inquiry can be used to frame the same target phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000).

Also guiding the field with sophisticated tools in the pursuit of scientific inquiry more appropriate for community contexts is Dokecki's (1992) methodological scheme for a human sciences framework. In describing the process by which scientific knowledge is generated, his model depicts four types of inquiry: evaluation research (micro-quantitative); phenomenology (micro-qualitative); behavioural systems analysis (macro-quantitative) and political philosophy (macro-qualitative). The structure suggests that inquiry may be narrow and focussed (micro) or broad and inclusive (macro) or quantitative (impersonal) or qualitative (personal). Dokecki highlighted, that traditional scientific enterprises are generally limited to three or four perspectives, namely: the 'experimental', 'system' and 'interpretive' levels of inquiry. Researchers who go beyond these levels of inquiry by seeking 'world views' understandings, that

is: "the implicit assumptions and perspectives that governs behaviour of the individuals and collectives within a system and create the structures that serve to perpetuate such views" is conceptualised as 'macro-level' analysis (cited in Contos, 2002, p. 24). The key principle of this approach however, rests on acceptance of methodological pluralism, multiple levels of analysis, collaborative research relationships and rejection of the empiricist search for universal and objective truth (Drew & Bishop, 1997). In this vein by pursuing a 'world view' inquiry this thesis aspires towards more holistic understandings of the substantive domain by including multi-perspectivist vantage points.

A vital goal of this research is to embrace more appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks in order to become more accessible to communities and become part of vibrant organs of civil society with a commitment to deepening democracy, to human rights and social justice (Sewpaul, 2005). Nevertheless, this study avoids the dichotomy of modernism and postmodernism – between justification, objectivity, reason, universalism, proof and unity of science, on the one hand, and postmodern emphases on language, power and the particular, contingent and relational, on the other hand (see Williams & Sewpaul, 2004). As Williams and Sewpaul argue to treat modernism and postmodernism as a linear progression and as a bi-polar categorisation is to fall within the traps of modernism itself. Laclau and Mouffe (cited in Torfig, 1999), p. 168) also challenge the idea that a choice must be made between 'universalization of the particular and particularization of the universal. For Laclau, (1995) a pure particularism is not theoretically sustainable.

### *Critical Multiplism and Issues of Validity*

In pursuing the broader strategic approaches to research and action, Newbrough advocated that style be based on praxis and methodology on critical multiplism (1992). *Praxis* understood as reflective practice informed by generative theory in pursuit of human development and community (Dokecki, 1996; Gergen, 1978) is advocated as apt for community psychology

(Newbrough, 1992). An illuminating example, is liberationists' praxis which often based on Paulo Freire's (1968, 1970) model of problem-posing education where:

"...the intervention agent empowers people to give voice to their own problems and identify root causes; to define learning and action goals addressed to these causes and to act to address the causes and bring about real change in the community" (Trout, Dokecki, Newbrough & Gorman, 2003, p. 132).

This method also shares similarity with Kurt Lewin's approach to action research (Dokecki, 1982; Marrow, 1969, cited in Trout, et al).

What is clearly articulated in the field of social and community research is that deepening cynicism over single model analysis has amplified the importance of multiple tools such as replication and systematic variation in research (Gergen, 2001b; Dokecki, 1992). In this vein, the methodology of multiplism that emerged from the critiques of empiricism is:

"focused on the complexity of the subject matter ... working within the framework as 'realist', with an 'operational ontology' consistent with a contextually bound world. Multiple perspectives, multiple tasks, multiple methods are intrinsic to critical multiplism" (Drew & Bishop, 1997, p. 30).

Also endorsing this paradigmatic shift, Cook, Shadish and Houts (1985) argued that: "critical multiplism" rests on the notion that no single realization will ever be sufficient for understanding a phenomenon with validity. Leading the way in conceptualizing nuanced contexts by melding together data from micro-analysis and macro-analysis - ethnographers have powerfully demonstrated multi-methods as a tool for understanding process, identifying patterns, comprehending systems and facilitating opportunities for targeted solutions (Schneider, 2006).

To promote a holistic picture of the research domain, multiple realizations of research questions, measures, samples, designs, analyses, replications, and so on are essential for convergence on the truth of a matter (Churchman, 1979; Maturana, 1992, cited in Pinzon & Midgley, 2000; Reichardt & Gollob, 1985). Drawing attention to the dangers underlying any analytic approach and selection bias, Rindskopf (1986) contended:

“We have virtually abandoned the hope of a single correct analysis, and we have accordingly moved to multiple analyses that are based on systematically distinct assumptional frameworks and that rely in an increasingly direct way on the role of judgment” (p. 125).

To prevent, such a varied approach becoming a methodological and epistemological Pandora's box, it's vital for researchers to apply critical judgment in deciding which multiples are emphasized in a study or set of studies (Mark & Shotland, 1985; Midgley, 2000).

### *Pragmaticism and Contextualism*

In his review of Pepper's (1942) world theory 'contextualism' Payne (1982, 1996) articulated a systematic approach by which the actions and needs of people in their context can be better understood. Endorsed as the epistemological basis most appropriate for community psychological research, (Bishop, et al., 2002) contextualism is the position that all knowledge is local, provisional and situation dependent (Madill, et al., 2000). Jaeger & Rosnow (1988) embraced its allure for capturing the multiple realities:

“Contextualism's focus on the active dynamic event, and its view of human experience in and of the world as both constructive and reactive, stable and variable, holistic and pluralistic have important implications for the ways and means by which we come to examine and understand human action” (p. 71).

The contextualist voice is really a set of voices that emphasize historicism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Morley & Hunt, 2004). The intention is to change the kinds of ways in which we think about epistemology and about science (Burningham, 1998). As Morley & Hunt, emphasized most analytical philosophers would, for example, wish to maintain a sharp distinction between contexts of discovery (the province of psychologists) and contexts of justification (the province of philosophers). While historicism makes the former relevant to the latter, the phenomenological voice is one that asserts key task of psychology, to focus on the world of our ordinary understanding – as we live it – rather than the world as abstracted and interpreted by science (p. ). The hermeneutic voice is one that emphasizes a concern with the presuppositions built into language, because history is articulated in linguistic tradition (Rennie, 2000). Taken together the cumulative affect of these voices is to assert primacy of the social and the historical over the natural and the scientific (Morley & Hunt).

Offering a vision by which competing knowledge claims can be merged for the purpose of gaining more holistic understandings of the social contexts Midgley (2000) outlined how the rationale underlying the three paradigms of scientific inquiry may be reconciled. As the author described, realism, idealism and social constructionism – take different worlds as the centre of attention (objective, subjective and social world). “The consequence of endorsing one of these injunctions is that the whole world seems to fold up in one of the three worlds, while excluding the other two” (cited in Muller, Tjallingii, & Canters, 2005, p. 197). To resist prioritising one of the three perspectives, Midgley suggests regarding all three worlds as equivalent by shifting the focus from content to process. For example, instead of taking objects, subjects and language as prime, he focuses on the process by which knowledge is generated. Accordingly knowledge-generating systems can be constructed for the exploration of the external (objective), the internal (subjective) and the social worlds (Muller, et al). Instead of choosing one specific knowledge-generating system, he focuses on the process of making boundary judgements, which is

essential for all forms of knowledge production, whether we investigate the external, the internal or the social world (Midgley, 2000).

Also calling attention to strategic paths toward knowledge generation which feature an inclusive worldview, Bishop et al. (2002) wrote that “pragmatism” had long been advocated as a model for psychological theorising (e.g. Dewey, 1929; James, 1907,1991; Sarason, 1981) and as an underlying paradigm for community research (Tricket, et al., 1996). Verifying the value of pragmatic action research, Reason & Bradbury (2001) declare that it is not only “... highly conducive for fine-tuning methodological instruments, it also enables researchers and stakeholders’ active deliberation of problems in social reality where solutions are tested in action” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. ). The most pertinent criteria relating to validity claims is that within a contextualist framework, methodological pluralism is afforded more status (Bishop, et al, 2002). Not only is it a reasoned response to the positivist world view (Gergen, 1994), it is a necessary precursor to understanding complex domains and pursuing social action (Romme, 2004; Wicks & Freeman, 1998). From this view, gathering data from multiple perspectives is not an option but an imperative, as “assertoric knowledge” is explicitly disputable as a contribution to the discourse about the phenomena of interest, rather than an immutable truth (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 16).

Moreover, developing an idealized design method to capture socially responsive knowledge (Moghaddam, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989; Schon, 1983) can help counter or prevent the ‘boomerang effect’ that Keune observed (see Boog, 2003, p. 435). This boomerang effect refers to people in power reacting repressively to empowerment and emancipation projects. This dilemma between domination and self-determination is an explicit focus of critical and community psychology that is aspired to. Also significantly linked with the construction of idealized design methods is the “... pragmatic, future-oriented focus on finding solutions” (Romme, 2004, p. 498). Adding clarity to this goal, Romme describes that many action research projects tend to focus on analysing and understanding the existing situation, which in itself would not lead to any

changes in the direction of a novel situation or practice. It is therefore, unusual for action research to deliver fundamental new theories or practices, because “the research is and remains situated in the social context of the problem (complex) under research, which remains intact as the object of research’ (cited in Coenen & Khonraad, 2003, p. 441). In surmounting this obstacle Bishop et al (1990) offer insights about community research that can help restore and reinforce the pragmatic design orientation towards emancipatory projects.

### *Iterative-Generative Reflective Practice*

While pragmatism contributes to understanding the actions and needs of people in their context, also vital is a reflective process referred to as an iterative-generative process by Dokecki (1992). As the iterative aspect of understanding context can be easily overlooked in the treatment of pragmatism (e.g. Dewey, 1992). Reflecting on the epistemological and conceptual evolution occurring in community psychology in Western Australia, Bishop, Sonn, Drew & Contos (2002) underscored the notion of an iterative-generative reflective practice for opening a window from which to examine broader theoretical issues. Specifically, the authors attribute critical importance to studying the small epistemological differences between USA and Western Australian contexts as a means through which community and society could be examined.

As they encountered, the nuances that give meaning for much of the North American literature did not fit the local conditions in WA. As a result of this divergence the following theoretical insights emerged:

“... small differences between our conceptions of the local context and the data emerging from the context were observed and integrated into new concepts. We would argue that small differences are more easily incorporated into theory as they fit into what Sherif and Hovland (1961) described as a ‘latitude of acceptance’.. Large differences are seen as being disruptive and revolutionary, rather than evolutionary” (p. 6).



Within this iterative-generative reflective process, epistemology and concepts are developed incrementally (Bishop, et al, 1999). Although the approach is similar to Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry, the model differs in its incremental process: a process of epistemological and theoretical evolution through reflecting on small emergent realizations (Bishop et al.). While this study intends emulating the innovations evolving in the field of community psychology in Western Australia, the research path taken here is intended to provide a rich description of the substantive domain and to leave a clear audit trail. Illuminating the underlying spirit of this research methodology, Sandelowski (1993) so eloquently captured that:

"research is both a creative and destructive process ... similarly we can preserve or kill the spirit of qualitative work; we can soften our notion of rigor to include the playfulness, soulfulness, imagination, and technique we associate with more artistic endeavours, or we can further harden it by the uncritical application of rules. The choice is ours: rigor or rigor mortis" (p. 9).

### *A Contextualist Methodology for Social Justice*

As scientists and humanitarians, with the explicit goal of human liberation, contextually relevant knowledge can be used to promote the voices of the oppressed, particularly in the public policy arena. To uphold authenticity to the tenets of liberty, the methodological framework echoes the themes that emerged from the rationale advanced earlier, imperatives for a 'progressive public psychology model' based on a contextualist epistemology and grounded in the values of 'emancipation and social justice' to balance the interests of the individual and the collective good. In line with this conviction the methodology reflected the specific goal of capturing the broadest possible understandings of the challenges confronting rural and regional communities. As such, the overarching methodological framework adopted in this study has been designed to elicit a multi-perspectivist understanding of the domain. As Madill, et al, (2000) pointed out the goal of triangulation within a contextualist

epistemology is completeness not convergence. The particular strength of which is the possibility of retaining truly novel perspectives that may have been discounted when consensus (hence probably conventional) understandings are valued (Tinsley, 1992). Thus, by employing the principles of a contextualist paradigm based on triangulation of methodologies the diverse perspectives will contribute a greater evaluation of our social world (Rossman & Wilson, 1994).

This study embraces a methodological framework that is cognizant of the multiple ecological layers influencing community functioning. The research design incorporated a number of multi-disciplinary theoretical models spanning the macro, meso and micro levels to act as heuristic guides in making sense of the complexity underlying this domain. However, the foundational glue underlying the methodology is linking understandings around notions of community as the overarching principle by which social justice values prevail in a context where diverse sectoral interests compete for vital resources in society. In view of this goal that seeks to capture community processes and outcomes from a social justice perspective, outlined below is the multi-disciplinary analytical framework followed by the methodology undertaken in this multi-perspectivist qualitative study.

#### *Multi-Level Eclectic Analytical Framework*

To understand the relationship between individuals, social structures and the processes that guide social change, an eclectic theoretical model has been adopted as apt for this thesis. The methodology begins with a description of the concept of sense of community as a multi-level construct in understanding the impetus driving social action within communities. Another multi-level construct incorporated into the framework is "liminality" a vital metaphor for portraying the diversity of communities emerging as they navigate the forces of modern and post-modern worlds. This is followed by the macro-level concept of civil society which depicts the inter-relationships between the various sectors of society that contribute to a greater appreciation of the power dynamics operating internal and external to community contexts. This is followed by the meso-level concept

of social capital for gaining insights about the way in which individuals participating in social structures are both influenced by and are influential in promoting the groups' interests (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984). Offering a macro-level understanding of inclusiveness and exclusiveness operating in community, Newbrough's (1992) framework of community and political theory contributes greater understandings of the role relationship adopted towards those most vulnerable in society. Offering a micro-level vantage of individuals' perceptions of inclusiveness and exclusiveness, Opatow's moral community theory discerns the application of social justice values to diverse groups in society. In combination these multi-level constructs play a heuristic role in analysing the rich detailed data gathered by a variety of qualitative methodologies.

### *Combining Eclectic Approaches*

The theme dominating this study is the need to explore more contextually relevant perspectives of the multi-faceted forces shaping change and development within rural and regional communities. In pursuing this objective, the framework articulated by Falk & Kilpatrick (2000) is adopted as the ideal research model for incorporating eclectic theoretical approaches. As the authors outlined the major feature of their theoretical approach entails making links between social capital outcomes, the macro socio-political influences and the micro social interactions in the community through substantive theorising and its derived discourse analysis. For example, desired social and economic outcomes are achieved through interaction between social, economic, physical and environmental conditions, a point affirmed through the 'embeddedness' of Granovetter (1985) and prominently echoed in the *sustainability* imperatives driving global development initiatives (Brundtland, 1992). The research therefore has as its focus the processes of the social structure and outcomes of social relationships by making explicit connections between micro level social interactions and the broader meso and macro social order (Falk & Kilpatrick, 1998).

By combining a diversity of micro-meso-macro level concepts from a critical theoretical perspectives links can be made between the empirical data and a broader social meaning (Caracelli & Greene, 1997; Morgan, 1998). For example, at the micro-level, the sense of community and moral community constructs are apt notions for examining values and attitudes at individual and group levels of analysis. At the meso-level, social capital theory is an appropriate notion for investigating the mediating structural and cultural aspects of society that enhance or inhibit individual and group action. Finally, at the macro-level of analysis, the civil society and community and political theories are appropriate concepts for examining influential interactions at the socio-political level.

A multi-level analytical framework is conducive to community research in that it allows researchers to incorporate the context (Leach & Carlton, 1997). It is particularly effective when combined with grounded theory as it allows for an emergent theory to evolve from the research domain (Strauss, & Corbin, 1990). In combination this qualitative approach allows for a synthesized discussion about the interpretations of the nature of the micro processes that interact with meso and macro-level factors that shape the political responsiveness towards social justice values. Following is a description of the multi-disciplinary theoretical notions acting as heuristic guides in this grounded qualitative study conducive to more holistic perspectives of community change and development.

#### *Psychological Sense of Community – The Micro-Meso-Macro Link*

Throughout human history, communities have been powerful forces for establishing cooperation and reliable interdependence, (Burroughs & Eby, 1998) qualities such as shared responsibility, common goals and face-to-face relationships were a necessary part of life (Sarason, 1974). The psychological sense of community therefore is an ideal multi-level concept for studying human interaction in common pursuit of social objectives. In fact, underlying theory of participatory democracy is built on the notion of sense of community (Portney & Berry, 1997). Sense of community therefore can be a powerful explanatory tool

for understanding community mobilization and participation (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990) and may well be critical elements underlying rural community empowerment and action.

Sense of community is also an ideal theoretical concept for examining sources of meaning and identity at individual, group and societal levels. Indeed, Sarason (1974) connects sense of community with belonging to a group or community in which persons perceive them-selves as similar, operating interdependently to satisfy their own needs. Also significant, Long & Perkins (2007) call attention to the roles of place and place attitudes in gaining multi-level, multifaceted understandings of SOC. By incorporating a broader social framework to this study, the concept of SOC is ideal as it traverses the micro-meso-macro spheres of analysis and allows more holistic examinations of individuals in context. This concept is conducive to understanding rural community adaptation and resilience at multiple levels of analysis.

PSOC measures continue to be refined, community psychology attributes greater importance to sense of community on the basis of two assumptions. Firstly, if a greater sense of community is present, it is more likely that people will mobilize and launch participatory processes for the solution of their problems (Francescato & Ghireli, 1998). Secondly, because SOC contributes to quality of life, subjectively perceived, and also to individual well-being, it encourages a greater sense of identity and self-confidence, facilitating social relations (Martini & Sequi, 1995) and opposing anonymity and loneliness. Both postulations have been confirmed through empirical studies (Botta, 1994; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Davidson & Cotter, 1991; Prezza & Constantini, 1998). There is however, a need to investigate the theoretical indicators at multiple levels of analysis by linking sense of community to the socio-political context. The objective of this study therefore

is in gaining understandings of the linkages between sense of community and other meso and macro level factors such as social capital and civil society processes involved in harnessing a more socially just community and society for those most vulnerable.

### *Theory of Liminality*

In view of the constancy and intensity of global and local influences forcing change in communities, the metaphor of "liminality" is apt for capturing transitional phases symbolized as a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994; Turner, 1974). As Victor Turner (1966; 1982) points out, van Gennep intended using the term 'rites of passage' to denote both rituals accompanying an individual's (or a group's) change in social status and those associated with such things as seasonal changes for an entire society (cited in Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003). In his original use, van Gennep distinguished three phases of a rite of passage: separation (divestiture), transition (liminality) and incorporation (investiture) (cited in Czarniawska & Mazza). During the separation phase, the person or persons who are to be subjected to the passage become separated from their previous social environment and their previous way of life. During the transition phase, the person or persons separated from their previous environment experience the liminal condition. During the incorporation phase they enter a new group and a new life (van Gennep). While liminality represents blurring and merging of distinctions, persons who find themselves in a liminal phase are "temporarily undefined, beyond the normative social structure... it also liberates them from structural obligations" (Turner, 1982, p. 27).

In Dudgeon & Fielder's (2006) application, in challenging the social and cultural identities and social position of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students different ways of knowing and being evolved. The liminal space therefore provides a space "...for change and the creation and valuing of different ways of knowing and being" (Sonn & Green, p. 341). Bhabha (1994) addresses this third space as one that destroys the 'mirror of representation' as it mobilizes the

dualistic first and second spaces and reveals culture as an ongoing 'expanding code' (p. 37). In essence liminality refers to a place of strangeness, a borderline place where cultural differences touch and become "moments of panic" (Bhabba, p. 207). It is a place of hybridity or threshold, an in-between place that is neither here nor there (Barlow, et al., 2006). Its most salient features are instability and the lack of clarity about where one belongs and what one should be doing (Heilbrun, 1999).

Meerwald (2001) however, redeploys this liminal space in the sense of hyperspace (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992) to counter the assumption that people in this space straddle two fixed places. Thus, the liminal space is that 'interconnected space that always already existed' (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992) where people juggle multiple histories, positions and politics, if not for the isomorphism of culture and space (p. 8). It is a space that is at the crossroads of multiple spaces. Drawing on Foucault's idea of heterotopia which 'juxtaposes in one real place several different (imaginary) spaces, "several sites that are in themselves incompatible" or foreign to one another (in Probyn, 1996, p. 11). Liminality is thus a child of actual and imagined reactions against modernist frames that incarcerate people in fixed spaces (Meerwald, 2001, p. 388).

What can be inferred is that for individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experiences of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality (Turner, 1969). Applied to the transitional experiences of Australian rural and regional communities, the notion of liminality provides a powerful framework for describing their location as they navigate the onslaught of social, political and economic forces of the local and global worlds. As van Gennep and Turner had already noticed, liminality can offer a sense of freedom, a possibility of creation, a special sense of community with the others in the limbo that has little to do with identity – rather a shared sense of alterity, as it were (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003). From this view, this research questions what it means to be members of rural and regional communities by deploying the liminal notion of being neither here nor there in a space of liminal limbo. The

liminal limbo is the interstitial space where fixed identification boundaries and binarism are blurred to negotiate subjectivities which are 'neither the One... nor the Other ... but something else besides' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 28). The liminal space opens up the possibility of being multiply positioned with a multicultural identity that is beyond notions of nation states, geographical boundaries and political powers (Meerwald, 2001).

*Concept of Civil Society – Macro Level Heuristic Guide*

At the macro-level the concept of civil society is consistent with Dokecki's (1996) appeal for more comprehensive examinations of the socio-political factors implicated in community mobilization and social change. For example, both Mass society and neo-Tocquevillian theorists argued that participation in civil society associations contributed to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government, both because of their "internal" effects on individual members and because of their "external" effects on the wider polity (Berman, 1997).

"Internally, associations cultivate habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public spiritedness. Externally, a dense network of secondary associations enhances the articulation and aggregation of interests and contributes to effective social collaboration" (Putnam, 1993a, p. 89-90).

Vibrant civil society, in short, creates the cultural and societal building blocks of successful democracy (Giddens, 1998; Gellner, 1994; Putnam, 1995).

The study of civil society however, is a study of power relations in society. For example, when all three arenas –economy, state and civil society are strong then various conceptions of social justice will compete with fairness and no sectors' beliefs of justice will prevail to the exclusion of others (Persell, 1997). If one or more spheres are weak, social justice may not be debated or even considered and relative advantage or sheer power will dominate the actions taken (Walzer, 1983, 1991). Berman (1997) highlighted that traditional analyses



fail to recognize that civil society can often serve to weaken rather than strengthen a democratic regime:

“Unable to differentiate between the positive and negative consequences of a vibrant associational life, theorists are unable to predict or represent situations in which civil society activity produces adverse patterns of individual behaviour and social interaction” (Berman, p. 42).

A critical question therefore is, under what circumstances does civil society activity produce “unsocial” instead of “social capital”. For Berman the answer depends heavily on the political context.

“If a country’s political institutions are capable of channelling and redressing grievances, then associationism will probably buttress political stability and democracy by placing its resources and beneficial effects in the service of the status quo” (1997, p. 5).

Huntington (1968) also found the answer in political institutions instead of civil society for harmonizing a wide variety of interests. Most important of all, the trust necessary to hold together modern societies also required strong political institutions capable of implementing long-term rather than short-term goals in the interest of the public rather than merely private interests (Huntington). From this perspective, it would be limiting indeed to narrow our focus to societal and cultural factors, without examining the crucial role played by political institutions in shaping the character and impact of civil society. The concept of civil society is a relevant vantage point from which to view macro-level factors implicated in sustaining a vibrant democracy. The intention in this study however, is to capture a more holistic examination of the processes of civil society sectors involved in achieving community goals from a social justice perspective. Hence by integrating a variety of analytical frameworks a more nuance understanding of the interplay of power dynamics involved in promoting harmony between social and self-interests can be gained.

*Newbrough's (1992) Model of Community – Macro-level Concept*

Newbrough's (1992) theoretical framework of community and political theory is an ideal macro-level model for examining linkages between the social, political and economic sectors delineated in the civil society concept. As there are a diversity of changed social arrangements occurring in societies around the world, Newbrough (1992) advocates key political principles important for promoting a just society. As the goal of this thesis is understandings of transformation occurring within rural and regional communities, his model is apt for an analysis of the variety of political communities emerging as a result of globalisation and sustainability imperatives. Table 1 below portrays the link between community and political theories for achieving a balanced and just society.

Table 1. Newbrough's (1992) Community and Political Theories

<b>Community Metapor</b>	<b>Political Principle</b>	<b>Political System</b>	<b>Social Ideas</b>
Organic	Fraternity	Centrally Controlled	Security Dependability Cooperation
Social Contract	Liberty	Democratic	Risk Taking Interdependence Competition
Human Social System	Equality	Polyarchic Mutualism	Development Interdependence Balance

In view of the diversity of societies, Newbrough (1992) suggests that our theories of community are outdated and therefore inadequate for capturing the phenomenon of changes occurring around the world. He highlighted that the modern world has given way to a post-modern world, and attributes this transformation to the "discontinuities, disorientation, demoralisation and

dependency experienced within the global community. Furthermore, the post-modern represents a particular kind of social system, where one must choose between interdependence and independence. To depict more realistic characterisations of communities emerging in a post-modern world, Newbrough's conception of communities is underpinned by three metaphors – *organic*, *social contract* and *human social system*. In parallel he also identified the three political principles of *liberty*, *equality* and *fraternity* as core concepts for achieving a balanced and human political system.

In detailing the processes of a socially just society Newbrough (1992) argued that the core problem of community is the relationship of the individual to the social grouping. This he called the paradox of the 'One and the Many' to which three contrasting solutions are associated with the three traditions of community. While Newbrough expanded on previously narrow notions of "togetherness" his model also embraces balance and integration of goals among competing interests of the individual and the collective.

In view of the congruence with the goals of this study it is adopted as an ideal macro-level analytical tool for understanding the role of civil society in promoting self-determination and social justice. The first tradition in Newbrough's model is *organic* or *gemeinschaft* community – underlying this society the political principle of *fraternity* has been associated with small villages or tribes of the pre-modern period. This community refers functionally to a group of people living together. There is typically a place or territory identified with the group, and a sense of belonging to the group that gives the members an identity (Bernard, 1973). In terms of the relationship of the individual to the group, the community is more important than the individuals, where loyalty and dependability is emphasized. Reflective of pre-modern times, Kirkpatrick (1986) calls this *organic theory* where individuals were seen as natural parts of the whole community. However, in an organic community, without some forms of check and balance it can become oppressive for individuals.

While Tonnies (1887) postulated the transformation of society from *gemeinschaft* to *gesselschaft*, the second tradition *gesselschaft* community is characterised as liberty-based, where emphasis is on independence, risk-taking and competitive enterprise, under a democratic style of government. The modern period is exemplified by the complex city with differentiated functions. Seen as a form of *social contract*, from this perspective, individuals are required to give up some freedoms to join together in community. In contrast the third community categorised as *human social system* is associated with the principle of *equality* that promotes social ideals of development, interdependence and balance. It suggests that resources should be provided to all members of society so that they have meaningful participation and an opportunity to improve their lives. The post-modern period is symbolised by the third tradition of *human social system* where the unit is the nation-state, and the solution of the paradox is to combine the *One* and the *Many*. According to the theory of human ecology (McKenzie, 1986) integration of the One and the Many is fostered by emphasising interdependence and balance as the goals for human and community development.

*Paradox of the "One and the Many" - Political Theory Link*

Newbrough's model links integration of the "One and the Many" to the political system of a society. Most importantly, that particular political principles can create a human political system that encourages political participation at the local level. *Fraternity* is an organic principle associated with centrally controlled governments and the consciousness within this kind of social organization is the desire to be free of domination, oppression and coercion. *Liberty* is usually towards liberty and freedom, based on human rights provided in some form of social contract (e.g. a constitution). *Equality* on the other hand is a principle to provide resources to all members of the society so that they may have meaningful participation and an opportunity to improve their lives. Newbrough (1992) argued that to develop communities that are caring and competent, and which promote individual human development, the three principles outlined above must be considered reciprocally. However, it is the

principle of *fraternity* that is seen as the binding concept of community development.

### *Dependence as Core Social Problem*

Newbrough (1992) outlined that the three different community and political orientations lead to different conceptions of social justice. For example, three different solutions are offered to the issue of dealing with dependent members of society by the three community theories. In an *organic community* where membership and loyalty is a priority, there is no social stigma associated with dependency. Those who lead are obligated to take care of the less fortunate, who in turn are obligated to be supportive. In a *social contract* community, emphasis is on the individual to be active and self-reliant. In such a competitive society, dependent members are treated as less worthy and marginal. In this community gaining cooperation on matters of community are difficult as the strong are self-centred and competitive while the weak are passive and lacking belief that their efforts will pay off. In the third community - a *human social system* emphasizes integration of all members into the society, seeing the dependent and the marginal as needing to become active participants, less dependent and more central. Rather than independence and separateness, the value is on interdependence and functional integration (Waterman, 1981).

Newbrough (1992) highlighted that the transition of society towards the post-modern phase has resulted in a number of social and political dislocations that are creating a significant dependent population. These dislocations include a lack of opportunity to work and participate in the community. As he emphasized, in the U.S. for example the general consciousness and values are still in second position, i.e. social-contract based. As a result, "...the individual is made responsible for the cause and solution to problems such as addiction and market dislocations while society withdraws its social responsibilities (Ryan, 1971, p.). In view of the insights about community change highlighted by Newbrough (1992) his model of community and political theories is ideal for examining the

responsiveness and congruence between the civil society sectors for achieving a balanced and humane social system.

*Social Capital - Meso-Level Analytical Framework*

As an analytical framework the concept of social capital is ideally suited for studying human interaction in common pursuit of social objectives. The social capital concept acts as the meso-level vantage point from which socio-cultural and political factors implicated in community development and change can be examined. The concept of social capital offers one way of integrating issues of community participation, change and empowerment within one overall framework linked to social justice outcomes.

It is clear that the more romanticized notion of social capital has been challenged on many positions. Researchers have identified the negative consequence of highly developed social ties and norms which act to constrain community development and wellbeing (Muntaner, Lynch & Smith, 2000; Portes & Landholt, 1996). Furthermore Coleman's rational choice perspective has also been criticised for ignoring structure and power relationships thereby risking its misuse in support of a conservative agenda of economic rationalist policies. Bourdieu's (1986) conflict-structural approach that examines how people's access to resources shapes their position in society however is more compatible with a social justice and empowerment position (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000).

For example, Bourdieu's book *The Logic of Practice* (1990) suggests that practices embody the dialectical relationship between *field* and *habitus*. (cited in Raedeke, Green, Hodge & Valdivia, 2003). While *field* refers to the dynamic nature of social structures, *habitus* is the internalization of the external by which basic dimensions of social life, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class and occupation come to guide our attitudes, values, perceptions and disposition in ways we are seldom aware (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988). It is this system in interaction with fields that gives rise to specific attitudes, feelings and dispositions (Raedeke et. al.). Conversely, social structures do not exist in isolation from social actors

but are created, maintained, and transformed through social relations made possible through a shared habitus (Bourdieu). Uninhibited by the theoretical tensions that underly the field, the research here aspires to capture a social justice perspective of social actors interacting in a variety of fields. This is facilitated by adopting a more holistic theoretical framework to capture linkages between micro instances to the meso and macro social order through a contextualist substantive theorising methodology.

*Opotow's 'Moral Community' – Micro-Level Concept of Scope of Justice*

In a community comprising a diversity of individuals and groups, it is important to understand who fall outside the 'scope of justice'. As part of the multi-level analytical framework adopted in this study, Opotow's (1990) moral community is an apt theoretical lens by which processes of inclusion and exclusion operating within community settings can be captured. As such, it is ideal for identifying the psychological boundary of fairness, it defines the limits of our justice concerns, acknowledging that only when justice is relevant do the norms for fair distributions and procedures come into play (Opotow, 1987). Moral inclusion and exclusionary effects is akin to Shils (1969) mass society concept, which locates relationships of the mass of the population to the centre of society through vertical and horizontal integration. While society is vertically integrated in a hierarchy of power, authority and status order, horizontal integration is by the unity of the elites in the various sectors or subsystems of society and through the moral consensus of the whole. Individuals who perceive themselves as outside these moral communities become very isolated and detached.

Sarason, Zitnaz & Grossman (1971) refer to this isolation as a feeling of 'mass society' and similar to Newbrough's (1992) Gessellschaft community which emphasizes individual performance and independence. On the other hand gemeinschaft community emphasizes a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment and social cohesion (Newbrough). Similar to the notion of *moral community* (Opotow, 1990) – it involves having a relatively coherent social network that creates and supports meaningful relationships by

fostering common attitudes, values and practices (Coakes, 1997). However, as Opatow (1987) verified individuals have different moral communities that may vary in their degree of inclusiveness. For example, those who are incorporated within the scope of justice, moral rules and values govern our conduct and we care about their rights and fair treatment (Deutsch, 1985; Opatow, 1987, 1990a; Staub, 1990). But for those who are considered to be outside the scope of justice, concerns about rights and fairness can seem irrelevant. Instead, we view those outside as nonentities, undeserving, or expendable, and under extreme circumstances, celebrate harm that befalls them as a moral victory (Opatow, 1990a).

Elaboring further, Opatow's (1996) empirical research identified three attitudes consistent with including others in the scope of justice: (a) believing that considerations of fairness apply to them, (b) willingness to allocate a share of community resources to them, and (c) willingness to make sacrifices to foster their well-being. The scope of justice expands when (a) target groups are perceived as beneficial; (b) conflict severity is low; and (c) under conditions of low conflict, when target groups are perceived as similar to oneself. The scope of justice shrinks when (a) target groups are perceived as harmful; (b) conflict severity is high; and (c) under conditions of high conflict, when target groups are perceived as similar to oneself. Thus, similarity fosters inclusion during low conflict, but in high conflict, it fosters exclusion. However, as conflict increases, those who are perceived as similar are more threatening competitors for scarce resources (Opatow, 1990b.).

It may be simpler to think about inclusion and exclusion in absolute terms- that is either "inside" or "outside" the scope of justice. However, research indicates that the scope of justice is a continuous construct - inclusion can be partial as well as absolute (Opatow, 1990a). For example, proponents of affirmative action may view societal parity as *elusive* when they note that only 5% of upper management are women and people of color (Diversity, 1995). On the other hand opponents of affirmative action may view 5% as societal parity achieved. This is consistent with Stern and Dietz's (1994) findings that values filter



information selectively, those who exclude target groups from their scope of justice identify information consistent with their values and beliefs and consequently view partial parity as "justice achieved" rather than as "injustice".

*Personal & Societal Scope of Justice:*

The scope of justice also has both personal and societal dimensions (Opatow, 1990a). Individuals have their own beliefs about the kinds of social categories that belong in their scope of justice and they also have their beliefs about the prevailing social order. A "personal" scope of justice, based on justice beliefs and values, might be congruent or incongruent with a perceived "societal" scope of justice. For example, incongruence between our personal scope of justice (what "should be") and the societal scope of justice (what "is") predicts support for or opposition to affirmative action. Opatow's research on affirmative action found that supporters not only include target groups in their personal scope of justice and perceive these groups as not yet having achieved societal parity, but they also believe affirmative action programs are fair and have the potential to bring about a more equitable society (cf. Crosby, Allen, & Opatow, 1992; Crosby & Cordova, 1993). Opponents on the other hand, oppose affirmative action because of personal exclusionary beliefs, perceptions that societal parity is already achieved, as well as because of procedural objections. Consistent with work on aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1993), opponents may confuse politically incorrect views with more socially acceptable arguments (Opatow, 1996).

Current societal conditions indicate that our economy is shrinking (Bradsher, 1995; Newman, 1998), and that society is increasingly bifurcated into the rich and poor (Meagher, 2000; Schwartz, 1995; Fincher & Saunders, 2000). Insecurity and scarcity increase the sense of threat, competition, and conflict (Argent & Rolley, 2000; Gunn, 1996; Thurow, 1995), conditions are thus consistent with a shrinking scope of justice, particularly for those perceived as harmful or similar (Huggins, 2005; Opatow, 1990a; 1990b; 1993; 1996; 1997). In light of the psychological, social and economic adversities being faced by rural and

regional communities (Fraser, et al., 2005) investigating the moral dimensions of community relationships will offer great insights for improving social inclusion and social injustice. By applying multi-level analyses to this study, the broad contextual forces including personal dimensions underlying the scope of justice perception are possible. This broader framework reveals the psychological and the socio-political beliefs, values and processes driving the moral and procedural fairness for diverse groups in rural communities.

*Activity Settings as the Unit of Analysis – O’Donnel & Tharp (1999)*

To facilitate analysis of a community setting, the methodological innovations evolving in community psychology advocated by O’Donnel & Tharp, (1999) sets the broad parameters for researching the behaviour setting of rural regional communities. While the field of community psychology is heavily influenced by the zeitgeist of intellectual movements such as postmodernism, social constructionism, semiotics, hermeneutics, and dialogism, its primary concern in theoretical development has been the issue of *meaning*, and its restoration to central position (Featherstone, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Manning, 1987; Packer, 1985). Also of crucial importance is *voice*, the understandings, and the interpretations of the world according to the *other* - the other that is not like ourselves, whether by culture, ethnicity, gender, personality, life history, religion, nationality or community (O’Donnel, et al., 1993, p. ). Adopting meaning as a central condition of psychology and community, O’Donnel & Tharp proposed it as the unifying concept in their transactional theoretical model.

*Influence of Behavior Settings*

The activity setting as an analytical framework has an empirically rich heritage and similar units of analysis, notably the micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the micro-setting, (O’Donnel, 1980) the behaviour setting (Barker, 1960, 1968) and substantive theorising (1989) have expanded the potential and relevance for community psychology (Schoggen, 1989). Instrumental to the field Barker’s (1968) ecological psychology demonstrated how certain behaviour

settings exert influence over the behaviours of people occupying them. However, as O'Donnel & Tharp (1999) emphasized the behaviour setting itself refers to the behaviour of groups rather than particular individuals. Furthermore, the behaviour setting is seen as a naturally occurring entity, having physical, behavioural and temporal properties, which reveal a complex network of relationships between individual psychological processes and setting components. Another important criteria why "activity settings" offer more comprehensive understandings of phenomenon is it incorporates both objective reality with subjective experience. "Activity setting" is therefore adopted as the basic unit of analysis for undertaking this community study because it unifies subjective experience, behaviour and external features into a common phenomenon. Its unifying feature is encapsulated by O'Donnel, et al, (1993) as:

"...the basis of the social process common to the participants... as this social process develops individual and group cognition, and structures of meaning. Therefore, the activity setting is the unit by which community and culture is propagated" (p. 512).

### *Objective and Subjective Characteristics*

*Activity settings* is a transactional model in which activity exists contextually (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Pepper, 1942) and in which the context is integral to the nature and duration of the activity and provides purposes, resources, and constraints. In guiding empirical research Gallimore, Goldenberg and Weisner (1993) suggest at least five 'activity setting' variables in the operationalization of the concept. They are: (a) *personnel or members* present during an activity; (b) salient cultural *values and beliefs*; (c) the *operations* and *task demands* of the activity itself; (d) the *scripts* for conduct that govern the participants' actions; (e) the *purposes* or *motives* of the participants. The objective features of people, task and place are united with the subjective features of values, motivations, and purposes. These characteristics are interdependent (Kelly, 1987), it is therefore not possible to assess either the individual or the "situation" independently without distorting the phenomenon.

According to O'Donnel & Tharp's (1999) model six additional dimensions are delineated in conducting activity setting analysis. An important variable *human interaction* at the heart of relationships is the foundational process by which cognitions are developed, skills acquired, relationships formed, goals set, and activities carried out. Often the purpose of interaction has a *common goal* - people are engaged in joint productive activity that facilitates learning, relationships, and individual, family, and community development. Another important component *reciprocal participation* is considered the most important form of joint productive activity, where each person both assists and is assisted during the activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; O'Donnel & Tharp, 1990), "to learn how individual and group competencies emerge and develop" (Kelly, 1987, p. 63) through interactive process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The fourth element *interdependence* involves the reciprocity of both teaching and learning that contributes to the interdependence of participants. It serves as a source of motivation and increases the productivity of the group. Over time, this process can lead to the most important outcome of participation - *intersubjectivity* (O'Donnel & Tharp, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981).

*Intersubjectivity* is more likely to develop in settings where the physical environment facilitates positive interaction, and promotes the value and commitment of group members, and the relative skills of people are engaged in reciprocal participation. While greater disparity of values, beliefs, scripts and motives lead to lower levels of *intersubjectivity*, higher levels have greater effects on the cognitions, behaviours, and social networks of the participants. *Symbols* are also particularly conducive to the development of *intersubjectivity*. During joint productive activity, symbols (principally language) - word meanings and discourse routines develop during their cooperative work. Sometimes this may take the form of negotiation to reach agreement (Wicker, 1987). The attachment of these symbols to shared events creates meaning and values for binding the group together.

The core function of *intersubjectivity* is expressed when common meaning develops within the individual and among group members. As O'Donnel &

Tharp (1990) emphasized *intersubjectivity* is a key concept for analysis of activity settings where the individual and the group are unified and understood. However, as the authors stressed, *intersubjectivity* does not imply uniformity, as diversity may be a shared value and agreement about process may allow frequent conflict. Additionally, activity settings are dynamic - their characteristics are in flux, and therefore, the *intersubjectivity* of their participants change over time. It is the shared meaning among otherwise heterogeneous characteristics that facilitates the activity of the setting (O'Donnel & Tharp).

### *The Analytic Process*

The analytic process begins by delineating the activity settings, the resources and the means by which it is enhanced. As Figure 1 below illustrates, the context of the *target activity setting* may be thought of as consisting of other activity settings. These other settings link the target activity setting to its macro-setting and are of four types: authority, parallel, constituent, and external resources. *Authority* activity settings sanction the existence of activity settings. They may also by implementation of laws, rules, regulations, directives, or the authorization of the use of specific resources. *Parallel* activity settings are those with activities or purposes similar to those of the target setting. *Constituent* activity settings are those in which interaction takes place among those people who benefit from the target (and its parallel) activity settings. Finally, *external resource* activity settings are all of those settings that have resources that could be obtained for the use of the target activity setting (O'Donnel & Tharp, 1990, p. 259).

As illustrated, these contextual settings are separated from the target setting by a "policy perimeter" to indicate that the contextual settings may influence the policy of the target setting by facilitating or limiting its possibilities. It is this interaction that results in behavioural and cognitive development, sustains human relationships, fulfils setting goals and creates the shared meaning of *intersubjectivity*. The theory presented are based on basic Vygotskian propositions which emphasize that dialogue is the process and the product of

constructing mind and constructing society, of perpetuating culture (O'Donnel & Tharp, 1993).

*Methodological Issues & Strategies - Theoretical and Inductive Approaches*

The lack of theory and research related to the inter-relationship between the multi-disciplinary concepts led to the conclusion that a multifaceted approach to the research questions and data sources could yield the most useful results as well as provide provocative directions for future study of this potentially important area. Therefore, both a theoretical and inductive approach to the design appeared warranted and methodological attention was given to three distinct phases of data collection. Support for taking a theoretical perspective came from several sources. The usefulness of the approaches espoused by O'Donnel & Tharp's (1999) activity setting variables; Falk & Kilpatrick's (2000) triangulation method for examining the macro-meso-micro construct of civil society and social capital; Sarason (1974) and McMillan & Chavis's (1986) approach to understanding psychological sense of community; Newbrough's (1992) taxonomy of community and political theories and finally Opatow's (1987) moral community for studying inclusiveness and exclusiveness in social practice. At one level the multi-disciplinary theoretical framework adopted in this study steers the ecological level comprehension of social change occurring in communities. Also incorporated into the methodological approach is Glaser & Strauss' (1967) inductive grounded theory approach.

In clarifying the process of combining theoretical and inductive approaches, Glaser (1992) distinguished between 'emergent' research and 'hypothesis-testing' research. The latter accepts the existing body of knowledge as the foundation for the current research findings to be consistent with that knowledge. With emergent research, researchers try to put aside their presumptions to engage with the research situation as it is. Both forms involve testing hypotheses, 'data driven' research involves hypotheses that are grounded in the data or derived from the data through interpretation from

participants, and the 'theory driven' research involves hypotheses that are taken or derived from existing theory (Glaser, 1998). Thus by combining data-driven and theory driven research methodologies to community issues more holistic insights for the formation of better theory and social action is promising (Roberts & Dick, 2003). Glaser (1998) however, emphasized that existing theory be incorporated into the analysis after a theory has emerged from the data.

Underpinning this research are assumptions that: there exist multiple socially constructed realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; 1994); there are many truths and many ways of knowing them, and reality may be more fully revealed in the way in which these different ways of knowing or perspectives overlap (Heron & Reason, 1997; Reason & Heron, 1986). In the choice for a methodology the researcher was also guided by the following goals, (a) exploration of possibilities for those most disadvantaged; (b) allow a variety of perspectives to be expressed and true interests of the participants to emerge; (c) allow a common vision to develop and (d) generate processes for action towards desired change. As a conceptual framework, the participatory systemic action research has come out of the 'marriage' of participatory research (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) and action research (Grundy, 1982; Kemmis, 2001; Rapoport, 1990) in its ideological perspectives. With the influence of participatory research, there is recognition of conflicting interests of societal groups and the plight of the disadvantaged as a critical problem (Dick, 2002; Roberts & Dick, 2003). While participatory researchers conceive the world in terms of conflict theories of society (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Reason & Bradbury, 2001): the recurring themes of participatory research are equity, emancipation and structural reform of society (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Fals-Borda, 1992; Freire, 1972). The complementary roles of action and research are highly recognised for capturing contextual understandings that allow more effective action and in taking action a better understanding of the research situation emerges (Dick, 2002; Roberts & Dick, 2003).

Stringer (2007) advocated that community-based action research "engages 'subjects' as equal and full participants in the research process" to

discover answers to their real-life problems and improve the quality of their lives (p. 10). Emancipation is also realized when researchers surrender control to their participants (Lincoln and Guba, 2000) as the participatory process transforms power relationships and enables change to occur (Goff, Gregg & Maya, 2001). While trust and mutual respect are central to the research process, (Rappaport, 1994) it is equally vital for researchers to abandon the expert role and acknowledge the resources and local expertise of the community (Heron, 1996; Reason & Rowan, (1981). Most importantly, while values, knowledge, skills and behaviours of the community will differ from the researchers' it is not inferior (Bishop & Syme, 1992; Friere, 1972; Rappaport, 1977, 1994; Serrano-Garcia, 1984). In seeking to promote social justice at the local level, the researchers roles as participant conceptualiser and active mediator (Throgmorton, 1991) converge with the notions of reflective-generative practice (e.g. Bishop, et al, 2002). In view of the complementary goals of understandings and social action, a primarily qualitative study is deemed the most appropriate design for developing socially responsive knowledge (Moghaddam, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989; Schon, 1983). Following is a description of the three-stage research process involved in capturing this community study.

#### *Pre-Study Phase One - Naturalistic Inquiry*

As Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1989, 1994) have pointed out naturalistic inquiry is always carried out, logically enough, in a natural setting, since context is so heavily implicated in meaning. The human instrument builds upon his or her tacit knowledge as much as if not more than upon propositional knowledge, and uses methods that are appropriate to humanly implemented inquiry: interviews, observations, document analysis, unobtrusive clues, and the like" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187). The three-phase methodological design used in this qualitative study is based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model where inquiry cycles (and recycles) through four methodological stages involving sampling, inductive analyses, theory development, and development of next steps based on what thus far has been learned. In engaging this methodology careful attention is given to sense and meaning of the participants' experience, the



inquiry cycles are designed to elicit data about their experiences and relate this to the multi-disciplinary framework (Guba & Lincoln, 2000) has been adopted in this study to understand social change and adaptation in rural and regional communities.

While three distinct phases of inquiry have been delineated to undertake this qualitative study, the first pre-study phase involves three stages and can best be described through use of Moustakas (1990a, 1990b) and Douglas and Moustakas' (1985) notion of heuristic research. The second stage of this pre-study phase was also guided by the methodological thinking of Gummesson (1991) on pre-understandings in research. Finally, the third stage of this pre-study phase involved more traditional qualitative methods that rely on unstructured interview techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This pre-study methodological strategy actualises Wicker's (1969) substantive theorising approach, Brinberg & McGrath's (1985) pre-study stage and Bishop et al.'s, (2001) iterative-generative reflective practice. The focus at this pre-study stage is levelled at capturing rich description of some potentially influential ideologies, socio-historical, political and cultural factors. By gaining clarification of the substantive domain the researcher can decide where to continue the focus of the next phase of the research process (Wicker, 19; Brinberg & McGrath, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 1994; 2000).

### *Heuristic Inquiry – Three Stage Research Process*

Moustakas (1990) and others (Frick, 1990; O'Hara, 1986; Patton, 1990) have encouraged psychologists to develop heuristic research methods that may hold potential for revealing certain forms of truth about the phenomena we are studying. Heuristic inquiry involves three stages; immersion in the substantive domain, acquisition of data through making inferences from tacit knowledge and realization in which a new appraisal of 'reality' emerges (Bishop, et al, 2002). In describing heuristic research Plas & Lewis (1996) clarified that in contrast to many phenomenological approaches, heuristic investigation preserves the

primacy of the researcher-as-person over researcher-as-scientist (Plas & Lewis, 1996). Seeking to reintroduce valid self-experience into the methodology of psychological inquiry, Douglass and Moustakas' (1985) hope to:

"... awaken and inspire researchers to make contact with and respect their own questions and problems, to suggest a process that affirms imagination, intuition, self-reflection, and the tacit dimension as valid ways in the search for knowledge and understanding" (p. 40, cited in Plas & Lewis).

### *Participant Conceptualizing & Incremental Processes*

While the process of immersion as suggested by Moustakas (1990) will not be as complete, the approach involves 'participant conceptualizing (Reiff, 1968) in which the researcher immerses him or herself in the substantive domain, yet attempts to retain some aspect of the detached observer. The approach also involves Bishop et al.'s, (2002) incremental process, whereby small emergent realisations evolve through a series of heuristic inquiries and in which conceptual and substantive domains are seen as separate. This substantive theorising (Wicker, 1989) pre-study phase will also involve making connections between data emerging from the domain and the multi-disciplinary concepts to make sense of objective and subjective aspects of the research context (Glaser, 1992, 1998; Roberts & Dick, 2003).

### *Stage One of Phase 1 - Researchers Impressions*

The first step in this pre-study research process involved identification, analysis, and understandings related to the researchers' own first experiences in the community. This involved conceptualising the issues pertaining to impacts of globalization and the process by which communities plan and deal with issues of local concern. This phase also involved identifying key stakeholders, community initiatives and both the organic and institutional opportunities for participation in groups and activities inside and outside the community. This first stage involved

getting the feel for local community politics and dynamics integral to gain the trust and confidence of the community.

*Stage Two of Phase 1 - Informal Interviews*

Stage two of the research process reflects an aspect of Gummesson's (1991) qualitative model, where pre-understandings provided a bridge between the heuristic stage of inquiry and the final stage of participant interviews. In Gummesson's model, pre-understandings derived from initial and heuristic perceptions can be methodologically formalized. In other words, the researcher is aware of what is eventually to be studied in a formal and structured way, but moves through the community without giving any explicit attention to theoretical concepts. With knowledge of theory in mind but not giving full attention, the researcher "walks through" community with no preconceived notions of how the concepts of interest might best be studied (cited in Plas & Lewis, 1996, p. 110). In this way, naturally occurring factors are permitted to influence the design of the study (Gummesson).

*Archival Analysis - Historical Narrative*

This phase was also complemented by a content analysis of the town's documents, newspapers and other related literature held by local libraries to identify community issues, the perspectives, the stakeholders and local and regional community understandings of globalization, its impacts and community and government responses. The community's historical narrative is an extremely important contribution to the overall analysis of transitional change (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991).

*Stage Three of Phase 1 - The formalized interview*

In stage three of the pre-understandings phase the format is based partly on community narrative techniques (Rappaport, 1998) for capturing a multi-level analysis of community issues by linking individual experience to social process. This enabled emergent realizations from the domain being linked to the multi-

level theoretical notions, evolving in a synthesis of all three stages of pre-understandings in phase one the research process.

*Phase II – Data Triangulation*

Three sources of data from the three stages of inquiry were primary collected by the researcher and three research assistants who were completing their undergraduate degree in psychology. This comprised (a) observational evidence; (b) historical information of the towns from archival analysis, and (c) interview data from community informants. Although some overlap occurs, in general each source is associated most strongly with a particular phase of the inquiry. In keeping with the three-stage research process outlined by Brinberg and McGrath, (1985) the next step of this study phase two represents doing the study stage. Based on the triangulated data sources of the pre-study stages, judgements about which specific sets of variables of the multi-disciplinary theories that best conformed to the data that emerged in the substantive context were tested. Thus, the data derived from the pre-study stage were embedded into the second phase of data collection to facilitate specific connections to be made between the micro-meso and macro theoretical concepts.

This next step thus, represents Brinberg & McGrath's (1985) "doing the study" stage, when specific dimensions of the multiple theoretical concepts are applied to make sense of the community's capacity to adapt to decreasing levels of government resources and increasing demands for local infrastructure and services. For example, Opatow's (1987, 1990) scope of justice enhanced the analysis of social inclusion and exclusion when there is greater competition among community groups accessing scarce resources. Newbrough's (1992) community and political theory also facilitated analysis of social justice by providing a framework from which to view role relationships towards dependent members of the community.

*Selection of Participants – Phase One & Two*

Data collection process consisted of both purposeful (Patton, 1990; Williams & Lewis, 2005) and theoretical sampling techniques (Punch, 1998). Initially in phase one a purposeful sample of twenty (30) participants consisting of key stakeholders in the community who play a leading role in activating community initiatives were selected. To avoid potential bias care was taken to ensure that a widespread of views was canvassed. In addition to key respondent interviews the process utilized focus groups because of the nature of some of the stakeholder groupings whose views needed to be gained. These informants represented the diversity of sectors comprising Local Government Councillors; business representatives; community leaders involved in environmental, health and social welfare issues; key personnel in government and non-government agencies; representatives of the farming community, as well as families and individuals involved in playing a key role in community issues. These participants were identified from the Local Council's Telephone Directory that lists individuals, families and community groups and organizations.

*Phase Two*

In phase two informants were selected according to the principle of *theoretical sampling* where subsequent data collection is directed by theoretical developments that emerge from the analysis (Punch, 1998). The second group of fifty (50) informants representing the diversity of community sectors were then selected on the basis of their knowledge about the phenomenon and *willingness* and *ability* to provide information on their experiences of community development and action (Morse, 1989). Data collection ceased when saturation point was reached and no further issues were forthcoming (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In total 80 participants were interviewed for phase one and two of the qualitative study.

*Demographics Details:*

The total number of participants interviewed for both phases of the qualitative study comprised of 80 informants. The participants were approximately 52% female and 48% male. The age ranged from 18 years to over 70 years, while more than 80% of informants were over 30 years of age. The participants represented issues that spanned the spectrum of community concerns from individual, micro, meso to macro levels of inquiry.

*Procedures involving Participants - Data Collection*

Participants took part in a semi-structured open-ended in-depth interview process either conducted on the telephone, face-to-face or focus group sessions that were arranged with key informants in the community. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Duration of Interviews and focus group sessions ranged from one hour to three hours depending on the depth of information elicited. The interviews and focus groups were conducted in a mutually agreed setting either at a place of business, community centre or home setting and at a time convenient to the participants. The participants were also advised of the ethical protocols adopted in this study prior to the interview. Participants were also advised that they may be contacted a number of times for clarification of issues and verification of thematic analysis. In keeping with grounded theory study, the researcher ensured development of trust and common ground with participants to enable a deeper reflection by participants (Hall & Callery, 2001).

*Materials – Interview Questions*

Following Silverman's advice (2001) question were as open-ended as possible to ensure 'authenticity' (p.13). In both phases the lead questions were framed as openly as possible, for example: (1) Can you tell me about the issues facing your community; (2) How effective are government strategies in dealing with XXX issues? The questions posed in stage one and two were based on the study's focus of community adaptation in the face of profound social changes

occurring within rural and regional communities. The probes guiding data collection in both phases reflected general and specific understandings of community issues and responses based on insights and theoretical links emerging from domain relevant data. The list of questions posed in the interviews and focus groups is attached in Appendix 1.

### *Data Analysis - Category Generation*

The purpose of grounded theory methodology is to generate theory through the process of constant comparison. Glaser (1978, 1992) described the process of emergence as generating codes and categories directly from the data; codes and categories are therefore not selected prior to data analysis and they are often labelled from words found in the data themselves. Data is therefore not viewed through a predetermined framework, but rather, data interpretation and category development are driven by conceptual concerns in the data (Glaser, 1978). As each interview or focus group was transcribed it was analysed through the process of coding. This involved writing theoretical memos to further conceptualise properties of the theoretical ideas and constructs. As similarities and differences in the codes were conceptualised, a coding scheme reflecting theoretical constructs were refined further by clustering codes together to generate categories. Conceptual saturation was reached when no new categories could be generated from the open codes, and the remaining gaps in the emergent conceptual scheme were filled (Glaser, 1978, 1992).

The next phase involved axial coding where relationships among the core set of categories are linked to produce higher-level categories (Miller & Fredericks, 1999). The researcher and two independent researchers returned to the transcripts and the master concept list to look for relationships among concepts. Those concepts that showed high inter-relatedness were grouped into categories. The list of categories was reviewed to eliminate duplications, ensure clarity, and assure that each concept fit in at least one category. The integration and interrelationships of the categories, especially the core categories, forms the basis of the grounded theory process (Strauss & Corbin,

1990). Once the theory is developed, it is compared to previous work as well as other literature and perspectives to validate or point out differences or gaps in current understandings of the phenomena (Davis, et al., 2002). The researcher and two independent researchers were involved in assessing and comparing emergent core concepts to multi-level theoretical concepts identified in this study and other similar phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This phase of the methodological process culminated with a thematic descriptive analysis based on the transcribed interviews, researchers' impressions and an archival analysis forming a triangulation of data sources.

*Phase III - Boundary Search - Quantitative Survey.*

Stage three represents Brinberg & McGrath's (1985) 'boundary search' where the limits and constraints of data are examined. The value of the pre-study stage is that it allows issues of ecological validity to be resolved by embedding the exploratory analysis to subsequent stages. The merit of Brinberg & McGrath's model is that stage three reflects a 'generalisability' or 'credibility' paradigm for research" (19). In this phase a survey instrument was constructed by embedding the triangulated data sources of phase one and two. This process ensured the widest possible representation and also validates interview findings that produced an exhaustive list of issues of concern to the community. This quantitative mail-out survey encouraged a greater number of resident contribution and representation.

*Selection of Participants*

The stakeholders identified by the qualitative study including individuals and families listed in the local community Directory were contacted by mail. Participants were randomly chosen where every fifth person under each alphabet listing of the community directory was sent a survey. This randomly sampled mail-out ensured that a wider range of community residents particularly those who did not participate in the stakeholder interviews would have the chance to voice their perspective on dealing with community issues. Several advertisements were also placed in the Local Community Newspaper urging



residents to participate in this community visioning study. Questionnaires were also left in key community agencies to promote greater access to the widest possible participation. A total of five hundred (500) questionnaires were distributed and 348 replies were received.

### *Construction of Quantitative Survey*

A short survey consisting of 12 questions was constructed from the insights and knowledge gained from the triangulated data sources revealed in stages one and two. This brief questionnaire was based on validating some key issues identified in the previous phases. Its brevity was also a key factor in promoting greater levels of participation in a community where research is prolific. The survey consisted of four (4) questions related to demographic details and eight (8) questions involved short written answers to gather data on issues of priority, the costs and benefits of living in Denmark and their visions for the community (see Appendix 1).

### *Data Analysis – Descriptive Statistics*

This questionnaire was designed to identify community consensus on issues of main concern and their vision for the future. As it was not designed to discover mean differences between groups the most appropriate statistical analyses is descriptive. The statistical data was entered on an Excel spreadsheet and statistical computations were calculated to provide a number of graphical statistics. As the survey involved written answers the data was coded according to grounded theory processes adopted in the previous phase. With the aid of two independent researchers this data was coded using triangulated consensus and then entered on the Excel spreadsheet for theoretical analysis and statistical computations.

### *Issues of Validity*

Throughout the study, several strategies were used to ensure rigour in the data analysis process. According to Patton (1990) researchers are considered

reliable when they have been trained to be objective observers and to analyze data systematically. The researcher and independent researchers participating in the data collection and analysis process have extensive qualitative research experience and through triangulation procedures and open articulation of potential personal biases have ensured credibility. Peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was also used as a measure to recognize and eliminate “group think” in the process of data analysis. In qualitative inquiry constructs that emerge from the analysis of multiple judges is considered free from personal researcher bias (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). This study used a collaborative investigative format involving independent researchers and informant verification that ensures that the constructs that emerged are dependable and trustworthy.

As defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness of this study is considered high because the categories created emerged directly from the interview data. Validity is also enhanced when emergent theory is compared to extant literature to examine similarities and differences, this point clearly articulated by Eisenhardt, (1989) “Overall, tying the emergent theory to existing literature enhances the internal validity, generalizability, and theoretical level of theory building from case study research...” (p. 545). The quality of the data is also influenced by the nature of the relationship between researcher and participants (Hamersley, 1987; Popay, Rogers & Williams, 1998). Kvale (1995) describes craftsmanship validity, which includes attention to the quality of interviewing. He argues that truth develops in a communicative process, with both researchers and subjects learning and changing through dialogue. Detailed description is a quality indicator because thin description is likely to be based on data that are a product of superficial interactions (Popay, Roger & Williams, 1998). The rigor of grounded theory work is partly judged on the explanatory value of conceptual density and scope, which relies on detailed description (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

The criteria for rigor developed by Glaser (1978, 1992) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), suggest that data are treated as reproductions of reality,

they do not acknowledge the social construction of data (Hall & Callery, 2001). In contrast, Charmaz's (1990) grounded theory study placed greater emphasis on interaction between the researcher, the research question and the data rather than achieving the feminist perspective stipulated. In essence, emphasis was placed on researchers' and participants' co-creation of social processes. In advancing grounded theory towards more reflexive and constructivist approaches (Annels, 1996; Charmaz, 1990; Wuest, 1995) Hall and Callery (2001) also argued that combining theoretical sensitivity with reflexivity and relationality creates a more rigorous form of grounded theory. Attention to making transparent the effects of interactions among investigators and participants during data collection and analysis therefore attends to the social construction of knowledge, which has been neglected in grounded theory (Hall & Callery). In this study attention was focussed on theoretical sensitivity, reflexivity and relationality that was enhanced by involving participants in the process of constant feedback until consensus was achieved about the multiple realities operating within the community (Hall & Callery).

#### *Ecological & Psychopolitical Validity*

Most pertinent to the field of community psychology is that action research is enhanced to achieve ecological and psycho-political validity (Christens & Perkins, in press). As this study is guided by the principles of community psychology it strives to echo aspects of the ideals of ecological and transformation validity. According to Heflinger and Christens (2006) ecological validity can be realized by attending fully to the many contexts of phenomena, including multiple levels of analysis, various domains (i.e. socio-cultural, physical, economic and political; Christens & Perkins). To this end, this study adopts an ecological-level analytical framework.

More specifically, the concept of 'psychopolitical validity' was proposed by Prilleltensky (2003b;) to strengthen community research and action by focussing on the psychological and the political influences that interact to promote well-being, perpetuate oppression, or generate resistance and liberation. As Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) outlined, there are two aspects to

psychopolitical validity (a) epistemic and (b) transformational. While the former refers to using psychology and politics in understanding social phenomena, the latter calls on both sets of factors to make lasting social changes. To enable research and practice of social change as a goal towards transformational change (Prilleltensky, in press) the outcomes are delineated as first order and second order change (Watzkawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974).

According to Perkins, et al. (2007) first order change impacts aspects of a system (e.g. change in personnel or programs) that may lead to incremental, ameliorative or evolutionary change. However the underlying structure, cultural values, and purpose of the system remains intact. At the other end of the spectrum second-order change refers to a paradigm shift; it is transformative, or evolutionary, it produces change in the system itself. Also pertinent, Perkins, et. al. argued that these stages of change apply to all levels of analysis including individual, organizational and community and which work interdependently for more effective change. For example, "significant community-level change may depend on the learning, empowerment, and transformation of the organizations that serve the community" (p. 304). With regard to promoting social change within the community this study was designed to ensure maximum participation of community participants in all stages of the research process including feedback on interpretation of the data and recommendations for the future visions of the community.

### *Selection of Denmark Community*

The coastal community of Denmark located 457 km from the city of Perth Western Australia was selected as the domain to study transition and adaptation to the forces of globalization. This community was selected as ideal for several reasons. Firstly this community had previous involvement with social action research with the researcher's supervisor and trust had been established. Secondly, this community is highly innovative in promoting multi-level change and is recognised as world leaders in protecting the environment and developing related technologies. The community is also highly acclaimed for it

contribution to the Arts, its promotion of alternative eco-friendly lifestyles and celebration of diversity. Denmark has also attracted a higher percentage of tertiary educated residents who are committed to environmental values and this in turn has greatly influenced the political dynamics within the community with a heritage for a farming lifestyle. The community on the whole is highly involved in local and state government politics and grassroots action is part of the community culture. Sustainability and public participation is also embraced by the local government as part of its planning and decision making processes. This community was chosen for a qualitative case study as it represents an ideal community model of democratic participation from which valuable insights and knowledge can be gained about how communities deal with adversities and promote holistic growth and development.

## **CHAPTER FOUR – Analysis of Community Narratives**

Chapter four provides a detailed description of the ecological-level themes emanating from the community narratives to capture community issues and transition. Subsequently, the discussion entails an analysis of the themes emerging from the substantive domain of Denmark and which have been grounded with the multi-disciplinary concepts (described in chapter 2 and 3) to capture rich inter-woven phenomena that is both pertinent and relevant to the research domain. Hence, this chapter examines the major phenomenon under investigation that is understood related to globalization and the impact of this force for rural and regional communities facing the brunt of economic downturn. This chapter also captures the community's psychological and socio-political process of change in responding to the global imperatives of sustainability and neo-liberal policies driving local community initiatives. Most pertinent to the analysis is the consideration of inclusion and social justice including power involved in promoting the sustainability goals of the community within the new governance regime.

## **CHAPTER FOUR – Analysis of Community Data**

The utilitarian and productivist paradigm of development is like a telescope through which the West sees only itself, when it thinks it sees the Third World. It cannot do otherwise because it is an instrument made to measure itself and no one else (Zaoual, 1998, p. 38).

### *Introduction – Methodological Process*

While this study adopted a grounded theoretical approach for identifying the issues specific to the socio-political context underlying the community of Denmark, the methodological process was also influenced by a number of multi-disciplinary theoretical models (outlined in chapter two and three). Subsequently, the themes have emerged from the amalgamation of grounded theory and the multi-disciplinary concepts acting as a general framework to capture rich inter-woven phenomena that is both pertinent and relevant to the research domain. To gain a greater understanding of the social context, the focus of this study was guided by a number of questions that remain unanswered in the literature. The major phenomenon under investigation is understandings related to *globalization* and the impact of this force for rural and regional communities facing the brunt of economic downturn. In understanding community adaptation this study also captured the community's psychological and socio-political process of change in responding to the global imperatives of sustainability and neo-liberal policies driving community action in addressing the diversity of community needs. Most pertinent to the analysis is considerations of inclusion and social justice including power involved in promoting the sustainability goals of the community.

### *Setting the Scene - Community of Denmark*

The Shire of Denmark is located on the south coast of Western Australia, approximately 400 kilometres from the state capital of Perth. Denmark is also a half hour drive to Albany a regional centre. While this major tourist attraction

provides employment to some residents of Denmark, the flow of visitors destined toward the regional town of Albany have also been drawn to Denmark. While the Shire's population was static at 1,780 between 1971 and 1976, it has risen from 2757 in 1986 to 5229 in 2004 (ABS, 2005). The demographic experience of Denmark is by no means atypical in the context of coastal Australia. In their analysis of tourism and rural change Selwood, Curry and Jones (1996) identified Denmark's more distinctive characteristics, firstly the late commencement and frequent failed attempts at developing primary industries between the 1890s and the 1930s and secondly the sheer diversity of more recent attempts at economic and social development.

Denmark experienced failed attempts at economic development in its earlier ventures with timber milling and group settlement schemes. However, Selwood et al. (1996) attributed its subsequent successes with agricultural diversification to its previous economic failures because it presented new residents with vital opportunities to experiment with innovative specializations and activities. The diversity of Denmark's recent developments include the immigration of retirees and people seeking an 'alternative' lifestyle (with varying degrees of formality and integration with 'mainstream' society), a wide range of specialist agricultural initiatives (e.g. wildflower production, herb farm, alpaca ranch, rabbit, deer and emu production, Woolhouse, 1995; 1996) including a growing number of artists, and crafts-persons' studios frequently have a symbiotic relationship with the other tourist ventures and activities (Selwood et al.).

As the authors highlighted, these changes concur with Butler's (1980) model of cycle of evolution where Denmark has passed through the exploration stage and is said to be in the early phases of his 'development' stage while still retaining some characteristics of the 'involvement' stage. As defined by Butler, involvement refers to the situation where local residents 'begin to provide facilities primarily or even exclusively for visitors' and adjustments are 'made in the social patterns of at least those local residents involved in tourism' (1980, p. 7, cited in Selwood, et al.). Denmark entered this stage early this century and is



now on the threshold of fully-fledged development stage where tourism may become the mainstay of the local economy, and characterised by 'larger, more elaborate and more up-to-date facilities provided by external organizations particularly for visitor accommodation'. (Butler, p. 8, cited in Selwood et al.).

There is however, uncertainty as to whether Denmark will fully make this transition to Butler's 'development' stage. As Selwood et. al. elaborated, the issue of continued development is heavily contested, particularly by the newer residents who are keen to maintain the district's distinctive natural charms. "The tendency of all migrants to relatively pristine areas to demand that the drawbridge be lifted immediate after they have crossed may be universal" ( p. 217). This concern is particularly pertinent in the South West of Western Australia, where Denmark residents are highly aware of the planning problems besetting many of the other shires in the region where tourist/retirement/hobby farm development has progressed to greater extents (Grieve & Tonts, 1996). These developments have sparked reservations in many segments of Denmark's population who fear any continuation of current demographic and land use trends (Shire Planner, 1995, cited in Selwood et. al.). In fact suspicions around development have been sensationalized in newspaper articles by Amalfi in 1994 under the headline "Cape Fear".

As in many other scenic coastal areas of Australia, Denmark is becoming an increasingly popular destination for people seeking a relaxed lifestyle free from extensive participation with the formal economy (Brunger & Selwood, 1997). In Denmark there appears to be two major components to this inflow of migrants. The first, not surprisingly, are retirees, including early retirees, while the second is composed of commune members, though this latter group exhibits very diverse socio-economic characteristics (Selwood, et. al., 1996). At one extreme are highly-organised groups of formerly middle-class urban dwellers who purchase property on which they construct either shared houses or groups of houses (Conochie, 1995; Shire Planner, 1995). While building materials used may be 'alternative' (mud brick, rammed earth, etc), the builders themselves are considerably more 'mainstream' with many remaining in full-time or part-time

professional employment. In contrast at the other extreme are new comers who inhabit informal settlements, more remote from towns and major roads. Some of them, the 'feral folk' as they are known locally, locate in remote and thickly forested parts of the Shire (Shire Planner, 1995). Arguably, this latter group has achieved a much higher degree of disengagement with the formal economy (Selwood, et al.).

Within this very small population, many constituencies exist ranging from development-oriented timber and tourism interests to deep green environmentalists. However, as Selwood, et. al. (1996) verified there is one growing and increasingly powerful group composed of middle class former city dwellers of various ages. More importantly this group who are advantaged by education, income and political capacity related to knowledge of the system with power to organise have the ability to manipulate, "...the members of this group can be compared with the gentrifiers who have, over a similar period, moved into the older inner suburban areas of large Australian cities and transformed them both socially, and physically" (Selwood, et. al., p. 222). Many growing rural areas of Australia and the South West of Western Australia (Amalfi, 1994; Grieve & Tonts, 1996) now contain an articulate resident population who question many local tourism, demographic and resource development initiatives on ecological, social and NIMBY grounds (Shire Planner, 1995). Inevitably, therefore conflicts can be expected to occur as Denmark continues to grow and to diversify economically and socially.

### *Thematic Coding Process*

The process of thematic analysis generated four overarching themes categorised as follows. The first theme reflecting both micro and meso-levels of analysis is categorised as "Spirituality – Principles Underlying Community Vision. This over-arching theme emerging strongly in the community narratives captured the community's underlying moral fibre that directed its governance relations. Also reflecting micro and meso-levels of analysis, theme two relates to the community's overwhelming sense of attachment and importance placed on its

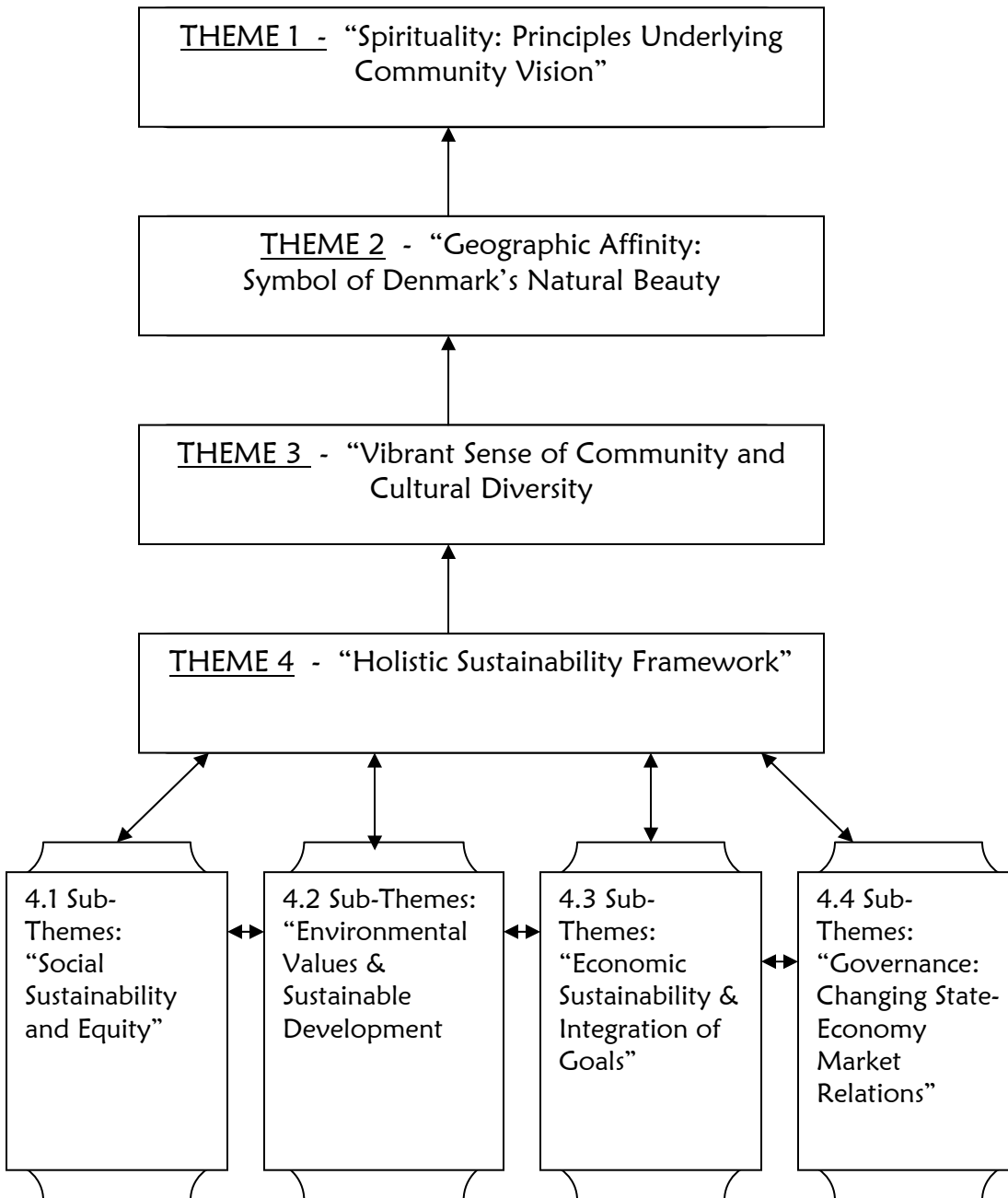
geographic heritage and is titled "Geographic Affinity – Symbol of Denmark's Natural Beauty". Capturing the general personality of the community at the meso-level is theme three, named "Vibrant Sense of Community & Cultural Diversity". This theme reflects the friendliness and openness of the town's people. The fourth overarching theme that spans all levels of analysis is categorised "Holistic Sustainability Framework" reflects the change process occurring within rural communities positioned within a global context. What the data analytic process revealed is that Denmark's direction in its development initiatives to deal with the multitude of issues facing the community reverberate the goals of *sustainability* advanced by the United Nations towards sustainable growth (UNCED, 1993).

In line with UN objectives, the theme 'holistic sustainability framework' incorporates four sub-categories: "social sustainability and equity"; "environmental values and sustainable development"; "economic sustainability and integration of goals" and lastly "governance and changing state-economy market relations". Each of these sub-themes in turn highlights a number of key community concerns involved in dealing with key changes occurring in the community and the processes underway to promote a resilient community.

What became clear in the coding of the fourth theme "Holistic Sustainability Framework" is that although various sectors of the community discussed all the issues relating to an integrative sustainability framework there was great difficulty involved in incorporating the various dimensions of sustainability. There was very little understanding about how the social, economic, environmental and governance concerns could be integrated to promote societal direction towards socially just outcomes. Inevitably participants related to social, economic, environmental or governance issues as separate entities and this reflects the general confusion worldwide about how communities and societies can implement holistic interpretations of sustainability. As a result of the overall confusion over integration the fourth theme reflects the various sustainability dimensions as separate entities in line with the UN's sustainability goals and some

overlap in the discussion of issues will occur. Please see Chart1 below for a list of the key themes.

Chart 1 - Thematic Coding of Qualitative Data



*Theme 1 - Spirituality " Principles Fundamental for Sustainability"*

The principal and most profound theme to emerge from undertaking a grounded analytic approach is categorized as '*spirituality – principles fundamental for sustainability*' which reflects the community's ethics for harmonious living, it emulates the synergistic mechanism that directs Denmark's process for community change and development. Capturing an eloquent portrayal of the foundational basis of spiritual approaches to community development, Chile & Simpson (2004) articulated: "[community] well-being comes from deep awareness, which requires a deep sensitivity to the well-being of others. Furthermore, spiritual approaches emphasize interconnectedness that require a holistic framework which incorporates related issues, such as social justice, economic fairness, human rights, and ecological sustainability. Procedurally "... this involves harmonizing individual and collective needs, as well as integrating socio-economic needs with environmental sustainability" (Chile & Simpson, p. 321). This sense of spirituality clearly emerged as the central feature of Denmark's philosophy guiding the community's vision. The data revealed that in spite of community diversity there is overwhelming support for the principles of 'sustainability' as the basis for the holistic framework that links spirituality and community development.

This theme clearly reflects the pertinence of adopting an ecological framework as the psychology of the community echoes many influences emanating from the micro levels to the macro levels. The community's response to deal with social, economic and environmental issues has been framed around ideologies emanating from local, national and global contexts that emphasize sustainability and community responsibility. Following are key excerpts that clearly articulate the heart and soul of Denmark's holistic vision for sustainability:

"To have a happy community... thinking and acting for the long term benefit of the whole community...Prosperity, sustainable, gradual

balanced development that preserves our pristine environment...a secure future... more community members becoming actively involved in promoting care and compassion for one another and the environment...better social support for vulnerable people...we have real treasures, our beautiful environment, sophisticated and talented population, we have the basis for becoming a great destination for environment and arts, wine and food... encouraging young people to stay and participate in successful businesses... working together to maintain our sense of community and resistance to ad hoc development..., managing development and population growth at a pace that is in harmony with our traditional lifestyle..." (responses to the question 'what is your one wish for the community').

As these statements illustrate there is a clear mandate for embracing the values of sustainability which has been defined as "... development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological process on what life depends" (NSES, 1992, p. 8). Denmark's vision also echoes the principles and ethics endorsed by Ife's (1995; 2002) expanded adaptation of community development: "to be informed by spiritual values of holism, sustainability, diversity, equilibrium and social justice (p. 318).

### *Theme 2 - Geographic Affinity - Symbol of Denmark's Natural Beauty*

Another analytic theme featuring prominently in the data is the powerful connection residents expressed towards the uniqueness of Denmark's diverse landscape that symbolizes the Shire's geographic beauty. This theme reflects the interaction between the micro and meso levels of analysis where the 'geographic beauty of place' impacts heavily on the psychology of people and in turn their behaviour. The fond affinity they experience towards Denmark's countryside is also the reason cited by many for their attraction to the community and their commitment towards preserving this pristine environment. The intensity of their attachment to place – also a symbol of their community

identity is eloquently captured by a majority of the participants in the following quotes.

“Denmark has awesome natural beauty, it has a sacred mystique which is hard to put in words...there are the karri forests, rolling hills, beautiful coastline...residents are bestowed with a variety of experiences ...the natural environment makes it a very lovely place to live...there is so much to discover... the majestic panorama of Wilson Inlet, Greens Pool, Williams Bay, Ocean Beach, Peaceful Bay, Valley of the Giants ... residents fight development that threatens the natural eco-system ... being green and clean is a priority to care of our prized heritage ... only through managed development do we have a chance to protect our most treasured natural asset ... the clean air provides us with more energy to engage in social activities and volunteering ... leading to fulfilment, contentment ... a lot of people come to Denmark for its beauty and are also seeking a spiritual awakening ... they have gone through chasing the ego, the money ... they are now looking for something deeper ... for something different and outside the commercial concept of what cities offer ...”

The distinctive sentiments expressed by the residents of Denmark resonate the notion of place attachment, a key domain of sense of community that refers to residents' emotional bonding or ties to their community (Altman & Low, 1992; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Riley, 1992). Also lucid to the analysis is the concept of *community identity* defined as personal and public identifications with a specific physically bounded community with its own character (Kim & Kaplan, 2004, p. 316). Community identity implies that local features of the built and natural environment characterize a physical identity place (Duncan, 1973; Geust & Lee, 1983) that in turn affects residents' personal and group identity (Kim & Kaplan). There strong identification to both community and environment is inextricably linked.

*Theme 3 - Vibrant Sense of Community & Cultural Diversity*

Also featuring loudly in the analysis is Denmark's vibrant sense of community and its distinctively rich cultural diversity. This theme is also enhanced by a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework as concepts at micro, meso and macro levels show how sense of community, diversity values and social inclusion interact to promote social cohesion. What is significant about this link is that a greater level of community inclusion is facilitated because many residents are able to find an authentic 'fit' with the variety of groups and hence feel a greater sense of belonging. Many in the field recognize this "congruence or compatibility" as a major factor influencing community identity: "a 'good' fit ... exists when the environment facilitates people's everyday lifestyle and when they can perform well in that environment (Hummon, 1990; Kaplan, 1984; Liebkind, 1992; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, cited in Joongsubkim & Kaplan, 2003, p. 316). Community identity is also engendered by uniqueness or distinctiveness "being different" from others through associating with a group or a place (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). People are also less likely to experience alienation if they "... have meaningful roles and relationships" (Sarason, 1974, p. 41). Through combination of these qualities, community identity can contribute to residents' sense of community (Joongsubkim & Kaplan, 2003) that which is clearly articulated by a majority of participants.

"...it's a wonderful safe environment to bring up children ...its beautiful it's a real community a nice community to live in ...we fell in love with the community, the community was vibrant, there were lots of variations of people...there was the conservative farming community, people who care very deeply about the forest...those establishing new ventures, wine industry... it is a very environmentally aware community... less materialistic ... less class conscious ... the Environment Centre was one of the things that attracted me to Denmark ... it was a sign of a well organised empowered group of people ... it was a great community resource. I moved to Denmark because it seemed to have a diverse population... and despite not



being materially well off seemed to be pretty empowered and able to affect their future to a large extent ... the size of the community and the values seemed to be similar to mine ..."

While the strength of attachment individuals feel to their communities is a psychological construct experienced as an abstract concept in the human mind (Nasar & Julian, 1994). Its importance is significantly related to the strength of social ties and personal networks among neighbours. These networks and ties represent a form of social capital that can offer emotional aid, social support, companionship, and services that support a household and the neighbourhood (Mohan & Mohan, 2007; Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Sarason (1974) also reiterated that if people are integrated into networks in which they can experience belongingness, they have meaningful roles and relationships, and will be less likely to experience alienation. This is clearly expressed by those who experienced estrangement in the city prior to moving to Denmark.

"... I had a small family a one year old and a three year old ,, ,I found it very isolating in a large city ... home mums were very few ... the majority worked and by staying home I became isolated and this affected my self esteem... coming to a smaller community has given me a sense of familiarity ... I no longer walk through a shopping centre where no one knows me... now I can't go anywhere without saying hello to people and being in contact and feeling part of something larger ... I am homeless I choose to live in my car but I can go to maybe 20 houses and feel very much like I am part of the family ... its just that sort of community ... many of the young parents here get together at the soup kitchen ... .it is a night out for young people and their families ... one of my ex fire control officers is 87 years young - he is still driving a fire truck though ... at 82 I caught him under a fire truck, pulling the whole transmission out because he heard a crack ... that is how people are in Denmark ... you're much better being active, its no point retiring and sitting on your bum in front of the TV ... you tend to go downhill very quickly.

*Theme 4 - "Holistic Sustainability"*

Four Also emerging from the data is the overarching theme labelled "holistic sustainability" that not only signifies the powerful influence of *globalization* but also the resilience of the community which is manifest in their concurrence with the values of *sustainability* as the vision for creating a better society for humans and the planet. The ecological framework provides a clearer understanding of community action in their journey towards sustainability from a socially just perspective as a number of theoretical frameworks at micro, meso and macro levels of analysis can be linked to this overarching theme. This fourth theme captures local, national and global influences that have directed the change processes occurring in rural and regional communities. As previously stated this theme exemplifies the issues faced by the community and the underlying philosophical approach adopted by grass-roots community groups and key leaders to tackle it. It is noteworthy however, to re-iterate that this theme echoes the sustainability model endorsed by the United Nations to advance economic growth and development from an ethical foundation.

Referred to as the 'sustainability revolution' it is a political and cultural change towards the simultaneous achievement of environmental and social objectives with economic growth (McCool & Stankey, 2004). Also pertinent, the application of 'sustainability' to direct policy is now entrenched in many governments (Miller, 2005). It is therefore no surprise that the four sub-themes that emerged from the data reflect the dynamic link between social, economic, environmental and governance concerns implicated in rural community change and the imperatives driving development initiatives to address the multitude of issues. Following are key excerpts resonating the four elements implicated in capturing the overarching theme of holistic sustainability.

*Theme 4.1 – Social Sustainability and Equity*

The first theme "Social sustainability & Equity" pertains to the contextual analysis of the following sub-categories: "Community Solidarity & Loss of Hospital

Facility; "Exodus of Young People"; "Youth Issues – Exclusion & Community Strategies"; "Pressures Exerted on Family & Mental Health Issues"; "Paradox of Sea Change Paradise & Isolation"; "Community Hub - The Soup Kitchen"; "Arts & Culture – Community Inclusiveness"; "Volunteering & Competition in Small Communities" and "Community Well-Being & Inclusiveness". These sub-themes clearly demonstrate the social effects of neo-liberal policies instigated by global and local actors and the resilience of the community as they respond to issues from a compassionate and caring philosophy. The multi-disciplinary concepts of civil society, social capital, sense of community and moral community are some of the frameworks that enhance understandings of community transition and change towards a sustainable future.

To understand whether sustainability objectives are being met from a holistic perspective, the analysis involved understanding the issues faced by the community and evaluating the extent to which social, economic, environmental and governance objectives are pursued with equal emphasis. While social sustainability is defined as the "ability of rural communities to retain their demographic and socio-economic functions on a relatively independent basis" (Smailes, 1995, p. 101). Few studies have explored the social dimension of sustainability in rural Australia (Jones & Tonts, 1995) instead more attention has been devoted to economic and environmental aspects of sustainable rural development (Cock, 1991; Murdoch, 1993; Le Heron, 1993). More importantly the data reveals that social sustainability is inextricably intertwined with social justice concerns. The first sub-theme demonstrates the depth and breadth by which the community views social issues and the passion that both unites and divides the community in their pursuit of justice.

### *Community Solidarity & Loss of Hospital Facility*

Unlike other rural communities Denmark has experienced rapid population growth particularly with a greater influx of retirees into the District. According to ABS statistics 35% of the population is over 35 years of age (2005). Given this demographic transformation and rationalisation of services where the

most severe cost-cutting measures adopted by governments in rural areas have been directed at the major expenditure areas of education and health (Jones & Tonts, 1995). It is not surprising to find overwhelming consensus that the issue of greatest concern to the community was the retention and modernisation of the Denmark hospital. Incensed by the state's proposed closure of the hospital, the community in collaboration with the Shire Council staged a protest rally and lobbied Politicians to demonstrate their opposition. While the potential loss of health services is perceived as highly stressful to the community its action can be described as collective-level problem-focused coping highly reflective of a resilient community (Kelly & Steed, 2004). The strategies of mass mobilization and public advocacy (Checkoway, 1995) galvanized by the Shire and the community promoted positive change at the community level. This public show of community solidarity in grassroots action not only drew public and media attention it gained the state government's pledge to finance a new hospital facility. This show of public unity also enhanced the residents' sense of community and identity as an empowered community.

"...rationalisation of services have impacted greatly on the Shire ... our responsibilities grow, funds are slashed and social issues suffer ... with the influx of retirees you need infrastructure for aged care ... Denmark Hospital is grossly inadequate ...its building structure is unsafe ... the sick, the elderly have to travel to Bunbury, Perth or Albany ...causing great distress to families commuting anywhere from 50km to over 400km to visit and care for them... spouses of the elderly are hit really hard...especially if they are frail themselves... Albany Hospital in turn is stretched to the limit and cannot provide necessary care ... to fight back we lobbied the politicians ... it was great to see the whole community coming out to support the rally ... the diversity of groups such as the environmentalists, farmers, shire councillors, artists, business owners, young people, families all uniting for a cause ... now we have a new Hospital ...the community was strong on this issue and we won"

*Exodus of Young People*

While the community has demonstrated exemplary political prowess in saving its valued resource the 'Shire Hospital' and in handling the multiplicity of stresses impacting on the community. There are also instances where certain social issues exert less reactionary concern and resilience. For example, identified as community-level emotion-focussed coping strategies, community members can also display apathy, public conflict, social support, cynicism or avoidance when responding to stressful situations (Kelly & Steed, 2004). One issue of concern to the community that is also experienced by other rural and regional communities is the outpouring of young people in pursuit of education and employment opportunities in the city. The paradox is that while families chose the small community lifestyle for their children they are then sent off to metropolitan areas as teenagers and adolescents. On the other hand children who are not leaving or returning early to the community are often seen as failures. While many residents believe that loss of youth causes a negative impact for social sustainability and arts and culture, many however, accept this as an inevitable transition and a rite of passage that young people should experience.

" ... Denmark is a safe and wonderful environment to bring up children ... there is a burgeoning of young people up to age 16 before they disperse to educational and employment pursuits ... there is a total lack of education, training and employment options means they have little choice but to leave ... it's a shame that they have to leave the safety and security of community life ... it impacts greatly on youth and the colour and vibrant mix of the community ... there is discontinuity ... its hard to fill a football team ... there is no one to replace our aging volunteer members which is vital for the community's fire and emergency services ... the arts and cultural development of the community has also been affected ... what the governments does not realize is that by becoming much meaner and tighter with unemployment subsidies ... youths cannot pursue their

artistic talents and survive in this town ... economic rationalization is short sighted ... it has blocked youths from staying in the community who want to create innovative artistic crafts ... young people need to get out to see what the rest of the world has to offer ... there are new and exciting ventures to be experienced ... going off to university ... learning new trades ... acquiring diverse skills ... experiencing other communities and cultures ... this is a healthy transition ... it's the best training ground for adulthood ... then they can come back later if they want to ..."

School children also echo similar feelings about their sense of attachment to their community and the costs and benefits of leaving their community. These excerpts highlight the views of a sample of High School children who responded to the question: if they had a choice to stay or leave Denmark what their preference would be? The overwhelming response is that they would choose to stay for community lifestyle however this is clearly not a choice. Although some thought that exploring the world or escaping small-town attitude is a good motivation to leave.

"... Denmark has the beautiful forests, beaches, great outdoor lifestyle of surfing, fishing, swimming ... it is a safe and secure place ... free from crime and gang wars ... its very safe to go anywhere in town ... the city is crowded and loud ... the diversity of people in Denmark is great ... everyone is very nice ... would prefer to stay as I would miss family, friends and small community life ... have to leave for education and work ... opportunity to travel the world might be exciting ... would stay if apprenticeship opportunities are available in Denmark ... would leave to escape from family scandal ..."

### *Youth Issues – Exclusion & Community Strategies*

While many view transition towards adulthood as something natural for young people to aspire towards many issues can hinder their progress. The

community identified 'youth issues' as an area of grave concern however, there is conflict about the ownership of the problem and how best to deal with the underlying complexities. While many groups in the community work collaboratively to pursue strategies and processes that are empowering to youth the enormity of the problem means that the social capital networks necessary to deal with the holistic nature of the problem is overburdened. Following are some excerpts that reflect the issues faced by youth and the frustrations faced by workers who work tirelessly to empower the youth in the community.

" ... some young people haven't eaten for three or four days ... quite a bit of poverty even in beautiful Denmark its very sad ... family dysfunction is high ... neglect and abuse is common ... our target group is youths at risk ... the stereotype is that they are from poor, low socio-economic backgrounds ... it is much broader ... kids from wealthy backgrounds are also at risk they have the money to snort drugs ... there is no differentiation when it concerns their human needs ... we assume that small communities are caring and supportive ... there is also the dark side ... one kid who made a mistake at age 6 is labelled for life ... he is stereotyped and ostracised affecting his whole life ... this reputation followed his siblings ... young people come to us to be accepted without preconceived judgement ... confidentiality is extremely important ... sometimes we feel compromised but trust with the young person is serious ... our facilities are basic and cheap but its all we have ... many in the community don't like young people so we have to plan carefully where we house youth facilities to avoid complaints from residents ... "

There are also other issues implicated with youth issues that relate to exclusion, alienation, and the lack of services targeting their special needs in promoting a healthy transition into adulthood. These issues are a growing concern as struggling families are unable to meet their basic needs and access to government assistance are minimal at best. At the macro-level it is clear to see how government focus on economic policies has failed families, youth and

children who are falling further behind in a neo-liberal environment.

Governments at national and state level also appear not to be interested or aware of these issues as there are no additional resources being targeted to support families suffering the social costs of globalization, neo-liberal policies and the sustainability agenda that stresses community responsibility. Instead of promoting social policies governments focus on tightening welfare benefits and forcing recipients to seek low-income employment which retains them in a poverty trap. Following are some excerpts that demonstrate the social costs borne by youth:

" ... domestic violence, drug rehabilitation and gay and lesbian issues are ignored because it is the hardest thing to be open about in a small community ... there are social and psychological consequences when people have no social support ... alienation can lead to drug and alcohol addiction ... which is a serious concern for youth although some are related to family dysfunction ... the multiple teenage road deaths woke up the community to its impact ... while local action groups are devoted to activities that promote fun and excitement it is also about building a strong sense of community and belonging ... principles are based on education, harm minimization and safety including youth participation in planning and organizing their own agenda ..."

While many individuals and groups work collaboratively with the Shire to promote youth needs they are constrained by community attitudes, lack of parental involvement and funds. To deal more holistically on youth issues the following quotes outline the strategies needed to promote youth inclusion and highlights the difficulties involved in attracting vital resources for youth issues. Here a number of levels of analysis are pertinent. While a number of individual and family level causes are attributed to the issues, many community members also identify meso and macro level causes such as lacking infrastructure, funds and government commitment to address the needs of youth.



" ... exclusion of youth leads to greater anti-social behaviour ... to promote trust and acceptance ... communication gaps between the generations needs attention ... education and awareness is vital to promote an inclusive community ... parents also need to become more involved in dealing with youth issues ... often parents are happy to relinquish their responsibility to schools and youth workers ... parents need to make youth more accountable for their behaviour ... often parents are modelling drinking and drug taking behaviours ... purpose built youth centres are a priority but the Shire is pushed beyond its capacity to provide for all the social needs in the community ... all groups work tirelessly and collaborative on attracting funds by writing submissions ... this is a slow and arduous process done by volunteers ... the Shire is expected to contribute most of the resources to operate it ... there seems to be no end to the responsibilities being unloaded by governments to the local Shire ... "

There is much evidence that the community works effectively and collaboratively with the Shire to respond to youth needs by providing a number of facilities and programs. In fact the pilot youth centre has been attributed as the most successful initiative as the problem of graffiti stopped three months after it opened. There is however, still a great need to expand the level and diversity of social and recreational pursuits to promote greater social interaction indoors and outdoors for all ages. There are also, serious issues requiring external resources to deal with the psychological issues of youth. Following is a quote demonstrating the lack of access and fit between government services and the needs of youth.

" ... youth mental health issues such as suicide, depression, self-harming and addiction need greater attention, isolated youths need understanding ... strategies are needed to improve access of at-risk youths to help them feel part of our community ... youths at risk tend to approach local informal networks such as the local drug action group because they are reluctant to access formal services ... "

unfortunately the system in place to deal with youth mental health issues is ineffective - particularly the needs of the disadvantaged ... access to psychological services are limited with waiting periods of up to six weeks for suicide cases ... government officials are often unable to handle their needs from a holistic perspective ... people suffering abuse and poverty need assistance alternative to middle class approaches ... empathy, acceptance and people with field experience are needed to break down class and cultural barriers to address the issues with respect ..."

*Pressures Exerted on Family & Mental Health Issues*

Similar to youth issues the community also struggles to deal with the multiplicity of family and mental health issues facing the community. More importantly, while some community groups are able to access limited resources to deal with aspects of the problem. It is clear that there are insufficient resources available to the community to address all the issues particularly the underlying causes that would make a difference or prevent its occurrence. What is also obvious is that those most vulnerable in the community are likely to suffer the impacts of globalization, rationalization and devolution more heavily than others. Following are some key observations highlighting the nature and complexity of the social issues facing the community, the reasons attributed for its occurrence and how some members of the community have responded to some of the issues.

While mental health issues are an important concern for all communities, Denmark has experienced escalating pressure being exerted on the region's existing health and police resources to deal with the consequences of a growing mental health problem. Furthermore, in spite of the growing needs of the Shire and the region governments continue to rationalize services without consulting affected communities. The narratives add further evidence to the ideologically driven nature of neo-liberal government policy and the lack of commitment to

the new governance relations that emphasize community participation in the decision-making process.

“ ...Albany Hospital is under extreme pressure ... up to seven separate visits from seven different patients in one week is not uncommon ... it may take months to recover from a psychotic episode ... this causes a huge drain on regional resources ... local Police resources are also over stretched by transporting patients to the Hospital ... Denmark has a growing number of people suffering mental health issues as many are attracted to the alternative lifestyle ... this impacts severely on the Shire's infrastructure as mental health issues are long term ... most infuriating is that decisions about local resource needs are made without any consultation and the impacts of cuts to services affect those most vulnerable who can least afford it ...”

Also adding pressure on the Health System and Police Services is the growing numbers suffering from Depression. Most alarming however, is that vulnerable people have limited access to government services due to their stringent criteria. At the macro-level this sub-theme highlights the inadequacy of neo-liberalism to meet the needs of vulnerable people. The narratives also echo what Newbrough (1992) describes as a *social contract* community, where emphasis is on the individual to be active and self-reliant. In such a competitive society, dependent members are treated as less worthy and marginal. Following is a reflection of the costs borne by those most vulnerable within a social contract system:

“ depression is very high particularly for older males and the Elderly ... financial struggles and ailing physical health add to their problems. However, government services are totally lacking to deal with the problems... If aged clients don't fit the HACC or Silver Chain criteria their mental health problems go untreated ... governments are not paying attention to the underlying contributory causes of mental health problems such as low incomes, high levels of unemployment,

insecure employment ... they have failed to respond to the social determinants of health ... grass roots action is the only way to have impact ..."

*Paradox of Sea Change Paradise & Isolation*

While families are attracted to Denmark for its village-like community lifestyle and coastal recreational pursuits there are also associated costs. Many people who move to Denmark don't have extended families as a result they are without support networks. Following are some experiences shared by families. This demonstrates the negative aspects of small cohesive communities where it is very difficult for new comers to gain acceptance. While high levels of sense of community and cohesion are expressed at meso and macro-levels there are also many who feel excluded from the social interactions of community life. Hence, sense of community and social capital are highlight implicated with new migrants.

" ... I loved moving away from the high-paced pressure of Sydney living ... I am relaxed and peaceful ... I view this majestic scenery from my window everyday ... as a single mother on a pension I feel like a millionaire ... but I do feel very lonely ... I recently divorced and now I realize how isolating it is to be a single parent in a small community ... there is a total lack of entertainment in town ... there is nowhere I can go to meet others ... its extremely hard ... that's country living I guess ... its a sign of our segregated society ... people only mix in groups according to age, gender, culture, status ... adding to our sense of alienation and division between people ... we need to get people to associate as humans ..."

*Community Hub - The Soup Kitchen*

To combat issues of segregation and alienation a group of women got together to promote a place where people from a diversity of backgrounds could come together and feel a sense of community and to bridge the divide.

This narrative is highly reflective of a community based on what Newbrough (1992) describes as *fraternity*. In this '*human social system*' (Newbrough) emphasis is on integration of all members into the society and seeing the dependent and the marginal as needing to become active participants, less dependent and more central. The value is on interdependence and functional integration (Waterman, 1981). Following are some quotes of their experiences.

" ... the womens' collective is a fairly anarchic group who offer community support ... we have been running a soup kitchen for two years and we get more than 120 attending ...we cater for the ... unemployed, pensioners, single parents, homeless ... our definition of need is very broad ... there is loneliness ... mental health issues ... need is self defined ... we provide food ... emergency relief funding ... general support ... referrals ... depression and substance abuse is very high but there are very few counsellors available ... a suicide case referred to me was put on a six week waiting list by the health services ... luckily the community drug action network accepted the referral, they're another support network that are doing great work to address at-risk youth and alienation issues ..."

#### *Arts & Culture - Community Inclusiveness*

Another way that residents promote sense of community, cohesion and inclusion is by the celebration of arts and cultural events where diverse groups are drawn together in harmonious interaction. A yearly calendar of entertainment organized by the Arts Council is renowned for attracting internationally recognized artists intentionally keep costs to a minimum to promote community inclusion. Such openness can be compared to the notion of *communitas* that recognizably emerges with a liminal experience, where 'social structure, rules and conventions give way to a feeling of equality and equipoise' (Madden, 1998, p. 50). As Turner explains, 'communitas transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalised relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency ... of

communion of equal individuals" (1968, cited in Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 270). This small group of volunteers who are devoted to Arts and Culture are altruistically motivated to promoting community celebrations as an inclusive experience symbolic of a liminal transition. These passages highlight the value of their contribution.

"... diverse groups are brought together at events such as market day, theatre performances and arts activities ... people from the extremes, such as the feral element right through to the ultra conservatives ... it encourages community harmony... its a great training ground for young people to learn and progress in their artistic endeavours ... the Arts Council entrepreneurial skills are world-class ... they attract internationally recognised artists and performers to Denmark at affordable costs which is heavily subsidised to provide access to all members of the community ... its inclusiveness sends a powerful message to the community that their participation is more important than financial gain ..."

While the Arts Council enjoys enormous success with their endeavours these citations highlight some changes occurring within the region and some of the challenges they face in promoting Arts & Culture for the benefit of the whole community.

"... commercial enterprises external to the community are marketing artistic and cultural events within the region ... competition is not concerning ... this industry is exclusive and does not bring any real benefits to the local population. Promoters come complete with their own staff and resources and do not engage or liase with local artists ... events are staged purely for economic gain for an exclusive community ... other challenges facing the Arts Council are lack of funding ... it is mainly project based ... employing local artists and long term employment is not an option ... the greatest challenge is the time needed to prepare funding submissions ... all committee

executives work extremely long hours organizing busy schedules with little financial compensation ... financial losses and little time to access funds means we continually run on a 'shoe-string' budget ... Shire and community support is vital ... "

It is understandable that the competitive challenges posed by big business in taking a large piece of the market share from this small regional industry has caused a severe blow to their previously held monopoly. As a consequence the Arts and Culture community expressed bitter disappointment and disempowerment to these invasive developments. This is further exacerbated by their dependence on a small pool of highly competitive funds and their inability to attract enough staff and resources to assist them in their largely voluntary role that provides enormous social benefits to the community. While government rhetoric is that competition leads to price reductions in this case big business which targets wealthier consumers may seriously hinder the ability of this small organization to promote equitable access to arts and cultural events. This narrative marvellously demonstrates the social and economic impact of macro-economic policies and the processes of social capital implicated in promoting the resilience of community groups at the meso-level.

### *Volunteering & Competition in Small Communities*

Also prominent and relevant is the large number of volunteer organizations and committees operating to meet the diversity of community needs. These voluntary groups evolved from the gaps left by a severe lack of government infrastructure and services to meet the needs of those most vulnerable. Due to size of the population community groups are in competition to attract a viable number of volunteers. Although a higher proportion of residents are highly oriented towards public participation there are also concerns expressed about the pressure placed on a small community to take up the deficits left by governments would cause serious community impacts. While the concern is lack of volunteers and resources being stretched too thinly, there are also groups with strengths to deal with the issues:

" ... this small community has four Arts group ... Denmark Village Theatre, Denmark Arts Council, Hyden Theatre, Artists Cooperative ... they are just not meshing ... a particularly large number of committees and groups means roles are filled by a small core of volunteers ... vital community services are at risk because the competition means they can't attract enough volunteers ... the demands of occupying multiple roles inevitably lead to burnout... emergency services volunteers perform an extremely arduous task ... the community faces real concerns with an aging volunteer population .... filling their shoes will be very hard ... they cannot be replaced by a younger generation due to youth exit ... the community has attempted to address this ... the Denmark Environment Centre initiated Forums and Workshops to assist groups in strategic planning and collaboration to maximise expertise, resources and capacity for longevity ..."

### *Community Wellbeing & Inclusion*

In spite of the social and economic costs associated with regional living what emerged from examining the sub-themes of the social aspects of holistic sustainability is the community's overarching values for addressing the social determinants of health, including promoting an inclusive community - one that is caring and compassionate particularly to those in need of support and advocacy. More specifically, the community's vision for social, health and welfare outcomes involve holistic strategies aimed at advancing individual, family and community wellbeing. This resonates with Prilleltensky & Nelson's (2002) wellbeing model which is both multidimensional and hierarchical. Where the well-being of the individual is predicated on the well-being of the immediate family, which in turn is contingent upon community and societal conditions. As Cowen (1996, p. 246) observed, 'optimal development of wellness ... requires integrated sets of operations involving individuals, families, settings, community contexts and macro-level societal structures and policies' (cited in Prilleltensky). The holistic nature of the concerns and the strategies highlighted by the community to promote the diverse needs of all groups powerfully demonstrates the community's vision for holistic health and wellbeing. Most of all community members speak of the positive social environment of the community these are



strengths that can be used to promote transformational change towards a more just society.

Following is the sub-theme “Environmental Values & Sustainable Development” which discusses the contextual analysis of the following sub-categories: “Wilson Inlet – Icon of Denmark”; “Ethical Consensus - Environmental Protection & Management”; “Empowering Impacts of Environmentalists”; “Conflicts & Diversity Between Environmental Groups”; “Power, Influence & Holistic Planning”; “Paradox of Tourism Dollars & Environmental Degradation”; “Management of Fire & Emergency – Development Issues”; and “Transformational Change & The Third Community”. These narratives clearly reflect the community’s values for transition and change to be positioned within an ethical and moral framework. Also demonstrating interaction of levels of analysis at micro, meso and macro levels, community values and action can be clearly linked to local, national and global paradigmatic shifts in thinking about the environment and the community.

#### *Theme 4.2 - Environmental Values & Sustainable Development*

Distinguishing trivial conceptualisations of sustainable development from more meaningful ones is simple according to Lele (1999). For example when advocates use the term “sustained growth”, “sustained change”, or simply “successful” development, then it has little meaning, especially when development is considered as growth in material consumption. More meaningful interpretations are multidimensional often distinguishing among social, ecological and economic goals it recognizes ecosystem integrity as fundamental to human society and economy (Ratner, 2004). Ethics therefore is imperative because “... what people do depends on what they believe” (WCED) and “widely shared beliefs are more powerful than government edicts” (Holdgate, 1996, cited in Ratner, 2004, p. 59). From this perspective communities acting from sustainability ethics value ecosystem integrity as fundamental to development. The data revealed five sub-themes related to environmental values and sustainable development. While considerable consensus exists

where environmental values is of the highest priority nevertheless, the community articulates a common view of its future, one of moderate change based on the maintenance of the environment, its natural beauty, and a vibrant sense of community.

“... development has to be carefully managed ... the costs are not visible in the first generation the damage happens later down the track, like salinity ... some are happy to go in bulldoze, have gravel pits, sand mining, not revegetate ... there is no turning back you have to live with the long-term consequences of decisions motivated by materialism, where no thought is given to future generations ... some people don't understand what they have here is irreplaceable, they are putting their heritage at risk ... they misjudge us as greenies and anti-development ... all we want is to protect Denmark from uncontrolled development ... we don't want to be swept up in the frenzy of creating another playground, another artificial place for the wealthy ... the community will eventually get it ... there is more value in remaining unique ... resisting global cultural trends ... preserving our heritage ... the Council will be judged fairly in the end ... ”

#### *Wilson Inlet – Icon of Denmark*

Since the settlement of ex-city folk the community has changed and there has been a considerable shift in the centrality of environmental issues. Where once Environmentalists were seen as fringe groups, the issues are now more mainstream. This however, has brought problems in that various sectors of the community define environmental issues differently and argue for environmental principles in different ways. Farmer views of the environment are considerably different from the new comers. What clearly emerged from the data is that in spite of the subtle yet important differences between the diverse groups there is one prominent landmark that residents strongly identify as their iconic symbol of Denmark - 'Wilson Inlet'. This first sub-theme is aptly named 'Wilson Inlet – Icon of Denmark'. While there is overwhelming consensus for

retaining its unique geographic beauty and promoting it to pristine condition, there is intense community conflict over management of the cause afflicting the health of Wilson Inlet and its development potential.

" ... the health and resilience of Wilson Inlet depends on reducing nutrient flow from catchments ... it needs to be restored to its pristine condition ... as a tourist attraction the local economy can benefit greatly ... development too close to the foreshore is disastrous ... extensive use of pesticides, fertilisers and other toxic materials cause serious harm to people. the ecology and Wilson Inlet ... governments must provide greater financial incentives to promote conservation on private properties ... the most divisive issue is the opening of the bar at Wilson Inlet ... whether it is the left, right or proposed permanent opening ... stake-holder groups are deeply divided over which is best ... impacts are fiercely fought and the community remains divided ... resolution is hampered by the number of agencies having jurisdiction over natural resource management .... If they are serious about addressing the environmental problems in Wilson Inlet then real collaboration is a priority ... an integrated, regional approach to decision-making and stake-holder participation is vital ..."

### *Ethical Consensus - Environmental Protection & Management*

The second theme categorised as "ethical consensus" reflects the decision-making framework of the community that is grounded and guided by a coherent set of values. Denmark's vision for 'environmental protection and management' is epitomised by the ideals of the sustainability movement, involving local citizens working in partnership with the local government. For example 'Agenda 21' proposes that the world's environmental and sustainable development issues can and must be solved through partnerships at the local level (Cuthill, 2002). There is outstanding evidence in the community that the seeds of change towards sustainability have been highly effective in developing a 'critical consciousness' that has empowered local citizens to take responsibility and action for their own 'backyards' (e.g., Mustakova-Possardt, 1998).

This highly skilled community also emulates the social mobilization approach which emphasizes public participation and the role of communities in initiating and guiding development and aspiring to empower people to be able to meet their own needs in ways that are ecologically and socially sustainable (Brinkerhoff, 2000). The following highlights achievements initiated by key community leaders and environmental groups who are leading the way in promoting a multi-dimensional approach to sustainability, as well as promoting conservation and development of environmental technology at a global scale.

"... Denmark's strong community of active conservationists set a benchmark pace in environmental innovation and services ... the Denmark Environment Centre initiated an ambitious Greening project with over 100 volunteers ... twelve local community organizations and government agencies collaborated on recording a digital database of vegetation type, condition and value ... it established the importance of Denmark's biodiversity 'on the map' of local, state and national planning agencies ... promoting conservation as a top priority ... Denmark has one of the most comprehensive and valuable digitised databases for environmental management in Australia ... a Public Tax Deductible Heritage Appeal was also initiated ... to fund green planning and re-establishing riparian native vegetation on private property in order to motivate landholders to fence-off & revegetate highly degraded areas ... this will help reduce nutrient exports to fragile south coast estuarine systems, particularly Wilson Inlet and other wetland complexes, such as Owingup Swamp ..."

A vital outcome derived from strategies initiated by environmentalists is the shift in consciousness that management of special landscapes and ecologies on public and private land is a community responsibility. It paves the way for greater land care innovations and it does not add an unfair financial burden to individual property owners. Environmentalists are also key leaders in planning the future sustainability of the community they work closely with the Shire and other sectoral groups to work on environmental, social and economic

goals. Groups like the Denmark Environment Centre and Greenskills are symbolic of community empowerment, they attract substantial funds from government grants, donations as well as from consultancy and training services. Comprising a diverse group of highly skilled people they work tirelessly in an egalitarian setting and promote environmental education, awareness, training, new technologies and advocacy to protect and manage the environment on a local and global scale. A related theme emerging strongly is the influence of the Environmental groups in directing the development goals of the local community.

*Empowering Impacts of Environmentalists*

As Environmentalists are key leaders in planning the future sustainability of the community they work closely with the Shire and other sectoral groups to address environmental, social and economic goals. Groups like the Denmark Environment Centre and Greenskills are symbols of community empowerment they attract substantial funds from government grants, donations as well as from consultancy and training services. Comprising a diverse group of highly skilled people they work tirelessly in an egalitarian setting and promote environmental education, awareness, training, new technologies and advocacy to protect and manage the environment on a local and global scale. The following theme 'empowering impacts of environmental groups' demonstrates the environmentalists' commitment and involvement in planning holistically with the community.

" ... the Denmark Education Innovation Centre (DEIC) consists of key community leaders from a variety of sectors ... we promote community planning and the direction the Shire takes ... the 1994 Future's Forum involved 120 people to identify community strategies ... in 2001 the Community Groups Expo involved 35 groups setting up displays ... 60 people participated in strategic planning ... groups were encouraged to collaborate, identify key objectives and strategies for the future ... integration and resource sharing was the

ultimate aim ... we hope to inspire volunteering by providing training in submission writing, strategic planning and preventing volunteer burnout, etc ... working closely with the school children on preserving the environment has encouraged custodian attitudes ... seeing kids giving up free time to plant new trees, cleaning up litter is priceless ..."

### *Conflicts & Diversity Between Environmental Groups*

While a number of environmentalists work cohesively to contribute meaningfully to strategic planning and promote community planning from a holistic perspective. There are also other environmental groups and government agencies that operate in the community that are driven by different worldviews and visions and at times they can be highly conflictive.

"... you have a large number of groups and agencies operating who promote different interests and perspectives on what is best for the environment and the community ... one of the enormous difficulties in trying to get a representative view is, who do you talk to? ... you don't just talk to one of the groups in the environmental network because it will reflect those sectoral interests and some of them are conflictive ... the Wilson Inlet Restoration Group for example is a very specific group that want to develop the Wilson Inlet estuary ... they have very specific views about how that should be achieved which is quite contrary to the government agencies attitudes ... so they represent a specific lobby group ... diversity is not be a barrier, as long as there is strong community leadership shared visions for conservation and development are possible ..."

### *Power, Influence & Holistic Planning*

There is little doubt that the environmental groups have greater social capital resources compared to other groups and are able to attract significantly more funds for their initiatives. Consisting largely of highly educated individuals with greater political expertise they are highly influential in setting local, national and global agendas. As such, they possess the power to determine sustainability

priorities at the local level due to their capacity to attract the enormous resources needed to promote environmental change in the community. Nevertheless, environmentalists are equally keen on promoting social and economic goals as part of the integrative process of community planning. Again highly indicative of the social mobilization approach they advance collaborative process with the Shire and other sectoral groups to address the community issues.

“ ... other pressures need attention ... sky-rocketing land prices is an equity issue about who can afford to build ... people on lower incomes have real problems getting housing ... if it continues to grow then the costs are a growing marginalized group ... a good model in Denmark is the ‘equity housing properties’ ... the Mallanar Housing Co-op has built twelve houses ... rent is based on income ... many families are on the waiting list though ... young people cannot leave home and stay in Denmark with low incomes and lacking rental properties ... real need for units to facilitate youth transition ... Denmark’s sharing and caring attitude attracts some people experiencing difficulties ... a substantial number of single men here have no permanent home ... creating jobs is a high priority ... thirty percent of people in Denmark are self employed ... many live on low incomes because of a lack of industry ... small businesses really need more support to help them create more employment ... These are big challenges but which all Councils must grapple with by providing leadership and some resources for the community to address them ... its better than ignoring the issues ... in the end the community ends up having to do all the hard work ... you can never work on all of them [issues] ... goals get prioritised any way ...”

The shortage of housing is also exacerbated by the relocation of some people suffering from a variety of difficulties who are attracted to Denmark as a haven from the alienation of city living. Denmark has gained a reputation for its caring and compassionate culture including its innovation with housing co-

operatives and alternative communitarian lifestyles. Following are some key perspectives on the plight of people who are in search for a home:

" ... like other small communities Denmark is perceived as having a caring, sharing attitude and this attracts some people with difficulties wanting an alternative to the city ... a single male for example, has not got anywhere he can call home ... permanency is something he doesn't have as a word in his life in terms of housing ... the number of vulnerable people falling between the cracks is growing... we have a large population of single men with no accommodation for any of them ..."

While environmental groups such as DEIC and Greenskills emphasize ecological integrity as a primary concern when considering business initiatives, they are nevertheless dedicated to tackling community problems in its entirety. In view of their holistic focus creating employment opportunities is also identified as an important economic and social goal for the community. However, the political nature of governments is highlighted as a barrier to social and economic goals particularly if the issues lack political clout. The inevitable consequence is that these issues remain at the periphery because governments are driven by the cyclical nature of elections rather than long term vision. The realization is that the community is just expected to make up for the shortfall of government funding and resources.

" ... small businesses employ more people than any other sector ... with a little assistance from governments this could be the area where more employment could be generated ... it seems that all the issues [social, economic, environmental and governance] have been the focus of our attention forever but you just can't work on all of them at the same time ... it [multiplicity of issues] certainly gives the Local Council and other government agencies a lot of food for thought but it is also important to the community ... because in the end the community ends up having to do all the hard work ... with so many



issues it ends up being just another set of goals for the community ...  
because you can never work on all of them it becomes prioritised ...  
issues having little impact at the ballot box are rationalized ...  
governments have a responsibility to provide services to people in  
need regardless of which party is in, but that is not the case ..."

In responding to the demands of a global age, the egalitarian inter-organizational approach adopted by environmentalists in initiating and planning community development from a holistic perspective perfectly resembles the elements of Lever-Tracy's (2006) concept of a *civilised gemeinschaft*, in which the "...penetration of kinship, community and personal relations by the forces and ethos of modernity and globalization, has not simply undermined or transformed them but has also, in the context of today, sometimes empowered them" (p. 25). The concept represents a way of understanding the self-transformation of family structures, personal relations and local communities, attempting to take on the modern world and international markets, rather than just being passive victims. Hence the interpenetration of civil society and *gemeinschaft* type relationships offers a renewed dynamism, flexibility and developmental power. It is conceived as a sphere of voluntary associations and individual choice, open to science and innovation, responsive to a cosmopolitan and multicultural world. Such a *civilized gemeinschaft*, it is argued can thus sometimes become a resource in the pursuit of such goals as development and accumulation by previously marginal or excluded groups (Lever-Tracy).

### *Paradox of Tourism Dollars & Environmental Degradation*

While the community has embraced holistic planning, environmental values nevertheless are a major imperative driving their development decisions. As a result the community faces many challenges in meeting the social and economic needs of residents. As previously highlighted many participants have a powerful attachment to Wilson Inlet, the data also revealed strong bonds with a number of other key geographic locations that are also symbolic of Denmark's ecological beauty and diversity. The paradox however, is that the community is

dependent on tourism for economic survival but this comes at a cost, the pristine nature of the environment is severely threatened by an influx of visitors. Following are some issues the community faces when tourism is the major source of income for the Shire.

“ ...From Greens Pool to William Bay National Park all need protection from the impacts of tourist activities ... smoking should be banned to prevent littering... discarded fish-hook, tangled lines are posing a safety issue, 4 wheel drive access is damaging fragile areas ... Greens Pool should be raised to Marine Sanctuary status ... Ocean Beach, Peaceful Bay, Lights Beach, Parry’s Beach, Conspicuous Cliffs, Bellanger Beach, Boat Harbour, Madfish Bay, the whole stretch needs protecting ... access by 4 wheel drive is necessary for activities such as fishing, surfing, diving but hooning around is not ... tourist education is vital ... everyone should have access to the beauty ... cars and people on beaches is a dangerous mix ... tourist influx is damaging to beaches, conflicts with birds nesting, spreading dieback to coastal vegetation ... flora and fauna is endangered by unthinking and uncaring motorists ... Shire needs to monitor tourist activities more carefully... we need more employment but not more tourists ...”

### *Management of Fire & Emergency - Development Issues*

Another paradoxical development is the issue of environmental protection and management of fire and emergencies. More reflective of the farming community perspective and residents who are resentful over the powerful influence exerted by the conservation movement in managing the issues is the emergent theme of fire and emergency management. The Shire is heavily dependent on volunteers comprising largely of the farming community to protect a large area of 1843 sq kms from the threats of fire and emergencies. The community however, is deeply divided about the priority of this concern and the actions that should be pursued. While the farming community sees it as a priority issue requiring large-scale preventative action, those more aligned with

conservation values are less concerned about the threats of a wild fire compared to the potential ecological damage of carte blanche preventative measures.

" ... Denmark is all forest and park land ... wildfire threat is a serious issue ... we are on constant alert ... fire bugs are a real menace, they light series of fires over hundreds of kilometres menace ... our crew is a small group of volunteers ... at times we are pushed to the point where we don't know which to attend first ... with below normal rainfall ... dead, dry vegetation ... high fuel loads adds to the threat ... many Council members are not interested in controlled burning, government agencies want it ... private property rights are a barrier to safety, regulatory control will hopefully enforce owner responsibility, financial incentives help ... it's difficult convincing them [greenies] to see this as a priority issue ... we [environmentalists] are there to provide another opinion on best management practices, we are not against prescribed burning ... we are concerned that decisions made are not sensitive to the ecological complexities ... it should be based on a risk assessment of fuel load threat, protecting life, property or biodiversity on a case by case basis ... a comprehensive Fire Policy that ties housing development to fire risk assessment must also be part of planning ..."

In spite of the conflicts and inherent complexities underlying the sustainability agenda, the overarching vision for the environment can be characterised as embracing the principles of 'ecologism' (Gray, 1992, p. 405) that accentuates cultural change in values and pattern of production and consumption as the ultimate goal. (Ball, 2003). This implies aligning resource use and outputs with the local environmental base, and the development of a more ecologically sensitive and sophisticated notion of 'economy' in striving towards a new society that balances the needs of human enterprise with ecological integrity (Jacobs, 2001).

*Transformational Change & The Third Community*

Emerging prominently from the environmental themes above is the way in which the community embraces the philosophy of sustainability to guide growth and development of the Shire. In spite of the conflicts and paradoxical challenges the community is united in their visions for the future. Also transparent is the influence of the environmental movement in promoting cultural change. It is clear that the multi-dimensional initiatives instigated by the environmentalists and other key members of the community have stimulated the sustainability agenda within a social justice framework.

In development 'critical consciousness' about sustainability the community has been provided a platform for participation and community mobilization. However, as Claridge and Claridge (1997) suggest, for participatory processes to be successful, all participants need to possess appropriate skills. Highly relevant is the enormity of funds and resources these social movements procure to coordinate multifaceted strategic actions. Their success can be attributed to their highly developed social networks that extend well beyond the local community. As a group environmentalists and key leaders of the community are not only highly educated but possess the expertise and political prowess to tackle issues at local, national and global levels.

Their dense social capital networks, high-level academic skills and political sophistication have empowered these groups to attract greater levels of funding from a large number of agencies to meet many of the environmental goals and related aspirations to promote holistic sustainability within the community. In advancing all-inclusive goals for the community, they have not only facilitated conscientization (Freire, 1968, 1970) of environmental justice but galvanized potential for transformational change which resonates with Newbrough's (1992) conception of a 'human social system' for meeting the social justice needs of the disadvantaged. Referred to as the third community it is symbolic of the post modern period where the paradoxical needs of the individual and the collective

are fostered by emphasizing interdependence and balance as the goals for human and community development.

This is also in keeping with Putnam's (1993a, 1993b) conceptualization of trust flourishing in communities possessing high levels of social capital. While not clearly defined, trust is similar to colloquial understandings of it: "confident expectations that others will "do the right thing" even when incentives or constraints do not encourage or compel them to do so" (p. 38). Also pertinent in understanding what propels the community's integrative approach to sustainability is poignantly recognized by Putnam (1995): "... well-developed trust relationships encourage economic actors to cooperate in a variety of productive efforts that fall outside the scope of market relations" (p. 68).

#### *Theme 4.3 "Economic Sustainability & Integration of Goals"*

The third sub-theme "Economic Sustainability & Integration of Goals" reflects the contextual analysis of the following categories: "Lifestyle Choice & Business Development"; "In Pursuit of Happiness – A Shattered Dream"; "Tourism as a Key Economic Strategy"; "Diverse Views of Sustainable Economic Development"; "Dark Side of Environmental Influence"; "Advocacy & Leadership Role of Shire"; and "Neoliberal Logic & Locational Disadvantage". The narratives clearly reflect the community's conflict with the dominant paradigm of neo-liberalism, individualism and competition. While one sector of the community is driven by capitalist ideals there is also a strong opposing force that is driven by holistic lifestyle aspirations. Due to the tension between these two value systems the community interprets sustainability and entrepreneurial ventures differently. The narratives reflect the tensions between two social systems which Newbrough (1992) identifies as social contract and human social system. Within a social contract political system there is greater emphasis on independence, risk-taking and competitive enterprise. In contrast the *human social system* is associated with the principle of *equality* that promotes social ideals of development, interdependence and balance. It suggests that resources should be provided to all members of society so that they have meaningful participation and an

opportunity to improve their lives. Following are the reflections that echo the conflict between these two social systems.

Three distinct tendencies have been recognized in the practice of sustainable development that entails integrating the three dimensions 'ecological, economic and social realms' of sustainability. Clarifying the complexity underlying this endeavour Ratner (2004) informed that the three dimensions can be considered commensurable by technique, commensurable by a unifying ethic, or never fully commensurable and therefore implicating value conflict (Ratner, 2004). Promoting integration the World Bank document "*Making Development Sustainable: From Concepts to Action*" exemplified the three goals of sustainable development (Serageldin & Steer, 1994). However, in terms of operationalization, the authors clearly enunciate that the objective involved integration of these three dimensions into a consistent accounting framework.

It is therefore noteworthy that it may not be possible to optimize all the dimensions simultaneously because the task is framed as a *technical* problem based on finding the appropriate balance, it is not a *substantive* problem of inherently conflicting goals. While at first glance this may appear to pose an impediment to sustainability goals that integrate social justice values, Holdgate (1996) states that sustainability is not a technical problem to be solved, but "a vision of the future focussing our attention on a set of values and moral and ethical principles to guide our actions" (p. 138). In effect sustainability is not about replacing complex decision-making with technical rationality but when framed as a dialogue of values visionary changes that incorporate social equity is possible.

In a similar vein this third sub-theme 'economic sustainability and integration' also parallels the fundamental issues implicated when diverse groups attempt to integrate the three dimensions of sustainability. While there is overwhelming consensus for a unifying ethic of sustainability to guide future visions of the community, there are inherent conflicts over the criteria that should

be adopted in determining costs and benefits to be endured by the community. While some advocate balance between competing goals, others offer technical solutions to overcome value conflicts or advance ethical ideals to promote united visions. There are also those who reject integration as achievable due to lack of parity between the groups involved in promoting the various dimensions of sustainability to the detriment of others. Following firstly is an example of the competing interests facing the community and the difficulty involved with meeting everyone's needs within the realm of economic goals.

"... population growth is imperative for business ... Denmark's small village community must be retained ... development that threatens the environment must be opposed outright ... we stopped MacDonalds from opening here ... consumers are entitled to choice ... more employment is needed, part-time/casual work is totally inadequate to live on ... businesses cannot survive on seasonal tourism ... more resources need to be directed at infrastructure and advertising to promote year round visitors ... an over-supply of accommodation operators causes community conflict ... businesses need to work cohesively and extend trading hours to attract and keep visitors ... people come here for the lifestyle choice not to make money ... the entrance to Denmark is an eye sore, earth moving businesses don't belong there ... there is no need to clear virgin land to make way for an industrial site ... we need to encourage business development that is sensitive to environmental values ... the Shire is anti-development, we discourage investors from seeking planning approvals here ..."

### *Lifestyle Choice & Business Development*

There are also other contextual reasons cited as barriers that the community needs to recognize in promoting its economic goals for business development. The lifestyle choices of many of the people who own businesses in the community are not oriented towards entrepreneurial philosophies.

"... due to a lack of industry 30% of people in Denmark are self employed compared to 12% across the state ... small businesses face a number of specific challenges ... GST, lacking infrastructure, varying professionalism, small population, intense competition, limited seasonal trading, very low profits and other institutional problems ... with government and community support many businesses could become more viable, generate higher incomes and create employment for young locals ... many businesses operate to fit with the lifestyle they moved here for ... businesses are not geared towards growth or expansion, this is a huge cultural impediment ... "

*In Pursuit of Happiness – A Shattered Dream*

The statements above clearly reflect the paradoxes confronting the community and possibly pose a number of barriers to improving the Shire's vision for economic vitality. In fact the quandary faced by a business proprietor who came to Denmark in pursuit of a dream of running a successful business along with small community living, left confused and frustrated conveys similar anxieties in his quest to find a sense of community and belonging.

" ... Denmark is fantastic if you are just willing to sit and enjoy its natural charm ... it is very confronting if you expect Denmark to make your dreams come true then you will be disillusioned and leave because you've got to do it all yourself ... you have to sit in the fire, get burned quite badly, go through many survival phases – relationship, family, community - a whole range of levels ... I know many people that have come and gone, eight out of ten people leave ... you forget about them ... the fabric of the community somehow is just not strong enough ... it doesn't take much for the link to suddenly become flimsy and people leave ... the survivors keep going till they reach another level of resilience where they see options and not constraints ... its time to move on ... for our family this stage has ended, we can't expand, explore, be creative, fundamentally there isn't the



population mass to draw on ... from a retail point of view, if the business was anywhere else it would be hugely successful ... but we derive income from less than 4000 people where 40% probably shop in Albany, and so you have a very small, largely low socio-economic population with a number of retail choices ... in the end survival is just too costly for our family's future ..."

From this participant's perspective Denmark is perfect for those seeking spiritual fulfilment, however, its lacking population size and mix including infrastructure acted as critical barriers in meeting many of the family's economic and social needs. This lack of fit presented the family with little choice in pursuing the potential for more diverse life experiences offered by larger communities that he illustrates further.

" ... to give you an idea of the constraints - my wife is an Occupational Therapist and a professional singer, I'm a Teacher, a company sales manager, neither of these four skills can be utilized here ... if you have skills like graphic design, horticulture or wood work then this works very well here ... so for a lot of people its quite a difficult place to find occupational success ... most hold many part-time jobs in order to survive so you have to find seek personal fulfillment in other ways ... you go fishing, walking through the woods, start connecting at recreational-social levels, but Denmark does not have that rich fabric, its not ready for that level of sophistication ..."

For this participant's narrative it is evident that place attachment is not sufficient a bond to keep this couple in the community. The decision to leave reflects the less positive association to 'place dependence' defined by Stokols and Schumaker (1981) as an 'occupant's perceived strength of association between him or herself and specific places" (p. 457). According to Thibaut and Kelly (1959) place dependence concerns how well a setting serves goal achievement given an existing range of alternatives. Hence, place dependence differs from place attachment in two ways; it can be negative to

the extent that a place limits the achievement of valued outcomes. Second, the 'strength of connection' of the social actor to the setting may be based on specific behavioural goals rather than general affect (cited in Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001).

### *Tourism as a Key Economic Strategy*

The community is acutely aware of the need to combat unemployment, underemployment, rising cost of living (with implications for the poor), loss of youth including the lower income bases of businesses. While a range of economic strategies were identified to improve the economic vitality of the community the most prominent is to expand the tourism industry with activities that are in harmony with the natural environment. While the need for a steady influx of tourists is vital for the economy the community is cautious about tourism as the ideal solution as they are divided about the costs and benefits to the community.

" ... I guess tourism means more employment but many of the older residents don't want the visitors ... tourists are referred to as terrorists due to the negatives such as over-crowding, traffic congestion, no parking, increasing crime, longer queues, littering ... the community is beginning to realise that we need them to survive and its just a matter of educating them on the flow on effects of the tourism dollars and other benefits such as greater political bargaining with governments for more resources ... tourism development on the whole is economically driven it is not environmentally conscious, its pretty scary stuff ... we have to educate new residents and visitors about our environmental values ... we will need more resources to police tourist activities or our pristine environment will be lost forever ..."

While some issues have been highlighted over the costs and benefits related to tourism, there are other issues confronting the tourism sector that need

to be resolved. Although the community is wary about the impact of tourism there are also internal conflicts of interest emerging within the tourism network.

" ... the Tourist Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce have a few issues, they compete for marketing funds and conflict over private owners renting their homes as holiday accommodation ... during the peak season accommodation is fully booked however, in off-peak there is an over-supply and chalet operators complain that they miss out on business because volunteers at the Bureau favour holiday homes ... volunteers at the tourism centre refute this and claim that tourists choose to stay in holiday homes because it fits with their family needs ... in response the business sector also claim that unlicensed operators lack professionalism and don't provide high quality services needed by more discerning customers ... this is a disastrous situation for the bona fide industry because the accommodation industry is judged by the services provided by untrained people ... this is not ideal, but the Council can't do anything, under our Planning Scheme they are supposed to be licensed but compliance is not compulsory ... we have turned a corner, having liaised closely with all the groups, a cohesive tourism policy is being developed ... addressing issues of collaboration, levels of professionalism needed by tourists, resources for infrastructure and upgrade of tourist facilities ..."

The issues discussed so far are a clear reflection of Denmark's anxieties over its lacking economic foundation, with no industry or resource base to create the much needed employment, all focus rests squarely on tourism development. This tension adds greater pressure on the Local Council in mediating a balance between social, economic and environmental goals. Sustainability goals are further exacerbated given that the Shire is largely national park and reserve, where possibilities for rateable income are severely limited. This in turn places greater demands on the Shire to be more innovative in attracting the much-needed resources to undertake the growing governance

responsibilities as the impacts of globalization are devolved to Shire and community level jurisdiction.

Also relevant to the analysis is the way in which Denmark has responded to this internal conflict within the accommodation industry. Kelly & Steed (2004) identified that at the community-level a number of emotion-focussed coping strategies can be adopted when responding to stressful situations. Community members can display apathy, public conflict, social support, cynicism or avoidance. What is apparent in this case is the way in which the community has evolved from public conflict between sectoral groups and apathy from the Council to one of collaboration and provision of social support. Capitalizing on pre-existing close relations the Council has utilized its leadership status to deal with the issue by meeting the needs of the tourism network and facilitated a united tourism policy. This community action is also an ideal manifestation of the processes of a *gemeinschaft* community (Tonnie, 1957). Rather than hiding behind regulatory loopholes and responding with apathy and avoidance, the Council acted as a member of the community and promoted the good of the community by initiating a resolution with strong leadership more conducive when community members work for collective interests. This is reflected more eloquently by Tonnie: " ... *gemeinschaft* relationships refer to groups with a commitment to a common good achieved through traditional ways and a sense of obligation to work and participate for the community's well-being" (cited in Sonn, Bishop & Drew, 1999, p. 206).

### *Diverse Views of Sustainable Economic Development*

While there is overwhelming community consensus to promote sustainable employment, Denmark is continually challenged to manage the different interests and perspectives around sustainable development. The following highlights some of the social impacts facing the community, the articulation of some key strategies that reflect underlying differences between groups in terms of promoting economic growth.

" ... development and growth is natural for a growing Shire, otherwise how can people survive ... environmentalists have completely taken over development and the whole community suffers ... costs of living are sky-rocketing, petrol, food, accommodation is constantly rising, we live on less and less ... with no alternative to part-time and casual work, people have to rely on small business ventures ... Denmark is a regulatory nightmare for investors ... Shire planning is just too restrictive and developers go elsewhere ... solid planning policies are needed to deter sand mining proposals ... agriculture is an important tradition that fits well with tourism, Local Council is under intense pressure to protect valued land from developers ... politicians could care less about our struggles ... communities have to solve their own problems with little assistance from governments and more responsibilities get devolved to the Shire ... Council needs to support local entrepreneurs who promote sustainable development ... we need to capitalise on our environmental profile and develop and market innovation in agriculture, energy and information technology ... building an educational facility to host conferences and workshops, promoting interpretive tourism, exporting unique goods and services to niche markets are all sustainable ... "

It is clear that groups in Denmark diverge markedly in terms of economic goals for the community. While some believe that sustainable development is about alternative industries that protect the environment at all costs, others believe that social and or economic costs are equal or more important considerations. Hence, some appear to see little conflict with land and coastal development for industry, housing or tourist activities as a natural entrepreneurial goal. Others believe that economic and social needs are subsidiary if the environment is threatened. Many also believe that Denmark's agricultural landscape is a heritage issue and hence sub-divisions and any development that impacts on the environment or affects the long-term future of Denmark's rural landscape is opposed outright. On the other hand environmentalists have

identified a number of ecologically friendly strategies that will generate economic growth in the community. In spite of these differences there is the view that environmental groups possess greater power in directing economic development within the limits of sustainability goals and that there is a negative consequence as a result.

### *Dark Side of Environmental Influence*

While the conservation movement in Denmark has been highly successful in changing the values of the community there is a dark side to this triumphant success for environmental justice. As a result of focussing on environmental conservation it appears that development proposals are extensively scrutinized and this has resulted in the Shire earning the reputation as anti-development, creating barriers to further entrepreneurial activity. The other consequence of the community focussing on development as a priority concern is that human issues get ignored. Many expressed that apart from the fears generated by the possible loss of the Denmark Hospital that instigated a public outcry and protest, social and welfare issues have become a low priority for the community. Many advocacy groups communicated that since social and welfare issues fell off the radar, it has been very difficult to summon community attention and more importantly attract the much needed funds to deal with the issues faced by a growing marginalized group. It appears that a growing number of charitable groups and agencies are competing for a smaller pool of resources and this means less available to meet the social, psychological and economic needs of people. The following highlight some of the consequences when environmental values overpower the consciousness of the community and the Shire's decision-making process.

“... the development issue is the biggest cultural change that has occurred in Denmark, people refer to us as greenies, hippies, ferals and mung beans ... realistically there are very few of them here but very few people in Denmark are not environmentalists ... the biggest change in the community is that now social welfare issues are way

down the list ... the needs of youth, the elderly, domestic violence, poverty - its not addressed by governments at any level ... we rely on local generosity, tithing their modest incomes, there is no alternative and they care deeply ... we send many submissions, contact state agencies, corporate sponsors, other charities, competition is rife ... we attract barely enough for emergency food ... what about other needs, blankets, clothing, bare necessities ... the saying goes the rich get richer and the poor get poorer ... worse the better off say why don't they get a job ... its disheartening seeing mothers escaping violence, suffering psychological problems on long waiting lists ... accommodation, counselling, financial help is hard to get from any one ... rural communities have always been there for each other, the problems are just snowballing and now more people are suffering ..."

While promoting integration of social, economic and environmental goals is a complex task requiring multi-level strategic actions to date a clear articulation of the process has yet to be determined. From examining the dialogue above it is clear that the influence of globalization involving governments adopting neo-liberal approaches to address social issues has failed to tackle rural limitations. Echoing similar sentiments, Alexander & Reddel (1997) noted that despite years of neglect by governments and policy makers to the spatial dimension of poverty in Australian social policy: "... the hegemony of economic rationalism appeared to neuter any policy agenda which attempted to link notions of equity, social justice and locational disadvantage" (Alexander, 1994, p. 52).

### *Advocacy & Leadership Role of Shire*

As the residents identified a new approach is vital if the community is to promote long-term prosperity. Among other things the community required change towards a strategic mix of entrepreneurial, environmental, social and political cultures. In spite of the Council's perception as pro-environment there is overwhelming consensus that the Shire play a central role in facilitating

community visions for holistic sustainable development in parity with social and welfare issues. The functions entail the Shire taking on leadership and advocacy roles in planning development initiatives in collaboration with local leaders and stakeholders, including procuring the infrastructure and funds necessary to encourage locally grown entrepreneurs. This strategy is highly reflective of the sustainability ideals expressed by the United Nations discourse but it is also related to nature of small community living. This is in keeping with Newbrough's (1992) conception of organic community where the political principle of fraternity is promoted to encourage political participation at the local level. While *fraternity* is an organic principle associated with centrally controlled governments. The consciousness within this kind of social organization is the desire to be free of domination, oppression and coercion. Hence, a high level of democratic participation is necessary to promote community sustainability.

" ... Council needs to provide business leadership, lobby governments for social and economic issues ... build powerful networks with government and private sector resources ... identify grants for community groups and work as partners to promote everyone's needs ... coordinate tourism groups and funds to attract niche tourists who respect the environment ... assist small business development and improve employment potential ... work strategically with key leaders to attract funds and promote local entrepreneurial innovations ... identify impacts of regional economic development that conflict with the interest of the Shire ...

### *Neoliberal Logic & Locational Disadvantage*

The themes above reflect the process adopted by the community in responding to the cumulative effects of globalization and the changes occurring with the state towards relations of trust and reciprocity within governance institutions. Many writers concede that globally responses to societal progress depend largely on neo-liberal logic where along with market driven policies, government retreat from a welfarist position (Emy & James, 1996) and emphasis



on an enhanced role for civil society, (Adams & Hess, 2001; Everingham, 2001) communities are encouraged to address their concerns as a regionally bounded problem (Little, 2001; Reddel, 2006). Thus, all policy efforts whether global or national are directed at communities addressing the gamut of issues at the local level and where governments act as facilitators rather than resource providers regardless of the disparities and the cumulative stresses facing the communities. This is clearly discerned by a number of writers who note that the Commonwealth appears to argue that social capital and community association is best left alone without unwanted interference from governments, their bureaucracies or indeed their resources (Cox & Caldwell, 2000; Everingham, 2001; Harris, 2000, Reddel, 2006). While social capital has been hailed as vital for economic well-being power is always an issue for networks of trust (White, 2001). The question that needs to be posed is in whose interests are the networks? While many of the networks in Denmark highlighted social and welfare issues as a serious priority issue it was from an advocacy position. Clearly absent from the democratic process of political representation are the very people who bear the brunt of neo-liberal economics.

Residents who endure issues of unemployment, homelessness, poverty or psychological problems largely experience it in isolation. These individuals do not form influential coalitions equivalent to the more powerful economic and environmental lobby groups including other interest groups. As a result the social and human issues while identified as important are subsidiary when compared to other political stakes. Also resonating the negative impact of power dynamics when more vulnerable groups compete for limited resources, McIntyre (2004) prompts loudly that "...social capital is an economic construct for governance that needs to be challenged through a process of sweeping in and unfolding the implications for all stakeholders" (p. ). While many advocate the positive aspects of the new governance relations that involve empowering communities to share power with bureaucrats (Davis & Rhodes, 2000; Considine, 2001), there are also those who underline the threat to accountability (Rhodes, 1997; 2000). As Reddel (2006) points out in emphasizing the role of community over state,

there is assumption or acceptance of a diminished role for government; silence about the dangers of community elites and it appears to merge the concepts of state and community.

While Denmark has been highly successful in promoting environmental justice, nevertheless upholding sustainability strategies from an integrative perspective is a long-term vision requiring multi-sector government support. In view of the power disparities within communities and limited resources in existence to address growing human issues it appears that the most vulnerable members of our society are exposed as collateral damage of an imperfect market. Power therefore needs to be recognized as an important element in promoting community resilience, as government and community accountability is essential to changing governance relations. Furthermore if national economic policy is to be cognizant of social equity then new visions are vital to ensure that local communities experiencing cumulative hardships and lack the infrastructure to compete with communities possessing higher levels of human and social capital including natural resources are supported based on the specific needs of place rather than generic global and national policy ascriptions which promote community responsibility to the detriment of government accountability .

The thematic narratives reflect more fully the implications of adopting the new governance relations where over-riding authority to ensure transparency and accountability is missing from the framework. At the macro-level civil society holds great promise for liberation of those most disadvantaged. At the meso-level there is great promise but there is also no guarantee that the new governance relations will necessarily promote egalitarian processes. What is clear is that civil society and governance relations at macro and meso-levels can be used to enhance the capacity of those most disadvantaged, but it can also be used by advantaged groups to further their cause at the expense of those most marginalised. Following are reflections of the final sub-theme related to sustainability labelled 'governance – state-economy and market relations'. Discussions relate to the following categories of data analysis: "Devolution, Consultation & Participation"; "Paradox of Empowerment & Local Sovereignty";

“Impact of State-Driven Tourism Development”; “Local Versus Regional Identity”; “Communitarianism & Structural Barriers”.

*Theme 4.4 Governance – Changing State-Economy, Market Relations*

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Discussions below relate to the following categories of data analysis: “Devolution, Consultation & Participation”; “Paradox of Empowerment & Local Sovereignty”; “Impact of State-Driven Tourism Development”; “Local Versus Regional Identity”; “Communitarianism & Structural Barriers”.

Many writers have attributed the failures of state intervention and the negative impacts of public policy by market-based rationality for creating the political space in the (re)-emergence of community-based ideas (Adams & Hess, 2001; Goss, 2001; Reddel, 2002). The harking back to a more communitarian age has been driven by the rationale, that “... neo-liberal policies of economic rationalism assume that individuals will be focussed on their own interests as utility maximisers, the structuralist policies of state-centred development assume that individuals will act-out group interests which are determined by historical forces” (p. 18). By contrast communitarianism which conceptualises people as “... essentially social beings seeking intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity over time” (Pinker, 1971, p. 8) suggests that public

value, understood in terms of community needs will guide policy better than either market rationality or historical determinism (Adams & Hess). Naturally, this project involves a changing set of relations between states, markets and communities, as the underlying system of liberal democracy (Lane, 2006). In practice two contending trends have attracted policy makers to the idea that community might play a central role. According to Reddel (2002) one is that communities can fill gaps in service provision, and particularly social policy created by the shrinking of the state. The other trend is the suspicion that communities are not merely a cheaper alternative resource but offer a qualitatively better flow of policy ideas and processes. This policy trend echoes international development theory underpinned by the universal proposition that community driven processes are more likely to promote successful implementation as policies and outcomes reflect the needs of beneficiaries (Adams & Hess).

To enable the shift towards community direction of policy and programs a new set of relations are necessary away from autocratic processes associated with government. As Goss (2001) highlighted in contrast to 'government' that is associated with classical, top-down forms of policy-making and/or implementation, governance is generally held to refer to non-hierarchical forms of societal steering (Goss, 2001). As such, governance is employed to describe the 'self-organising, inter-organisational networks' which, in addition to governments, help to authoritatively allocate resources, exercise control and coordinate social activities at local, national and global levels (Rhodes, 1997). Governance relations also embrace local authorities, as the tier of government closest to the community they are recognized as key players and where their role evolves from that of service provider to facilitator (Rowe & Enticott, 1998). Indeed De Tocqueville included town councils in his *civil society* and thought that "autonomous local public bodies provided one of the means whereby citizens both achieve common purpose and maintain their independence of state and federal government" (Bryant, 1995, p. 143, cited in Lever-Tracy, 2006).

Governance is also associated with increased flexible structural arrangements, non-hierarchical and dialogical forms of inter-organizational interaction (Sibeon, 2001). Highly wary of the inherent risks of inter-organizational partnerships/networks, Goss also argued for more permeable departmental and professional boundaries that stand in the way of innovation and enunciates creating climates conducive to cross-boundary work. By employing flexible structures and protocols the various parties involved in local governance – including citizens, consumers, voluntary organizations, interests groups, professionals and administrators, private firms, quangos and politicians can engage in cross-boundary collaboration, where authentic approaches involve open-minded debate, negotiation and consensual social action (Sibeon). In view of the cross-boundary parameters discussed so far, this final sustainability sub-theme 'governance – changed state-economy and market relations' reflects the new governance interactions evolving in Denmark and which signifies a more complex role relationship between the state, Shire and the community as they attempt to deal with the diversity of community issues. Following immediately are excerpts highlighting the governance interactions between the various inter-organizational networks including government agencies and the community.

" ... the diversity is quite frightening, but to represent, hear everyone is still most important ... diversity will ensure we remain unique and sustainable ... expectations placed on the Local Council is enormous and growing ... pressures from community groups, government agencies, developers ... different sectors demand different things, some want us to be more official, others want less regulation, more freedom to do as they have always done ... newer residents come here and demand city services ... then we have governments continually reducing funds for roads, cutting back services with no consultation, no assistance ... they just expect us to get on with business ... I think the Council has a moral duty to look out for long-term locals, they should find lawful ways to stop new businesses

operating if it negatively affects established businesses ... the Shire needs to pay more attention to the needs of business owners, environmental groups have taken over the Council and our concerns are ignored ... we want to collaborate with the Shire separately from environmental groups ... the Health Services has a cohesive relationship with the Shire to attract funds for aged and mental health issues ... the Shire needs professionalism to deal with development issues ... the shire, police and the community pool resources to help at-risk youths not qualifying for government services ... the state government won the election on the back of our resource management policy which they adopted ..."

What is easily observed from the governance interaction just described is that firstly, rural residents have greater expectations of the Council's roles in managing the diversity of issues at the shire level. Also pertinent is that in spite of oppressive policy decisions that have resulted in a reduction in funds and services to the community, the Council appears to work more cohesively with government agencies at the local level. Also important to the analysis is the pressure exerted on the Council to deal with growing community conflicts more noticeable since the arrival of newer migrants from urban areas. Thus, conflicts arise out of differences in community expectations. While older residents expect the Council's decision-making to be based on loyalty, more recent migrants demand more formal management. The tension experienced by the Council reflects the clash between Tonnies' classical distinction of *gemeinschaft* (village) and *Gesellschaft* (societal and bureaucratic) communities - where the Council's relationship with a more diverse community reflects conflict and tension between traditional rural community values more associated with maintaining a local sense of community and the transplanted urban community values that resonate more with service provision.

To elaborate further, older residents see the Council in village terms and Councillors including council staff are seen as part of the community structure and where issues are dealt with more informally. The expectations of newer

residents however, tend to be based on the notion that Councils are service providers and therefore relationship with this community is more a 'them and us'. Nevertheless, there is much evidence to suggest that the community is embracing the new collaborative governance relations involving the Shire working cohesively with a number of inter-organizational networks to attract resources and address community concerns. The outcomes of such powerful networks also show that key environmental groups have influenced state policy. While the Council embraces its decision-making role, there is also the realization that they are part of the community and are not merely there to serve the community. Denmark as a community exemplifies the notion of cross-boundary collaboration based on creating permeable structures that facilitate non-hierarchical forms of societal steering.

*Devolution, Consultation & Participation*

The second theme to emerge titled "Devolution, Consultation & Participation" reflects the community's abhorrence of devolution of responsibility and disillusionment with government rhetoric' over public participation in decisions affecting their community. Firstly, the Local Council acknowledges that devolution and funding cutbacks have increased pressures to redirect funds for community infrastructure resulting in less for the Shire's social needs. Also adding to the burden is that current government services are grossly inadequate to deal with existing economic, social and health and welfare issues. As a consequence the elderly, single mothers, children, youth, unemployed, under-employed and those dealing with drug addiction, mental health and abuse issues experiencing poverty bear the brunt of government cutbacks. The following excerpts capture the frustration of dealing with government actions that ignore the contextual needs of a community and the lack of influence over government decisions.

" ... Denmark is the fastest growing Shire in the region yet governments continue to withdraw our services ... governments appear to offer no alternatives for communities like Denmark with

specific needs ... it's a recipe for creating further disparities between the haves and the have-nots ... decision-makers appear to be totally inflexible, the Department of Transport transferred Denmark's Licensing section to Albany, this decision was based purely on economics with no local consultation ... the effect on youth on limited income is having to travel 100km three times or more to get their licence ... it would be easy to adapt the service to avoid imposing impacts on local residents but no one in head office wants to listen ... many people with special human needs cannot meet the strict criteria set by government agencies, some luckily get by with community charity, others go hungry, live transient, alienated lives ... "

### *The Costs of Regional Living*

Many sectors of the community express extreme disappointment and desire for more equitable access to government services. However, there is passive acceptance of accommodating to change such as longer waiting periods and inferior levels of services as the price one pays for living in a regional area. The comments following demonstrate some of the inequity faced by those living in small rural areas:

" ... infrastructure and services are essential for regional living, there are no options ... since Western Power withdrew its service from Denmark, it takes more than three hours for anyone to respond, even in emergencies when someone's life is in danger ... the farming and business community are adversely affected by erratic power supplies ... if a dairy farmer with 5000 litres of milk loses power, the temperature drops just one tenth of a degree over 4 degrees centigrade and the tanker [buyer] won't pick it up, there's no choice but to turn the tap and let the milk run down the drain ... black-outs can occur up to nine times in one day, motors burn out, computers blow out, recordings of 206 volts show that not enough power is being generated, this would never be tolerated by city dwellers ... regional technology is totally



inferior ... line speed is slow, connections unreliable, broad-band is lacking ... mobile service is extremely limited, other media like SBS TV is not available ... opportunities are severely restricted for small businesses, emergency services and locals reliant on information access for research, education or employment ... basic infrastructure is not being addressed by governments and businesses suffer ..."

In spite of the political activism of key leaders and groups in the community there is much resentment about the authenticity of community consultation and participation having influence over government decisions that impact the Shire and the region. The comments below highlight the community's distrust about the genuineness of the policy and processes of consultation and participation adopted by government agencies.

" ... state agencies continually take actions that affect our community without any prior consultation ... the Main Roads Department increased the speed limit at a school zone, resulting in grave safety issues for the primary school children ... the Department of Education sited the Denmark High School without any regard for community wishes, it is an environmental mistake that cannot be fixed ... the Fisheries Department selected aquaculture sites with minimal or no consultation even though it impacts on Denmark's environment, agency officers ignored a sustainable aquaculture site selected by Denmark stakeholders and gave no feedback ... the Conservation & Land Management authority were secretly dumping toxic waste material in the Shire's landfill site until they were exposed by the Council ..."

One issue that causes a lot of emotional upheaval for residents is the siting of the world-renowned tourist park the "Tree Top Walk" within the Denmark Shire. Not only has the tourist park been developed by the state agency "CALM" without any consultation with the Council, the park's destination is advertised by the state Tourism Commission as nearest to the bordering Shire of Walpole. This

not only infuriates the Denmark business community due to loss of tourism dollars to another Shire but it is an exasperating outcome for the Shire of Denmark who is responsible for funding the services provided to this state tourist initiative.

“ ... no planning approval was required to build the “Tree Top Walk” because a government agency proposed it in a National Park ... they just went ahead and developed it without any consultation and they weren’t prepared for the consequences ... they did not plan for any emergency situations, car accidents, heart attacks, people falling off rocks... there is nothing to speak of, we have volunteers, there are no evacuation procedures in place, no Rangers to stop people doing stupid things ... CALM did not plan for upgrading of roads leading to the Tree Top Walk entrance which receives 200 000 visitors per year, the road was never built for that volume of traffic, in the end the Shire said we can't upgrade the road ... they removed all the rubbish bins from park and advised visitors to take their rubbish home but of course a lot of people don't, so it all ends up in the Shire's [Denmark] Tip and CALM does not pay for it ... there is no triple bottom line of accountability being practiced by government ... this tourist park has been of no benefit to Denmark ...”

In spite of government commitment towards greater collaboration, consultation and transparent processes, community perception is that many agencies are autocratic and fail the triple bottom line approach in evaluating their decision-making processes. While the community has demonstrated capacity to fiercely oppose decisions that adversely affect their community the perception is that communities should not have to resort to political activism to have influence over agency decisions that affect the community. It is believed that differences in value systems between bureaucracy and community are at the heart of the problems and are potentially great barriers towards achieving sustainability. The understanding is that bureaucratic decisions are made for short-term efficiency instead of long-term sustainability. There is fear that there are grave costs for future generations if this process continues along this path.

*Paradox of Empowerment & Local Sovereignty*

The third theme to emerge titled “paradox of empowerment and local sovereignty” is the community’s dissonance about the empowering process of sustainability planning on the one hand and the burden of dealing with mounting issues with little or no assistance from governments. It is true that many groups have experienced liberation and a sense of community from public involvement in solving community issues. There are also others who feel besieged by the cumulative social and economic impacts that have overtaxed their resilience and feel that neither the community nor governments are interested in addressing their concerns. Related also is the realization of the limit of local governance relations when set as rivals against the hierarchical power of the state. While local communities feel empowered in planning their future there is also the paradoxical understanding of the limited nature of local government power. The following highlights the community’s capacity for resolving the growing issues based on the premise of new governance relations.

“ ... self-help is nothing new, rural communities have always relied on local volunteers to maintain crucial community infrastructure and give a helping hand to people in difficult times ... times have changed the harsh social and economic realities necessitates double income families and growing single parent families means we cannot rely on volunteering and charity ... economic downturn places many demands on the community, it is an unfair burden to expect small rural communities to solve problems created by governments ... it is unjust to expect struggling community groups to provide the mere basics to vulnerable groups while governments ignore their social responsibility ... the Council adopted the sustainability approach, they attend to environmental and legal impacts but social and economic impacts are seriously lacking, how can we address economic and social issues when the environmentalists’ needs always come first, there needs to be a fairer system to meet everyone’s needs ... ”

While more resilient groups in the community feel empowered by the new governance relations many others feel overwhelmed by the pace and magnitude of changes they have to cope with. As Solomon (1986) highlighted community social support systems can become overtaxed in times of stress and given the government's shift of focus from social policy to self help models of intervention there is a clear need for collective-level social support (Solomon, 1986). Kelly (2000) argued that collective-level social support includes counselling or mediation for groups, the provision of physical resources to maintain or increase community facilities, compensation for industry closure, funding for retraining, community education programs, information about community services and facilities, and the dissemination of information about the potential impact of a change event. It is therefore not surprising that a lack of collective-level social support results in greater vulnerability to future change or lack of resilience to adapt to changing conditions. Given the long-term nature of changes impacting on rural communities, the erosion of community's ability to cope with additional change is particularly salient (Kelly). Most importantly, the depletion of community resources can result in a deterioration of social ties and increase open conflict between community sub-groups who are competing for overtaxed resources (Hobfoll, et al., 1995). This in turn can create greater obstacles to collective action, ultimately undermining a community's sense of well-being.

### *Local Sovereignty*

As already observed the Shire and the community are highly proactive in strategic planning for sustainability however there is scepticism about the power of local government sovereignty. Following are comments about the unbalanced role relationship between the three spheres of government and whether it is really possible for local Councils to plan for sustainability.

" ... planning is still the achilles' heel of what this community wants to protect ... town planning schemes are effective till it is challenged and our planning process, planning laws are subject to over-rule by

the Minister of Planning, nothing is set in concrete ... the Shire is repeatedly confronted with mining applications despite its policy opposing the activity ... in the end the Council is just an advisory body, not a decision making body ... we have no influence over private development, soon the harvesting of blue gum plantations will see logging trucks travelling along major access roads and this impacts motorists, school children and the Shire ... Local government is a toothless tiger, it needs more teeth to protect the interest of the wider community which they serve and are very close to ... No-one knows better what the people of Denmark want than the Denmark Shire Council, not state government, not federal government, no-one ..."

Many residents highlighted that the state government limits the Council's planning efforts by shifting the costs associated with infrastructure pre-requisites to the Local Shire. For example to accommodate the changing needs of population growth the Shire proposed expansion of nodal housing developments across a number of key locations within the Shire. While the Shire has every desire to comply with the legal stipulations endorsed by government agencies it is socially unjust to place the unfair burden of the infrastructure costs on Shires unable to attract funds of this magnitude. In effect nodal developments remain at a stalemate while the community searches for investors willing to fund the infrastructure costs. The following highlights the state's restrictions on the Shire's planning process.

" ...you've got limitations with waste disposal and water supply, Peaceful Bay [coastal holiday homes] has no water, its got no bore or access to public supply and unless you can find it, I don't see how you can develop it ... The Minister for Planning said no more sub-divisions unless you can deep sewer and provide proper water supply ... no one is willing to pay the money to search for it and connect it, so although the Council has signalled nodal developments for Peaceful Bay, Nornalup, Kenton and Bow Bridge, really you've gotten nowhere

with any of them ... a case was put forward to the Planning Department for some funding for structure plans and they knocked it back ... the Developer doesn't want to do it in case he doesn't get approval and the Shire can't afford it and the State Planning Commission says you can't have money for it, so if you want good planning, you have to pay for it.

Clearly an unjust burden has been placed on Local Shires to source substantial funds from government and private sectors to develop these nodal towns that abide by government building and safety regulations. The real tragedy is that local residents of Peaceful Bay who have had a 100-year lease with the Local Council and who have lived there for generations will stand to lose their homes when the lease expires in 2010. The social impact of a stalemate on development along with leases expiring is that current owners may not be able to afford to buy back their properties. Part of the complexity is that these coastal-sited homes have experienced a dramatic rise in real estate values and when the lease expires the prediction is that the Local Council will sell these properties at the new inflated prices. Given that the majority of these residents are retired and in their elderly years living on a pension this is causing extreme stress. To make matters worse the Shire is not being transparent about the process to be adopted and no assurances are being given that residents will not severely be disadvantaged. A month after the researcher reported the community's fears to the Local Council a committee was set up with Local Council representation and a number of key community stakeholders to resolve the issues. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the Local Council will act in the financial interest of the Shire and adopt *gesselschaft* relations to the issue and risk causing a social injustice to residents. On the other hand the Local Council could adopt *gemeinschaft* relations to the issues and promote more socially just solutions that would see people in their advanced years continue to live out their remaining lives in their homes.

*Impact of State-Driven Tourism Development*

The theme titled "Impact of State-Driven Tourism Development" reflects another issue that impinges heavily on creating more positive local governance relations. There is the concern expressed that state activities directed at development and promotion of the tourism industry is pursued without any due consideration of the changes and impacts to local communities. Furthermore there is the expectation by states that Local Shires will assume all the coordination and costs of infrastructure maintenance and related services that flow from tourism activity. While the state agencies appear oblivious to the social and economic impacts caused to the community and Local Council there has been no consultation undertaken by the state on the effects of unlimited visitor numbers to the Shire. It appears that state agencies operate under the notion that increasing tourism numbers only produces positive outcomes and very little attention has been directed at evaluating the sustainability costs. A number of issues that the Shire and community members have not been able to discuss with the state agencies are outlined below.

" ... locally grown nature-based tourism with its maintenance plan and support is the ultimate in sustainability planning ... nobody has done a study of the full impact of [state driven] tourism and we're opening up a whole new front with this local industry approach ... the state nor the local Council has considered where the tourists are coming from, how they are getting here, we haven't got an airport, nor adequate accommodation to house a huge influx ... where is the water supply coming from, we haven't got the infrastructure in place and there is this aggressive advertising on a world scale ... none of the town planning schemes are taking this whole issue seriously ... what if we get another 200 000 tourists and they stayed for a week ... how do we feed them all, provide medical services with a nursing post ... there are also increasing numbers of caravans and campervans, its a nice way of creating revenue, but bins get filled, toilets get clogged ... as far as road maintenance the Mines Department can't even find

the gravel sources, it took the stake-holder Reference Group to push them for a 10 year forecast of the region's need ... we have no fire fighting facilities commensurate with very large areas of National Park, the fire station at the northern end is gone because Rocky Gully [town] is dying due to the growth of plantations ... the whole issue of tourism, infrastructure needs and impacts has not been considered, there is no forward planning done by any body ... there is a benefit and a cost to tourism, except the costs land at the feet of the community at large and the benefits go to the few..."

In spite of the costs involved the community is not against expanding the tourism industry, as there are meaningful ways to manage the costs and benefits. First and foremost is facilitating all tiers of governments to work authentically within the new governance relations and to accept that these issues require long-term planning guided by the imperatives of sustainability. The following highlights the community's perspectives on resolving the issues.

" ... the message from the Tourism Conference in Hobart is that you do not oversell the assets, advertising should go easy, the infrastructure needs to be developed in tune with the visitor numbers that you can accommodate and it is done gently, planned properly we will derive success ... just like Africa and Europe we have to accept that certain areas, like the "wilderness" areas here, must have a quality system in place where you set a definite "upper limit" of tourists and that is linked to what you can support without destroying the area ... this needs to be brought to the attention of local and state governments ... while the state is advertising on the international market, the local government is involved as the service provider but it is imperative for the state to provide some funding to oversee it ... what is the point of the Tourist Commission selling the hell out of our tourist destination if we cannot handle the problems created ... all these government agencies are going to have to start pulling



together in the same direction if they don't want to create nightmares for each other... "

### *Local Versus Regional Identity*

While residents have identified a number of governance related issues implicating state agencies acting in conflict with the interest of the community there are agencies that promote collaboration and community development for a number of Shires sharing a distinct regionally bounded identity. The theme titled "Local Versus Regional Identity" reflects the conflict of interest inherent in promoting a regional identity when Shires experience disparate outcomes. The agency Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) works to promote the collective needs of the Great South region and as a result some Shires derive more benefit from a regional focus. Firstly, this regional authority has been created without community consultation and it is also located in the regional town of Albany 50km from Denmark. While this agency is charged with facilitating the sustainability goals of all its Shires within the region, it is set up as a resource network and the expectation is that Shires will access GSDC expertise to promote community driven strategies. As the community interviews revealed apart from the Shire Council and key leaders in the community this regional authority held no significant meaning to the community. More importantly, the community did not feel any connection to an externally imposed regional authority and felt that a regional identity produced a conflict of interest when all the Shires compete for the same resource dollars. Following are community views about the costs and benefits of embracing a regional identity.

" ... the notion that regional promotion of events in Albany will cause an overflow of business into Denmark is not a reality, the winner is Albany ... regional marketing conflicts with the distinctiveness of Denmark's identity ... we are all competing for the same tourism dollars, Albany tourist bureau does not promote or market Denmark, in fact tourists impressed by Denmark's offerings felt disappointed that they were told that Denmark had little to offer ... tourists benefit from

the whole journey within the entire region, we need to stop competing by promoting all the attractions the region has to offer ... at the end of the day GSDC is not going to make a lot of difference to local Shires, it's not going to mean any more money either as the local governments have a better understanding of local community's needs and issues ... the GSDC is too far away to know our needs, I would think they would be biased towards Albany's interests ... many issues require regional solutions and the local Shire needs to develop good relations with government agencies to promote Denmark's interests ... the Great South has no significance to me, I am proud to identify with Denmark's unique culture ..."

### *Communitarianism & Structural Barriers*

What seems clear from examining the changes occurring in governance relations is that there is a greater push by governments towards community driven processes and to have local governments more responsible for infrastructure and equity issues like creating equal employment opportunities. While state agencies have devolved many responsibilities to Local Shires and expect Local Governments to work collaboratively with their communities to resolve issues. What the data revealed is that on many occasions state agencies continue to reflect more top-down forms of policy-making and decision-making at odds with the espoused communitarian concepts. On the other hand the Local Government has demonstrated more clearly the application of non-hierarchical forms of governance relations involved in collective steering. As such the community of Denmark echoes the principles of the new governance where self-organising, inter-organisational networks' work alongside Local government agents to authoritatively allocate resources, exercise control and coordinate social activities.

There is no doubt that community mobilization has promoted a greater sense of community and facilitated inter-organizational trust within the Local Shire however, the process has shown to be ineffective for delivering equity in

outcomes. While the foundations for 'triple bottom line' decision-making and community development principles have been designed to create more community involvement, the processes does not address issues of inequity they were partially designed to address. Community development processes, for example are hampered by the governmental structures and when implemented at a local level, they are not capable of addressing inequities. Disadvantaged groups remain invisible and are not engaged in the general community change processes. Nevertheless, community involvement is one way of maintaining trust while these 'foreign' concepts are adapted to rural life. The sheer nature of Denmark's diversity makes community involvement more complex and governance networks need to recognize that there are more interest groups that need to be involved and that the process of participation needs to be more complex to embrace inclusiveness. It is hoped that the Denmark Council with the support of the GSDC will have the opportunity to monitor the effects of these policies, to advise state government agencies and to work towards remedying problems with voice and equity.

As Day (1998) contended, government policies aimed at notions of shared ownership and control with the community is dependent on how these forms of empowerment are actually played out at the local level. Whether individuals themselves actually feel empowered by the process or whether the added burden of responsibility is being devolved is at the heart of the question. An added inference of self- help models is the powerful ideology of community capacity to place an unfair responsibility on community members for failures due to deficiencies in developing entrepreneurial skills or 'self-change' (Gannon, 1998, p. 28). Such reasoning shifts the responsibility for decline away from government action and overlooks the various structural barriers to self-help which exist in communities with declining levels of social, economic and physical capital (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). Placing the responsibility for failure on the inabilities of rural people also helps to justify a form of social action that is directed less at dismantling the structural inequalities of society and more at changing the response of those who suffer from them most (Herbert-Cheshire,

1999a). Understandably, there are calls by many for a 'rural policy' that seeks to guide and monitor community development initiatives to ensure that sustainability outcomes are being achieved evenly by diverse sectors of the community. In particular, for all tiers of governments to coordinate the vital infrastructure and services necessary to complement the capacity of groups and organisations who continue to be marginalized.

#### *Quantitative Analysis of Data*

Representing Brinberg & McGrath's (1985) 'boundary search' a quantitative survey of residents' perception of the issues most pertinent to regional living was undertaken. This is also consistent with data source triangulation (Mays & Pope, 2000) where qualitative data is compared to survey responses to confirm earlier findings and identify differences in opinions. While a number of questions were posed about issues related to regional living, only one question will be analysed due to limitations on the word count of this thesis. The question asked residents to list the issues of of priority that is of most concern to the Denmark community.

#### *Demographic Detail of Survey Participants*

From a total of 348 survey replies 55% were female and 45% were male. The age range was classified into three categories and 10% of the respondents identified as 'under 30 years' of age; 50% identified as between '30-55 years' and 40% identified as 'over 55 years' of age. As far as socio-economic status is concerned the respondents ranged from unemployed (5%); pensions and social security benefits (15%); self funded retirees (10%); farming related work (20%); light industry and hospitality (10%); self employed and business owners (20%); professionals (20%).

As far as gaining sectoral representation of environmental, business and social and community welfare issues is concerned, the statistics revealed that 40% reported as not belonging to any committees or groups and 60% belonged to a multiplicity of committees and groups. Based on the statistics of group

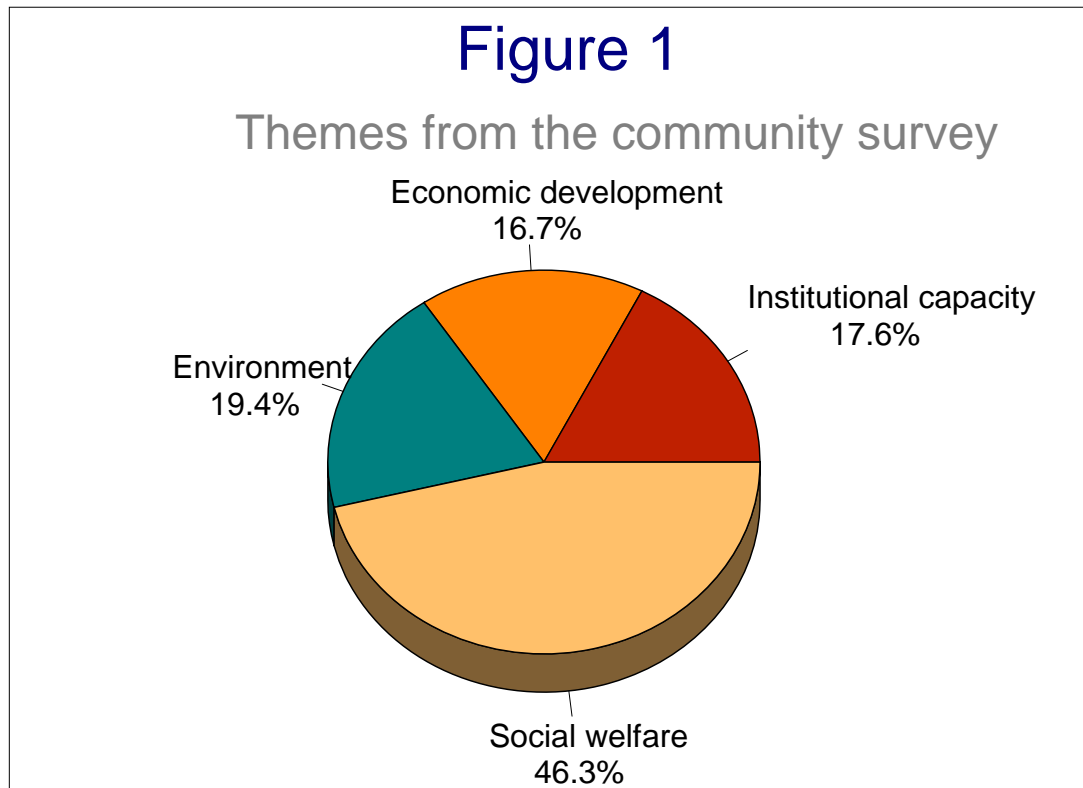
memberships it is fair to say that all sectoral interests have been represented in this survey. Of the 60% who belonged to committees and groups in Denmark, 35% identified as participating in environmental groups; 35% identified as participating business related committees and 30% identified as participating in community and welfare committees.

### *Thematic Coding*

The community participants representing farming; business; environmental and other social and community sectors identified 531 responses to issues spanning social; environmental; economic and governance concerns (see Appendix 1). The issues generated from the survey were thematically categorized into four dimensions namely "social welfare"; "environment"; "institutional capacity" and "economic development". These responses were then entered to the Excel Spreadsheet program and percentage calculations were computed.

The pie chart on the following page (Figure 1) revealed that 46.3% of the respondents' identified social welfare issues as most relevant and in need of urgent attention by governments. The second community concern comprised 19.4% of the respondents who identified the "environment" as an issue of vital importance to the community to protect its natural heritage. This is closely followed by concerns related to "institutional capacity" where 17.6% of respondents identified government action as critical in promoting sustainable community development to address socio-economic and environmental issues. Closely related is "economic development" as an issue of grave concern to which 16.7% of respondents identified as vital to deal with equity and access to address social welfare problems. Both Table 3 (see Appendix 1) and Figure 2 (see Appendix 2) delineate more clearly the break-down of the holistic nature of issues identified as priorities by community residents that also echo the sustainability dimensions.

Figure 1 – themes from community survey



*Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data*

It appears that a superficial analysis of the survey results confirms strong community consensus for governments to address social welfare issues as the highest priority. However, this is not defensible when quantitative data is merged with contextual analysis that substantiates that the community overwhelmingly sees the complexity of issues to be addressed as an integrated set of concerns. While the quantitative data revealed that social welfare issues are extremely important to a greater number of residents, this can be attributed to the high levels of stress residents being reflected over the possibility of losing the Denmark

Hospital that did not eventuate. What the combined qualitative and quantitative data revealed is that the community sees all the issues as an inter-related set.

While different sectors of the community emphasize different issues, as a community there is an overwhelming culture of ethics for economic development to be cognizant of environmental justice; for governance relations to echo egalitarian processes in promoting community visions, for governments to acknowledge locational disadvantage in its policy ascriptions and by integrating all the contributing factors the social welfare of its members can be addressed. A viable vision should not assume a perfect and harmonious world. On the contrary, it must confront a world of conflict, injustice and other evils (de Raadt & de Raadt, 2005).

## **CHAPTER FIVE - Discussions and Implications**

*Chapter five discusses the implications of the data analysis in terms of addressing the impacts of globalization from a 'community mobilization' approach, within a sustainability paradigm in terms of delivering just processes and outcomes. Specifically this chapter incorporates multi-disciplinary literature to highlight ecological level factors implicated in promoting the social, economic and environmental needs of the community. The focus also includes examination of the new governance relations for promoting empowering processes to deliver the social justice needs of those most vulnerable in the community. A key finding to emerge is that while the community has endured adverse socio-economic impacts and development and social justice outcomes are uneven, they reflect unity in their strong relational bonds to the community and spiritual connections to the beauty of their natural geography*



## **CHAPTER FIVE - Discussion and Implications**

### *Community Psychology and Community Development*

As analysts and practitioners community psychologists have much to contribute to the field by assessing the nature of development conflicts and identifying the specific social and institutional transformations evolving in communities. To gain knowledge that has the potential to promote participation and empowerment of individuals and communities to meet collective challenges in pursuing ecological and social justice. This requires the dual role of understanding the character of 'development-making' and engaging in debates over development alternatives (Ratner, 2004). This also requires refining our conceptual tools to make sense of the language and practice of development. In pursuing these aims this chapter will integrate literature pertinent in clarifying and enhancing understandings of the findings emerging from this community's transitional experience.

What this study revealed is that the impacts and influence of change permeating from globalization manifest differently depending on the level of analysis employed. In view of these differences discussions will pertain to impacts of change in terms of the community as a whole, the various sectors of the community, the Local Council and its effect on the community's capability and capacity to adapt to change. This chapter integrates the literature relevant to the findings in these three key areas and is followed by a discussion of the implications of the key findings to promote processes and outcomes toward a just society.

### *Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature*

In attempting to gain clarity of the impact of globalization forces for rural regional communities this study identified four overarching themes that captured the Denmark Shire's experiences. The first three themes epitomises the community's strong sense of community and holistic vision for a sustainable

future. The last theme captures the community's narratives of transition and the inherent contradictions involved in striving towards a sustainable and morally just future while dealing with the multitude of impacts flowing from globalization imperatives. A key finding to emerge is that while change has had a significant socio-economic impact on the community their resilience is best expressed as soaring and this is clearly reflected in their relational bonds, the strong sense of community and identity they collectively share. Furthermore in spite of intense local and global pressure to capitalise on their natural assets they stand united by a spiritual connection to the unique geographic beauty of their region and fight to preserve it for future generations. This chapter begins with an exploration of the first three themes that reflects the community's idealism and vision for a just and sustainable community while the fourth theme discusses the community narratives in terms of the paradoxes involved in pursuing the principles of sustainability and collectivism while clashing with the dominant cultural narratives of individualism, capitalism and globalized neo-liberal logic of development.

#### *Themes Underlying Community Narratives*

The central thrust of this study sought to determine the shape of globalization impacts occurring within a rural regional setting and to understand the fundamental values driving community visions to deal with the multitude of issues influencing community sustainability. In grasping the impact of globalization forces the most prominent feature emerging from the data is the impetus to act collectively in preventing the negative consequences of development initiated by capitalistic greed. It is evident that the thrust of the community's motivation can be attributed to many factors including their strong sense of community and identity to the geographic beauty of their region. They are also motivated by a strong concern for intergenerational justice. This consciousness is eloquently captured by Syme, Kals, Nancarrow & Montada's (2000) study of the function of justice and ecological risks: "... from an intergenerational perspective, although the next generation has no lawyer representing its rights in the present and although the people of the current generation have no direct self interest in the future ecological situation, there is a

general sense of justice for intergenerational ecological risks and “heritage” (p. 117). Hence, according to the authors communities are motivated to act pro-environmentally and to reduce future risks when intergenerational injustices are perceived. Given this linkage it is understandable that in spite of the social and economic consequences the community of Denmark is driven to promote an ethic of holistic sustainability.

It is clear to observe that the first three themes “Spirituality – Principles Underlying Community Vision”; “Geographic Affinity – Symbol of Denmark’s Natural Beauty” and “Vibrant Sense of Community & Cultural Diversity” powerfully reflect the community’s shared values and impetus driving the community’s sustainability vision. These narratives clearly radiate the community’s strong sense of community and identity that is linked to their desire to create a community that is economically viable, ecologically sound to ensure inter-generational equity as well as caring and compassionate towards those most vulnerable. These narratives fit strongly with Fyson’s (1999) articulation of the practice of human agency that can lead to experiences of transformational community and in Williams (1992) language as “truly living”. Dokecki (1992) also argued that “community integrates the levels of society by means of the intentional caring relationship”, which becomes the ‘norm for the rightness or wrongness for any action” (p. 31). In exploring the relationship between theory of community and theory of praxis, Newbrough (1992) also argued the same basic thesis that “the duality, identified as the problem of the ‘One and the Many’ has to be transcended into a unitary concept of both The One AND The Many” (p. 11) or as Fyson described it, into an experience of transformational community. The first three themes reflect the authentic community experienced by the majority of the residents who are united to transcend individual and sectoral interests and to promote an intentional caring relationship toward people, the environment and for future generations.

The fourth theme titled “Holistic Sustainability Framework” also reveals compelling reflections of the community’s vision for creating a viable community based on integrating the holistic needs of the community and the environment.

However, unlike the first three themes that reflect the optimistic elements of the community, the fourth theme is more complex. While many positive aspects of community life are also represented the last overarching theme captures the varied nature of community functioning and change including the inherent contradictions involved with community transformation towards the ideals of sustainability. Hence, reflections also incorporate the more negative aspects of community relations, particularly when diverse community groups with varying levels of power are forced to compete for limited resources. Following is a critical discussion of all these themes in light of literature that resonates the need to look more deeply to promote contextual understandings of community.

*Place Attachment, Place Identity & Sense of Community*

Bishop and Vicary (2003) argued that researchers have failed to study sense of place, place attachment and sense of community as integrated concepts. As this study revealed the community reflects an inextricable link between identity, sense of belonging and attachment to the geographic beauty within and outside the border of their Shire. It is useful to explore pertinent literature that clarifies this link at a conceptual level. Place attachment is broadly characterized as the emotional ties people have with place (Altman & Low, 1992; Williams & Steward, 1998) or the meaning one attributes to such areas (Fishwick & Vining, 1992; Kaltenborn, 1998; Relph, 1976; Stedman, 2003). On the other hand Harold Proshansky (1978) stated that "there is no physical setting that is not also a social, cultural and psychological setting" (p. 150). He coined the term "place identity" to denote the dimensions of self that define an individual's personal identity in relation to a physical environment. Proshansky later attached the concept of place identity to belongingness (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983, cited in Rosenbaum & Montaya, 2007) to suggest that when individuals identify with a place, they engender the place with feelings of attachment. Hence place identity refers specifically to the role of places as sources of identification and affiliation that add meaning and purpose to life (Proshansky, 1978).

Many have related "identity theory" to people's bonds to residential environment (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Bonaiuto, Carrus, Martorella & Bonnes, 2002) and favourite places (Korpela, 1989, 1992). However, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) suggested "sense of place" as a multidimensional construct, an attitude, comprising the attachment dimension. According to these authors, the main characteristics of "place attachment" is the affective positive bond between a person and a place; more specifically, a strong tendency of that person to maintain closeness to such a place. More, Jorgensen and Stedman showed that the dimensions of identity ("beliefs about relationships between self and place") and dependence ("the degree to which the place in relation to alternative places is perceived to underpin behaviour") were less related to the sense of place construct than was the dimension of attachment ("emotional connections to place").

The consensus is that place attachment and place identity are related in that strong feelings for a place derive, in large part, from the role that places have in forming and affirming a sense of personal identity (Williams, 2002). These conceptual notions are clearly depicted in many of the community narratives where Denmarkians echo a strong sense of place, place attachment, sense of community and identity as an integrated experience that living in Denmark derives. These observations are also easily discerned in their resistance to alternative identities being imposed on their community particularly by government agencies and the more recent wave of migrants. For example, in relation to the identification of Denmark with the more recent arrivals, long-term residents are quick to point out that referring to Denmark as 'feral folk' or "greenies" is false as they are fewer in number and that while they are diverse in culture they are united by history and love of the lifestyle afforded by their 'geographical place'.

In terms of alternative identities being imposed by government agencies, residents expressed either no feelings or awareness of being part of the Great Southern regional boundary. In fact residents feel very strongly against the homogenization of the Southern region. The belief is that Denmark's landscape,

culture and community is unique and insist that they differ markedly from communities in other Shires. In striving to be authentically different, resisting development and reinforcing environmental values to guide future visions, the community reflects a very strong inter-relationship between attachment to place, the community, environment and identity as a unique cultural experience.

Casting a different light on the mechanism of community resistance, Williams (2002) highlighted that in making and resisting claims on what *place* is, was or ought to be, the community is participating in the politics of place. In fact all humans participate in the politics of place whether in the formal venues of community planning and political decision making or in our choices of how and where we live, work and play including the more mundane routines of daily life (Williams & McIntyre, 2001). Clarifying further, Williams argued that "... (a) place meanings create and structure social differences (serve to define us and them, locals and outsiders) and (b) claims of what belongs to a place (what kinds of meaning and practices are deemed authentic to the place) are often invoked to assert power and authority over place" (p. 355). Hence, "sense of place" is not *an* or *the* authentic quality of a place waiting to be recognized by the more observant among us, but a social construction perpetrated by some one or some group with a particular interest. Competing sense of place are thus important sources of political conflict.

An important source of political conflict over place clearly emerged when fierce battles were fought by the business community to influence local, regional and state Tourism agencies to re-site the location [on advertising and promotional material] the location of the world famous tourist attraction the "Valley of the Giants" as situated within the Shire of Denmark given that is where it resides. In spite of intense lobbying pursued by Denmark no change has occurred to remedy the location error and the other Shire continues to be identified as the gateway to this tourist site and benefits financially from the flow of tourist dollars this attraction generates. It appears that the interests at stake are too well entrenched and there seems little that the community can do to

gain recognition of the loss of place identity or re-negotiate the financial loss of having an externally imposed development constructed within their geographical boundary.

Williams (2002) eloquently linked politics of place to the development of postmodern identities. For example, on the one hand globalization liberates individual identities from a given place, no longer bounding self around the culture and practices of a given traditional place-based community. On the other hand by unmooring identity from place, globalization expands our capacity to make claims on how we might value and use a universe of places. The implication is that while modernity frees us from some pre-existing and fixed set of meanings it turns all meaning into contest. The paradox is that while much has been gained in terms of material well-being and individual autonomy and liberty, modern forms of social relations have also led to the displacement of local community norms and standards of behavior and replaced them with individual preferences often expressed in the marketplace or the voting booth (Wolfe, 1989). Hence, the meaning of a place is increasingly subject to a kind of ideological marketplace with all the competition and instability that goes with it (Williams).

### *Holistic Sustainability Framework Discussions*

To re-iterate the first three community narratives capture the essence of a strong relational *gemeinschaft* (Tonnies, 1957) culture including the positive elements of sense of community shared by the community as a whole. What also emerged is the community's positive reflection of its strong sense of identity to community and place, including its open-ness to cultural diversity and its collectivist, social justice orientation to steer the community towards a just and sustainable vision. However, as already alluded to theme four portrays the complexity and the diverse shades of community life and interaction for different sectors of the community. Hence, a more complex understanding of community functioning and change is illustrated. While many positive aspects of community are also portrayed in terms of promoting a cohesive community, contextual

understandings of the negative aspects of power differentials and social capital and civil society resources between in-groups and out-groups are also identified. The operation of a lack of sense of community including moral inclusion and exclusion are all part of a more contextual understanding of community functioning.

Theme four “holistic sustainability framework” refers both to the powerful influence of *globalization* and the resilience of the community in concurring with the values of *sustainability* to guide visions for a better society. This section begins with a discussion of the first sub-theme ‘social sustainability and equity’ to clarify the impact of globalization and community responses. Featuring prominently from the community narratives is the way in which globalization has impacted on the community and more specifically how different sectors of the community adapt to these changes. While social sustainability relates to the “ability of rural communities to retain their demographic and socio-economic functions on a relatively independent basis” (Smailes, 1995, p. 101) the data revealed that social sustainability is inextricably intertwined with social justice concerns. While costs endured by the community have been high, this theme also demonstrates both unity and division in their quest for sustainability and social justice. This section also includes a discussion of literature pertaining to globalization and social capital to aid understandings of community impacts and notions related to community resilience.

#### *Impact of Globalization for Denmark*

The impacts of neo-liberal policy initiatives, technological changes, (Larson, 2002; Tonts & Black, 2002) declining profit margins and increasing efficiency in Australian agriculture (Gray & Lawrence, 2001) have resulted in a decline in the proportion of population employed in agriculture in localities such as Denmark. Despite greater efficiencies, Pritchard (2000, p. 101) argues that the profits are ‘captured by other players within internationalised commodity chains’ and do not filter down to the producers, whose profit margins continue to decline. This is clearly illustrated in the community narratives about the impacts



community endures as a result of the growing export market of blue gum plantations. While farming in Denmark is a diverse industry the growth of the blue gum plantation has not benefited the farming community or the shire as a whole. For example it is reported that the profits from blue gum plantation go directly to international and national consortiums while the Local Council assumes all the costs of roads and infrastructure maintenance. Additionally community residents are also affected by traffic congestion, noise pollution and pose safety threats to cyclists, school children and aged pedestrians as heavily loaded trucks use the Highway that passes right through the community centre. Community observations are that these plantations pose a serious environmental and social cost to the Denmark Shire and the community.

While governments continue to push international trade, Gray and Lawrence (2001) report that trade policy changes have had a direct impact on the economic wellbeing of entire rural communities. As many rural researchers have highlighted the federal government's progressive move away from provision of social infrastructure and services to privatization of some services and reforms to public policy in line with neo-liberal philosophy has resulted in the withdrawal of many services initially established in the 1970s (Hancock, 1999; Stilwell, 2001). More specifically the impact of these changes Denmark is that it has left a huge gap in terms of the capacity of the community to deal with the multitude of issues emanating from unemployment, under-employment, economic downturn, homelessness, alcohol and drug addiction, mental health issues, growing aged population and youth exodus to list a few.

While the implications of globalization and government reform have hit the farming sector in Denmark heavily in terms of lacking infrastructure, power, and emergency services, the farming community did not feel that this study was the appropriate forum to discuss issues affecting the personal lives of their family. However, what has been revealed by this community and backed by many studies (Lockie, 2000) is that neo-liberal economic policies have created substantial relative deficits in institutional or social supports for rural residents, compared to those who live in cities and regional centres. Additionally,

privatisation of public infrastructure (e.g. Telecommunications) and services (e.g. health) brings the profit goals of corporations into conflict with the service needs of residents. This creates a dilemma in areas such as health where there is little 'elective' choice in when and how demands are made on the system (Gray and Lawrence, 2001; Hancock, 1999). It is clear that these policy approaches increase the economic, social and emotional burden of ill-health already carried by rural people (Black, Duff, Saggors & Baines, 2000; Hancock, 1999; Voss, 1999).

Gray & Lawrence (2001) noted that rationalisation of services that are not volitional, such as health services, puts at risk people's access to services which do not lend themselves to free market management. Hence, service reduction has a disproportionate impact on the less mobile members of the community, particularly young people and the aged (Tonts, 2000). Also concurring other researchers revealed that in Britain the centralisation of health-care services impact those with the poorest health and the least flexibility to access distant services (Lovett, Haynes, Sunnenberg & Gale, 2002; Mungall, 2005). Many community narratives reflect similar concerns where the aged, single parents, youth - those with the least resources bear the costs of centralization of services to regional centres. Many writers have noted that regional 'sponge' centres continue to grow rapidly as they provide centralized infrastructure and commercial support to surrounding rural communities (Dawson, 1995; McManus & Pritchard, 2001). In contrast the "infrastructure and community life of many rural and remote towns has been slowly pared away" by the direct and indirect effects of reduced incomes from the farming sector (Sidoti, in Pritchard & McManus, 2000, p. 9). The consequences of policy changes that lead to an unwelcome reduction in access to health services for rural people highlights the human effects of the divergent value systems of the welfare state and market or neo-liberalist state (Hancock, 1999; Stansfeld, 1999).

Despite mounting evidence of economic downturn endured by the farming sector that in turn adversely affects the vitality of the local economy, many have lamented over government inaction to improve the incomes of farmers and other residents including addressing the social impacts occurring in

small rural communities in Australia (Barbieri, Paugam & Russel, 2000; O'Toole & Burdess, 2004; Stone, 2000). There is a clear mismatch between neo-liberal policies and programs aimed at empowering communities and building the capacity of rural communities to solve their problems with local knowledge, expertise and depleted resources (Talbot & Walker, 2007). This is exacerbated by the fact that governments continue to centralize services to regional centres which prosper at the expense of peripheral communities like Denmark that receive less support in their struggle to develop the viability of their economy and social sustainability. Add to this a lack of access to health and other essential services and it is inevitable that the impoverished continue endure the brunt of neo-liberal goals. Alston (2002) eloquently captures the lacking reflexivity of the impacts of policies driven blind adherence to market ideology: "... government policies of devolution, privatisation and managerialism have been formulated with free market principles as the dominant determinant and with little apparent consideration of the effects on social capital ... NGOs report being overloaded and under-funded. There is widespread acceptance of the view that Australian rural people are becoming more socially isolated and alienated" (p. 93).

### *Community Resilience & Social Capital*

While community resilience is a dominant attribute of Denmark also emanating strongly from the data is the diversity by which the various sectors of the community have adapted to changes. While it is clear to see that the more powerful groups tend to attract more resources, Talbot and Walker (2007) have linked this capacity to a specific dimension of social capital. Offering greater clarity the authors have distinguished three dimensions of social capital implicated in conceptualising the impact of neo-liberal policy initiatives in communities. In general social capital can be defined as "networks, shared norms, values and understanding, which facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (OECD, 2001, p. 41). In contrast, Talbot & Walker identified three different dimensions implicated in enhancing community resilience. Drawing on the work of Woolcock (1998) the OECD identified three forms, where (a) bonding social

capital refers to the strong ties that develop between people of similar background and interests, usually including family and friends; (b) bridging social capital refers to informal links between more distant associates and colleagues across communities, and (c) linking social capital refers to 'relations between different social strata in a hierarchy where power, social status and wealth are accessed by different groups' (p. 42).

While bonding and bridging social capital are considered essential community resources, Talbot & Walker (2007) stressed the significance of linking social capital in facilitating greater access to external resources. As they noted a crucial aspect of the associations in 'linking social capital' are between community members and the agencies of the market and state that have direct and indirect influence within the community. Because community members' interactions with these agencies involve the negotiation of power, linking social capital is where the effect on access to resources will be most clearly evident (Talbot & Walker). Clearly apparent from the community narratives is the abundant source of bonding and bridging social capital as a universal feature that enhances resilience among families, the various sectoral groups and the Local Council. However, in terms of linking social capital that demonstrates negotiation with more powerful actors in society to access resources this level is ad hoc and lacking for some groups in the community. For example, while the community as a whole mobilized for political action and demonstrated linking social capital in negotiating for a new hospital. Linking social capital is not an endless resource it is an energy that builds strategically to promote the capacity to fight for issues of high priority to the community and enhance community well-being and resilience. For example, it is clear that the environmental groups possess greater levels of linking social capital reflected in their ability to influence local decision-making, and also affect government policy and the voting public. In view of their political influence and expertise they demonstrate astute skills in attracting resources to develop innovative technology and promote ecological integrity within the Shire and surrounding districts requiring environmental protection.

On the other hand, sectors such as the Denmark Community Arts Network demonstrate excellent levels of bonding and bridging social capital in sponsoring world-class artistic events however they struggle to gain financial and human resources to sustain the valuable contribution they make to the community. They lack the vital ingredient of linking social capital at the societal level that would enhance the resilience of the Arts sector. Also contributing to the struggles experienced by this sector is the lacking commitment and priority of governments to the Arts sector where a multitude of agencies have to compete for limited levels of funding. McDonald & Harrison (2001) noted that governments and industry groups in Australia have increased the call for arts organizations to undertake more marketing activities. This required them to show knowledge of the marketing concept and produce marketing plans in order to obtain funds, a trend noted worldwide (Harrison). As the industry is still learning the fundamentals of conventional marketing practice they experience serious challenges (McDonald & Harrison). This effectively forces the Denmark Arts community to either become more entrepreneurial to raise needed funds or accept the lower standard of living derived from minuscule levels of funding available to the Arts sector. It would take linking social capital to negotiate with power elites to demand greater priority to the Arts sector. However, this would require gaining recognition of the important contribution of Arts to community cohesion and well-being to enable access to more funds and resources.

Similarly, the business sector also struggles to remain viable and as a group they battle to attract the income and funds necessary to enhance the resilience of the community economy. While Denmark's economy is unique in that it has a higher proportion of small businesses who compete off a very small population base, its failing economy is also linked to the lack of bridging and linking social capital apart from lacking regional government intervention. While the various business groups clearly demonstrate high levels of sense of community and bonding social capital by the unity over environmental and social justice values including more participative governance relations. This sector also reveals a lack of both bridging and linking social capital. For example, the lacking bridging

capital is expressed by the absence of collaboration among the business community to ensure that tourists needs were met with a prompt and reliable service, instead the community was marred by conflicts of interest and individualist responses. Hence, potential tourists would often drive past Denmark because businesses were shut even during peak tourist business hours. In spite of the frustrations over the tight economic conditions in Denmark there is reluctance to work co-operatively through strategic planning collective economic benefit. It appears that the tensions that underlie competition between business groups are incongruous with collective planning. The lack of linking social capital is also reflected in their inability to work strategically with the Local Council and other community groups to facilitate entrepreneurs that are willing to invest in environmentally and socially responsible development. Obviously many in the business sector are constrained due to political differences to collaborate with the Local Council as they interpret the powerful influence of the environmental sector as a defeat to business activity. The Chamber of Commerce and other business also do not link strategically with regional government agencies and other power elites internal and external to the community to attract the necessary funds and resources to improve the economy of the community.

This study also revealed that the various social and welfare agencies involved in advocating resources for the more vulnerable population groups also reflect a variety of social capital dimensions that affect community resilience. For example while there are greater levels of bridging and bonding social capital operating among members belonging to the Soup Kitchen, and committee members involved in addressing the needs of youth at risk, homelessness and access to mental health services. These groups clearly do not possess the crucial element of linking social capital to negotiate with the power elites, as they are unable to access adequate resources for those most vulnerable and instead are dependent on the altruistic segments of the community to sustain their good work. This can also be linked to the neglect of governments and powerful

community groups who have failed to promote more inclusive forms of governance relations that promote self-determination of those most vulnerable.

The Denmark Hospital's committee on the other hand demonstrated all three dimensions of social capital in their capacity to work collaboratively with all sectors of the community and attract more funds from a number of government agencies to promote the housing and safety needs of the Aged as well as generate the community's interest in protecting the Hospital from closure. Why linking social capital is such a powerful explanation for the success of the committee in accessing greater resources for the Aged issues, their success can also be attributed to the governments' fear that a rising baby boomer population can pose a serious threat at the ballot box if they continue to ignore their social needs. As a result it appears that more funds are being directed towards the Aged sector and as a result this group is able to attract more funds for their issues. It is a sad indictment of our political system that other vulnerable groups such as the farming sector, struggling businesses, youth, unemployed, under-employed, homeless, disabled and the impoverished do not appear to pose a serious threat to party politics and as such the advocates in these sectors are less able to manipulate linking social capital to their ends. If this community is serious about promoting a just society then it seems clear that Newbrough's (1992) framework for promoting equilibrium among the three principles of liberty, equality and fraternity lacks synergy. It seems prudent that the next step for the community lies in pursuing more confrontational means in advancing the liberation and equality of those most vulnerable in the community.

*Ethical & Technical Consensus - Multi-Dimensional Notion of Sustainability*

The second aspect of theme four relates to the community's environmental values and the community dynamics implicated in pursuing sustainable development. This section involves clarifying the implications of embracing sustainability particularly where environmental values are a powerful force in driving the decision-making process. Featuring prominently from the community narratives under the theme "environmental values and sustainable

development" is the way in which the community experiences intense internal and external pressure to develop its natural coastal assets for economic gain however, the community remains adamant in its opposition as it is seen as a short-term financial gain that will ultimately result in enclaves for the elite. While the community fears the expansion of exclusive communities that would ultimately change the cultural dynamic of Denmark, these fears can also be attributed to their strong environmental values. As the narratives reflect the community is united in their spiritual connection to the geographic beauty of the region and as such many of the decisions appear to be driven by an authentic concern for preserving ecological integrity and community identity. What is also implicated is that this community is diverse and while the environmental groups sway great power over decisions that affect the environment, diverse values do co-exist and the extent to which the community embraces a multi-dimensional framework of sustainable development will be explored.

As previously reviewed Ratner (2004) advanced that holistic notions of development can be pursued by the attainment of technical consensus and ethical consensus. Most pertinently when all three sustainability dimensions: social goals; ecological goals and economic goals are pursued within a unified framework it is considered commensurable. In contrast, if the dimensions are pursued as discrete substantive ends, then they constitute *different value spheres* and are deemed incommensurate, as action cannot rely on a single framework. Consequently, the three dimensions can either be considered commensurable by technique, commensurable by a unifying ethic or never fully commensurable and therefore implicating value conflict.

What the narratives revealed in terms of Denmark's transitional experience is that while the first three themes loudly echo an ethical consensus in pursuing a multi-dimensional notion of sustainability within a unified framework. Theme four reflects community diversity around pursuing social, ecological and economic goals including governance relations. While the environmentalists and community sectors that embrace environmental values share both ethical and technical consensus within a unified framework to guide development and deal



with the impact of globalization. There are however, other groups who reflect contradictory interpretations in terms of pursuing the three dimensions of sustainability. For example, while conceding the existence of within group diversity, it is clear that the business sector, including the more traditional farming community and the Local Councillors who represent their interests desire a less ideological approach and where each dimension is pursued separately within a contextually based socially just evaluative framework.

Given the diversity of viewpoints on sustainable development (Merchant, 1992; Dryzek, 1997) the existence of value conflicts among Denmark's diverse community sectors is inevitable. It is therefore not surprising for the less powerful and particularly the original inhabitants of the Shire to harbour resentment towards the newer generation of migrants who promote globally imposed interpretations of sustainability at the local level. In spite of these tensions, there are collaborative alliances between government officials and the community groups who support the more vulnerable sectors and who in turn also champion environmental causes. This in part can be attributed to their strong sense of community and identity with Denmark including higher levels of awareness about global warming issues. There is also an additional factor that may contribute to the community's growing affiliation with environmental groups. On the whole the narratives show that environmentalists appear more inclusive in their values and concern for the welfare of the needy and promote a caring and compassionate ethic to the processes of community planning. The fact that the environmentalists in Denmark promote a more holistic interpretation of sustainability inclusive of social justice considerations may also explain why this sector is generating growing support for a unifying ethical and technical consensus towards community visions. However, this is not to affirm that the environmentalists' conception of "sustainability" is the true character of sustainable development, as (Ratner, 2004) pointed out, it misses the larger dynamic, a social construct in which a wide variety of approaches contend for legitimacy.

*Supporters of Status Quo, Reform & Transformation*

These divergent community viewpoints can also be compared with the value positions categorized by O’Riordan (1989) as strong ecocentric and strong technocentric. Ecocentrics are oriented toward social and economic equity and redistribution while technocentrics are more likely to support the economic and political status quo. However, this is not always the case, as Marcuse points out: “sustainability and social justice do not necessarily go hand in hand” (1998), p. 104), with sustainability masking injustice or on the other hand social justice masking environmental damage (Dobson, 2000). In many cases the linking of environmental and social concerns is based on a moral (Blowers, 1993) or sympathetic outlook rather than seeing the two as materially and socially related and inseparable. Contributing to a more complex understanding, Hopwood, Mellor & O’Brien (2005) outlined three major perspectives that capture the trends occurring within the field of sustainable development: status quo; reform and transformation.

Firstly, supporters of the status quo do not view societal and environmental problems as insurmountable, as adjustments can be made without any fundamental changes to society, means of decision-making or power relations (Beck, 1992; Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000). Furthermore, growth and economic growth is seen as part of the solution (DETR, 1999). On the other hand those who take the reform approach accept there are mounting problems, however, they do not locate the root of the problem in the nature of present society (Christie & Warburton, 2001). The key is to persuade governments and international organizations, mainly by reasoned argument, to introduce the needed major reforms. Their strategy is to focus on technology, good science and information, modifications to the market and reform of government (Hopwood, et al., 2005).

In contrast, transformationists see mounting problems in the environment and/or society as rooted in the fundamental features of society today and how humans interrelate and relate with the environment (Leff, 2000). They argue that a transformation of society and/or human relations with the environment is

necessary to avoid a mounting crisis and even a possible future collapse (O'Connor, 1998). Reform is not enough as many of the problems are viewed as being located within the very economic and power structures of society because they are not primarily concerned with human well-being or environmental sustainability (Weinberg, 2000). While some may use the established political structures and scientific arguments they generally see a need for social and political action that involves those outside the centres of power such as indigenous groups, the poor and working class, and women. The transformationists include those who focus either primarily on the environment or the socio-economic, and those who synthesize both (Hopwood, et al., 2005).

It is clear that the narratives reflect many of the elements highlighted above and the contextual differences pursued by various groups in the community need further clarification. It is tempting to categorize those groups in the community who promote growth and development as supporters of the status quo and as having a weak commitment to environmental sustainability however, this is not supported by contextual analysis. While some believe that industry and development is necessary to address dire social and economic problems, there is also paradoxical support for preserving Denmark's geographical heritage. While there are external pressures for development that can be associated with greed, the community's concern for the economy is largely based on survival and community sustainability. It appears that both sides of the political spectrum [growth versus environmentalism] are fearful of each other's ideological stance and there is a clear need for more relational work to create an environment conducive for collaboration.

Clearly the distinction between those who support the status quo, reform and transformation in the literature are not as straightforward in the context of the Denmark community. This study also found that many individuals and sectoral groups who support the environmentalist position for more holistic interpretations of sustainability are also more aligned with reform and transformation. On the other hand there are many groups supportive of environmental preservation in principle also face paradoxical interests when their

culture, lifestyle and livelihoods are at stake. Hence, when people face poverty and little hope for the future they are more inclined to see social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability as deserving discrete evaluations in light of contextual considerations and as a result are more inclined towards technocentric orientations and supportive of the status quo.

Additionally, while on the surface it may appear that those who are strongly ecocentric, embrace transformation from a social justice perspective. What this research also found is that in spite of the community's value orientation towards transformation contradictory actions are also inherent. For example, the more powerful sectors of the community particularly the environmentalists are clearly more oriented towards transformation. However, they will need to go beyond advocacy by changing the power relationships of those most vulnerable, by focusing on strategies of inclusion of those outside the centres of power toward self-determination and participation in social and political action. As the narratives revealed the environmental movement in Denmark has repositioned their standing in the community from marginalized to a mainstream status. It is therefore predictable that community visions for holistic sustainability would largely reflect a framework based on environmental conceptualizations. As a result many community groups with divergent interpretations of sustainability and justice are either excluded from the decision-making process either by their resistance to participate in affairs perceived as green power. Or by the inability of the green movement to see how they may be inadvertently excluding voice and constraining innovation by not embracing diversity. In highlighting the absence of Indigenous and non-white voices from the environmental table, Jackson & Penrose (1993) noted: "...the invisibility of the dominant self has, through differential relations of power, allowed whiteness to remain outside the process of definition, and many have been ignored and marginalized.

Also prompting the environmental movement to adopt a more reflective practice of inclusivity, Agyeman (2001) argued that: "... the crux of the problem is that the mainstream environmental movement has not sufficiently addressed the fact that social inequality and imbalances of social power are at the heart of

environmental degradation, resource depletion, pollution, and even overpopulation. The environmental crisis can simply not be solved effectively without social justice..." (Bullard, 1993, p. 23). Whilst the environmentalists have gained power to promote their conceptualizations of a values-based vision of sustainability, there is a real need for the community to embrace a diverse and contextually relevant discourse of values and sustainability to gain consensus on the practical meanings of justice considerations at the local level. Also espousing contextually grounded principles to guide community development practice, Gleeson & Low (2000) highlighted that an abstract philosophy [e.g. sustainability] to guide the kind of society and morality needed to promote ecological justice leads to unresolvable paradoxes and contradictions. Indeed many have warned against de-contextualised applications of meta-ethical principles in dealing with environmental issues, as abstract considerations of justice rapidly lead to contradictory alternatives (Brennan, 1988; Elster, 1992; Walzer, 1983).

While these observations raise the issue of universalism versus moral relativism, Lowe & Gleeson (1998) have argued for the fusion of universal principles within a situated ethics to resolve this dilemma. With reference both to Kant and Arendt (Benhabib, 1992) argues that "judgement is not the faculty of subsuming a particular under a universal but the faculty of contextualising the universal such that it comes to bear upon the particular" (p. 132). It is therefore vital for the community of Denmark to pursue the next stage of their transition towards the nature of what Beck (1992) calls "reflexive modernity" as justice will always be a contested concept. The important thing is for the means of contesting it to be available. "In discovering justice through the practice of examining and resolving conflicts, we create the possibility of change for the better" (Low & Gleeson, p. 205). The struggle for justice in particular cases can thus become the vehicle for change of the big picture.

*Economic Sustainability & Integration of Goals*

Emanating clearly from the community narratives under the sub-theme “economic sustainability & integration of goals” is the paradoxical issues facing this community that have implications for the viability of their local economy. The contradictions are related to several factors, the dominance of sustainability as the framework guiding Denmark’s future visions, the powerful influence of the environmentalist sector and lacking government policy and infrastructure to address the inequitable needs of rural communities. At the governance level Denmark faces fundamental challenges in managing the needs and aspirations of diverse groups and in determining the costs and benefits to be endured by the various sectors of the community. It is clear that groups in Denmark diverge markedly in terms of economic goals appropriate for the community. While a greater majority embrace sustainability goals in line with alternative industries that protect the environment, others believe that social and or economic costs cannot be ignored. Hence, while some see no conflict with entrepreneurial economic growth, others believe that economic and social needs are subsidiary to the long-term protection of Denmark’s natural environment.

While ecologically friendly strategies have been identified by the collaborative environmentalist sector to generate economic activity, there is the view that economic development within the constraints of sustainability affects the vulnerable sectors more harshly. As a result many reject integration of sustainability goals as achievable due to the lack of parity between the diverse groups in the community. It seems clear that Denmark struggles in balancing the needs of a diverse community and the power differentials of the various groups. While the more powerful environmentalist groups are driven by ethics of sustainability there is the sense that they now represent the new oppressors. As powerful leaders of the community they will need to be more reflective about the inclusiveness of the processes of participation and more importantly that outcomes are just and not too far in the distant future. In her exploration of community sustainability within a globalized context, Fyson (1999) advised that

keeping a balance between justice and oppression is difficult. McMurray (1954) also warned that: "Without justice, cooperation becomes impossible" (p. 204).

This 'relational dynamic' between community and power is made explicit by McMillan (1996) as the need for authority (which is to serve the many and not just the self) to maintain a sense of order and therefore, trust (p. 319). Also significant is that we live in times where the balance is on the side of needs fulfillment. Given the dominance of individualism in contemporary culture (e.g., Sarason, 1986; Bellah, Madson, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Newbrough, 1992) emphasizing collaboration and participation as a relational link between individual and collective needs are vital (Nelson & Prillentsky (2002). Following are discussions pertaining to the dynamics involved in pursuing economic vitality in a community where tension and conflict between collective, individual and sectoral needs are an all time high. These tensions are also explored in light of the dual influences of globalization imperatives and sustainability goals.

### *Stakeholder Interests & Collaboration*

A truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems (Agyeman & Evans, 2004). Pursuing 'just sustainability' represents a balanced approach where there is explicit focus on justice, equity and environment together (Agyeman, 2002). Jacobs (1999) calls this 'the egalitarian conception' of sustainability. While Denmark powerfully reflects a 'just sustainability' approach there are many issues that need closer examination in terms of transformation towards an egalitarian conception of sustainability. As previously identified Denmark faces a number of social and economic dilemmas in the management of unemployment, underemployment, lack of industry, resources and infrastructure including inadequate revenue generated by local businesses. While a number of groups within the tourism industry have attempted to work collaboratively with the Shire to promote professionalism and increase tourist numbers many sectors of the community also vocalize their fear of the social and environmental costs of an influx of tourists.

Another barrier facing the community is that the business sector is not a cohesive network while some desire financial success others are content to balance income generation with lifestyle pursuits. Also fuelling the lacking integration of economic goals is community diversity, some residents are self-funded retirees, others generate income from sources external to the local economy, however, there are many individuals and families including youth who are highly dependent on the vitality of the rural economy for survival and community sustainability. It is therefore vital for the Shire and key leaders of the community to address issues of participation to ensure diverse representation and egalitarian decision-making processes to promote a united vision for economic vitality.

In keeping with government policy pronouncements that emphasize the role of the community as the ideal site for resolving local issues (O'Toole & Burdess, 2004; Reddel, 2002), key community leaders in Denmark have achieved much success in working collaboratively towards economic and other sustainability goals. In fact groups such as the Denmark Environmental and Innovation Centre (DEIC) have implemented many environmental strategies and identified a number of potential entrepreneurial niches to stimulate economic growth and development. These strategic responses powerfully echo the public sector reforms being pushed by governments to promote the self-sufficiency of rural communities and pursue sustainability (Davis & Rhodes, 2000; Considine, 2001; Little, 2001). Most notably, social capital and 'partnership' feature prominently within the Australian social welfare system and the public policy context to promote social and economic wellbeing (Stone, 2000). Partnerships involve forging new relationships among industry, government, NGOs and other societal stakeholders and establishing new social values compatible with sustainability (Biondi, Frei & Rialdo, 1998; O'Toole & Burdess, 2004). The process of collaboration is also facilitated when "parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (Gray, 1989, p. 5). While the key leadership group DEIC and the Local Council have successfully forged a



collaborative network and values framework to promote strategies compatible with sustainability there are a number of concerns that need further clarification.

It is highly visible that the DEIC partnership comprises mainly of environmentalists and other participants who support their vision. Other community groups who conflict with their conception of sustainability including those most vulnerable in the community are absent from this community-level decision-making body. Confirming findings comparable with Denmark's collaboration experiences, Thomas-Slater (1994) noted that despite the best of intentions, efforts to engage local residents run the risk of neglecting the poor and disenfranchised. Those who are marginalized and powerless are likely to be both unorganised and silent, even when organized, their voices may still be muted by more powerful interest groups. Hence, "enabling disenfranchised groups to achieve voice and agency is a significant challenge in any community context" (p. 1486). Some obvious absences from DEIC's partnership include the farming sector and the Denmark Chamber of Commerce (DCC) that represents the interests of the local business sector. DEIC however, may find it difficult to recruit the participation of the farming community as they depend on their own networks of power to advocate for their needs and disassociate their cause from the environmentalist groups due to political differences.

On the other hand, the Chamber of Commerce was invited to participate at the DEIC's table and they declined for a number of reasons. Firstly, they did not think that DEIC was a neutral group capable of integrating diverse perspectives of economic development. Secondly, they felt their autonomy would be vulnerable in a pre-existing structure that commanded a powerful influence in the community. Hence, relationships are strained as the Chamber of Commerce resists the domination of DEIC's processes for determining the entrepreneurial goals of Denmark. The conflict of interest is that DEIC's economic agenda would lead to improving the employment prospects of a select group and therefore is not representative of the diversity of skills in the community. Furthermore, DEIC's processes are not perceived as truly egalitarian as alternative or conflictive visions are suppressed through power and exclusion.

While Denmark shares the values of sustainability, the community is divided on its interpretation and the underlying conflict and tension requires attention. Distinguishing factors that challenge collaboration, Wiesenfeld (1996) focused on the antagonistic forces operating within communities and the value of diversity. Hence, an appropriate foundation for community involves building more trusting relationships among the various sectors. Persell (1997) highlighted trust as essential for sustainable economic activity. Kadushin (1995) also isolated the concept of “enforceable trust” as a key factor in high finance to explain the importance of friendship in the operation of the French financial elite. Hence, economic growth is especially enhanced with more associations and less hierarchy (Mohan & Mohan, 2002; Putnam, et al., 1995).

### *Collaborative Networks & Linking Social Capital*

In attempting to advance ‘community capacity building’ (McClure Report, 2000) government policies aimed to “create an environment based on social partnerships in which government act as a facilitator, sharing the role and responsibility for providing, regulating and delivering services and welfare” (Stone, 2000, p. 10). Missing from DEIC’s collaborative network are the key government officials, particularly, the regional agencies with greater access to vital infrastructure and resources to support the entrepreneurial goals of the community. Also absent are the entrepreneurs and private sector capital essential to facilitate the economic vitality of this community.

To promote ‘linking social capital’ this community planning partnership will need to increase its vertical spread of networks (Mowbray, 2004) to gain the resources and expertise essential for undertaking entrepreneurial activities that transcend local borders. Many have emphasized the essential role of *civil society* in promoting community capacity, but what needs to be emphasized is that civil society cannot flourish without economic sustenance (Lane & Morrison, 2006; Tracy, 2006). To ensure structural economic transformation, discourse emanating from collaborative networking (Dasgupta, 2000; Woolcock, 1998; Zollinger, 2003) suggests that Denmark must confront its decision-making

processes to ensure inclusivity by acknowledging its power base and limitations to achieving a truly civil society.

Acknowledging the tribulations of adversarial stakeholder partnerships, Hartman, Hofman & Stafford (1999) echoes the message that collaboration presents significant challenges to communities. Specifically, the practice of coordinated decision-making requires moving outside existing social structures, bringing together opposing values, exercising flexibility and changing traditional independent and competitive mindsets among sectors of society (Miller, 2005; Pizzocaro, 1998; Talbot, 1998). Other factors implicated in inhibiting the effectiveness of stakeholders' exchanges for economic sustainability, include, institutional disincentives, historical and ideological barriers, social dynamics, risk perceptions, technical complexities and politics (Florida, 2002; Golding, 2004; Gray, 1989). For Denmark to continue its transformation towards a coordinated management of sustainability, Talbot (1998) calls attention to tolerance for compromise and a willingness to 'agree to disagree' as essential elements. Hence, collaboration entails more than just economic or technological solutions to promote sustainability, but careful attention to leadership, decision-making, fairness and relationship management (Assouline, 1998; Miller, 2005; Rushton, 2002).

Given the enormous challenges underpinning collaboration it is indeed astonishing that in spite of its diversity Denmark has embraced an ethical consensus around sustainability. It is therefore no revelation that Denmark experiences a number of difficulties with stakeholder participation as much more time and effort including expertise is necessary to build the relationships necessary for constructive management of differences, joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibility (Reddel, 2002). Also adding support Edwards (1998) points out, there are clearly multiple ways in which communities participate in the decision-making process and while dominant discourses and expectations on the empowerment of the community may have emerged from state policy, these are interpreted and mobilized differently by various community interests. Local development histories are also highly important in

terms of the way in which local groups and organizations interact in the formulation and implementation of community-based initiatives (Ray, 1998).

Given Denmark's chequered history and the rise of the environmentalist movement as the new community leaders this had led to conflict with the traditional farming sector and other individuals and groups who feel over-powered and therefore excluded from conceptualising a future that addresses the local needs and aspirations of a diverse community. Purpel (1987) eloquently claimed that: "[This is]... the crux of our crisis: the difficulty of creating a vital, authentic and energizing vision of meaning in a context of significant diversity, pluralism, division, skepticism, dogmatism and even nihilism." (p. 64; cited in Fyson, 1999, p. 356). It will take a visionary leader to promote community transformation (Evans, Hanlin & Prilleltensky, 2007) towards a united moral interpretation of sustainability.

### *Leadership & Transformational Community*

The Shire Council plays a key role in facilitating community initiatives towards sustainability visions to ensure protection of the environment along with promoting economic, social and welfare issues. Implicitly, the Local Council plays a central leadership role in facilitating 'community relations' optimum for guiding this diverse community towards an over-arching collective ethic that embraces sustainability from a place of unity. As pertinently noted by Sampson, McIndoe, McAdam & Weffer-Elizondo (2005) collective civic action does not emerge or grow directly from individual memberships and dense social ties, instead it is the organizational infrastructure of the neighbourhood level that matters a great deal more. Most importantly, community 'intimacy' or as O'Donnell, Tharp & Wilson (1993) coined it intersubjectivity' is vital for promoting a transformational community (Evans, et al., 2007). Fyson (1999) depicted "transformational" community as when the tension between the "One" and the "Many" (Newbrough, 1995) is resolved in such a way that meaning is added to the individual's and community's life because of a common calling to a vision.

This vision is transcendental to the individual and community and is reflective of the concept of agency as the pursuit of truth (Williams, 1992).

While the narratives support the observation that the community of Denmark has embraced the new discourse of sustainability, many difficulties are experienced with implementation of these values particularly in the face of pervasive social and economic problems. Nevertheless, the community has achieved a transformation of discourse and as Evans, et al. (2007) highlighted changing discourse facilitates deeper understanding and may be a necessary antecedent for strategic action. However, inextricably linked to 'transformational change' (Fyson, 1999) is the role of visionary leadership. Wallace (1956) pertinently noted that when there was a consensus for change, a new visionary leader was required to institutionalize the "revitalization" process. This is similar to what Etzioni (1964) described as the cycle of non-bureaucratic heads," whereby charismatic leaders routinely establish new organizations (p. 54). It is therefore vital to examine the factors that will enable Denmark's Shire-level leadership toward transcendence and community solidarity.

According to Fyson (1999) the model towards transformational, in contrast to disintegrating community involves a number of strategic actions. Firstly it involves acknowledging the antagonistic forces operating within communities (Wiesenfeld, 1996) by recognizing differences of need within a base of understanding and support (McMillan, 1996). To resolve the tensions of the 'One' and the "Many" (Newbrough, 1992) visionary leaders can also use the questioning of operations, ideas, ethics, or identity to deal with disagreements and as a time for renewal. Specifically, while questioning of *operations* refers to "is there a better way of doing this?"; *ideological* doubts relate to the goals of the community, and the start of personal hurt and disillusionment as to what the community stands for. On the other hand, *ethical* doubt not only questions what the community stands for, but whether it maintains its integrity in the pursuit of these goals. The last stage, of *absolute* doubt, challenges the values (identity) of the community, and calls into question the desired membership of the individuals within the community (Fyson).

When members experience security to express these doubts then the role of questioning is said to hopefully aid communities to be more competent (Iscoe, 1974). As, "lack of security in asking questions indicates a lack of mutuality, based on an inequitable power base" (Sarason, 1990, pp. 87-88). Therefore, a transformational community experience involves choosing to live together with others truthfully, and "accepting that we are connected by ideas greater than our individual and collective selves, and that these visions of life are what provide for 'the needs of the soul' and 'community'" (Berkowitz, 1996, pp. 446, 454). In view of these deeper-level considerations, it seems clear that Denmark is in its early stages of development and will need to grapple with the strategic developmental processes of leadership, reflection and trust central to visioning and transformational community.

*Economic Vitality, Collaboration & Social Capital*

Denmark's grassroots approach to tackle the multiplicity of community issues from a holistic perspective is an inspirational example of community development. In terms of economic vitality there are a number of collaborative groups that operate autonomously to deal with different aspects of the local economy. Also of great importance is that despite the political divisions, key community leaders have gathered together as partners to promote a local interpretation of the global discourse of sustainability to deal with the impact of globalization. It could be argued that in promoting increased community participation for control over the wider organizational and systemic influences there must already be measurable cooperative civic engagement, or social capital, in communities. Or, at least there must be a minimum level of infrastructure (Mulgan, 1997) and economic conditions without too much hardship (Moser, 1996) to allow the possibility for the development of social trust, exchange and cooperation for mutual benefit to happen (Gillies, 1998). The community's strategic responses involving collaborative leadership with the Shire Council including DEIC's planning role also reflect national and state government imperatives to become self sufficient by enhancing the social capital of their communities.

While the environmentalists have been very successful in utilizing their higher levels of linking social capital to enhance their power position in the community including access to greater resources. Other community sectors representing the economic and social aspects of sustainability initiatives have achieved varying levels of success. There is also the fear that the economic vitality of the community is hindered by conflict between the green versus brown political spectrum. Furthermore, while community leaders accept the economic costs of protecting the environment for future generations, there are those who continue to suffer the consequences. The implication of accepting social and economic costs of decisions made by the power elite is that the social structure of the community remains unchanged. The needs of those most vulnerable continue to remain a peripheral issue and the social justice needs of the disenfranchised are relegated to a lower priority. There is a clear need for the leaders in the community to work on changing the power differentials to promote the self-determination of those most vulnerable. This will require a visionary leader, greater levels of trust, diverse representation, egalitarian decision-making processes and political action for the social justice needs of their community.

While communities like Denmark have embraced sustainability and social capital initiatives as the strategies for social change towards achieving ecological integrity, including a prosperous and healthy community the journey has only just begun. Governments also need to become more reflexive about their policy ascriptions to ensure that they are not blinded by neo-liberal logic to the detriment of those most powerless. There is no denying the difficult process of gaining community consensus on a 'just sustainability' framework to guide community visions, it is equally complex for a community dealing with the impacts of globalization to embrace self reliance without government support for social justice. As Stone (2000) highlighted, while the social capital and partnership approach has a role to play in enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of communities, there are a number of concerns. Firstly, doubts are raised about the ability of social capital and social partnership to foster

economic development in depressed communities and where there is a high level of economic inequality.

Secondly, Barbieri's (2000) study demonstrated an inverse relationship between social capital and the ability of individuals and families to develop or attain resources that would assist them to 'get by' and to work toward self-reliance and independence from state support. The third dynamic is that economic disadvantage and inequality hinders the growth and maintenance of social capital; and that where inequalities are entrenched, social capital may actually act to exacerbate inequalities rather than alleviate them (Stone, 2000). The role and importance of social capital are also affected by two institutional factors. These are the extent of government involvement in facilitating economic growth and employment opportunities; and their involvement in the matching process between job vacancies and the unemployed – that is the regulation of the labour market (Stone & Hughes, 2000). Given the lack of state involvement in Denmark to address economic, particularly structural disadvantage that exacerbate social consequences, these findings serve as a reminder of the ongoing and central role that government has to play in ensuring community wellbeing. Specifically, these findings emphasize the importance of government intervention in the economy, including the ongoing process of employment and jobs creation, and job matching (Stone, 2000).

### *Manifestation & Role of Government*

In advancing neo-liberalism with communitarianism (Adams & Hess, 2001) where communities direct the policies and programs to address local issues a new set of state-market-civil society relations evolved. This involved a shift from 'government' linked with classical with top-down forms of policy-making and/or implementation to 'governance' involving non-hierarchical forms of societal steering (Goss, 2001). Governance involves 'self-organising, inter-organisational networks' which, in addition to governments, help to authoritatively allocate resources, exercise control and coordinate social activities at local, national and global levels (Rhodes, 1997). At the community level Local governments are



recognized as key players and facilitators that focuses on the use of voluntary capacity of people to help solve their own problems (Bowles & Gintis, 2000; Rowe & Enticott, 1998). This policy trend echoes international development theory underpinned by the universal proposition that community driven processes produce better outcomes because they reflect the needs of beneficiaries (Adams & Hess).

Many have advocated that government be replaced by “new technologies of governance”, (Rose, 2000) including governance through communities (Reddel, 2002; Rose, 2000), ‘Third Way’ approaches (Giddens, 1998; Rose, 2000), decentralisation of governance to civil society (Friedmann, 1998), and public–private partnerships (Edwards, 2001; Teisman and Klijn, 2002). While diverse they are unified by a common concern: “the failure of statism and the need to renew democracy by enhancing the policy role of non-government actors (civil society, place-based communities, citizens and NGOs)” (Lane & Morrison, 2006, p.234).

As previously identified Denmark epitomizes a thriving democracy and is driven by strong governance relations to guide development and the community’s future direction. Denmark also echoes the higher levels of governance where the self-governing processes of small rural communities ‘row’ themselves by finding ways to satisfy some of the needs of their local communities (Burdess & O’Toole, 2004). While many of the community sectors work collaboratively with the Local Council to promote the needs of the diverse population groups there are also others, such as the farming sector that work independently to promote their own issues. There are also those who are absent from the processes of civil society participation and their needs are not represented. In spite of these differences, the absence of state and federal government jurisdiction, has meant that Shire officials have inherited a multiplicity of roles ranging from administration, to advocacy, social activism, entrepreneur and conflict mediator to name a few. Following is an examination of the assertion that local governance is best for re-dressing the multitude of issues facing rural communities, specifically Denmark.

In contemporary discourse of the role of civil society in governance, they develop to either: (i) fulfill demand for public goods left unsatisfied by government, (ii) partner with government in the provision of public goods, and/or (iii) make public policy demands of government and to ensure accountability in public governance (Young, 2000; Wagner, 2000). Civil society therefore, acts as challenge to state autonomy and market power (Eberly, 2000). In contrast, Lane & Morrison (2006) recognises civil society-state relations as interdependent. Furthermore, by adopting a Foucauldian relational theory of power the authors distinguish governance beyond the usual simple binary of the powerful (but clumsy) state pitted against powerless (but flexible and innovative) civil society (Herbert-Cheshire, 2003; Lockie, 2000). A power relations view of state-civil society interactions might allow analyses of particular policy practices and behaviours differently from the standard refrain of civil society independently acting to check state power and excess (Lane & Morrison).

#### *Civil Society Role of Shire Council*

As an advocate for the needs of the local Shire and as a facilitator in planning strategic responses to deal with the multitude of issues emanating from state inaction, the Denmark Shire Council is a key political civil society coalition. In terms of its governance role although diverse, in this instance the Local Government can be perceived as powerless - fighting against the powerful state to obtain vitally needed funds and resources for its community. In terms of partnership structure the Council is involved with a diversity of groups and sectors each representing a specific issue or cause, hence size of coalitions and influential power vary accordingly. In terms of the process undertaken by the Local Council to facilitate the needs and aspirations of the different groups and sectors also vary according to the funds available and the power they possess to influence the community.

Firstly, it is evident that in spite of the potential of social capital and civil society resources, the Denmark Council is overwhelmed by state devolution of responsibilities and struggles to address the rising number of issues it is required to

manage within the constraints of ever decreasing funds and resources. Decentralisation has also triggered rising expectations of professionalism and expertise in the Local Shire's governance capacity. Ernst & O'Toole (1999) confirm that Local governments have been forced to reform their processes to conform to public management discourses and specific policy prescriptions at state and federal levels. For example, National Competition Policy directs councils to adopt more marketised approaches in their micro-economic reform agenda (Ernst, Glanville & Murfitt, 1997). Under the influence of these neo-liberal discourses, local government has shifted from a relatively basic system of administration to new styles of public management (Kiss, 1999).

Demands on the Shire also include application of sustainability from a socially just perspective as well as being flexible and responsive to both *gemeinschaft* and *gesselschaft* community relations. For example, while some community members expect the Council to adopt legalistic and individualistic approaches [*gesselshafft*] to decisions others expect relations founded on collective ethics and social justice [*gemeinschaft*]. This is reflected in the conflict with Peaceful Bay residents who stand to lose their homes if the Council renews their leases at the highly inflated prices they cannot afford. The Council can either act to benefit the Shire treasury or it can take a social justice approach and charge according to ability to pay. These decisions however, have been hampered by the limitations placed on Denmark by state agencies. Unless the Local Council can attract the funds to comply with state development regulations the needs of the Peaceful Bay residents will be hindered. These examples highlight the role undertaken by the Local Government civil society sector in challenging the state and championing the community's needs.

On the other hand, due to the competing needs of the different sectors the Shire also adopts different governance processes depending on the availability of funds and influence of the sector. For example when working on sustainability issues with the environmentalist sector the Shire's governance relationship is based on a community directed partnership. Where the Council acts as a facilitator and the environmentalist civil society coalition directs and

implements the policy and programs including accessing funds for the projects. In this instance the Shire is a partner with the environmental coalition to implement public services such as green planning and community education. However, the role also extends to influencing Council decisions on development applications that affect the natural environment. Not only is the environmentalist represented on the Local Council it exerts a powerful influence over development decisions. This civil society partnership is described by Goss (2001) as the fully independent approach where local organizations develop specific partnerships with local government, but fiercely demand control over many of the local decision-making mechanisms. They are not simply working at community level, but are also negotiating relationships with other levels of governance (O'Toole & Burdess, 2004). This is representative of the powerful governance links forged by the Denmark's environmental civil society sector that extend beyond the community level to also influence government environmental policy.

As previously highlighted the Shire's governance role relationship to other civil society groups differs according to power and access to funds available to address their issues. For example, the business sector struggles to be financially lucrative and while the Council is concerned about this situation the Shire has not developed the entrepreneurial expertise or the linking social capital to lobby governments and facilitate access to the infrastructure, funds and the knowledge essential to achieve their aims and goals towards economic sustainability. While the Shire has, since this research developed strategic plans to target this as a priority it will take time for this to produce community outcomes. In the mean time the business sector and the unemployed and underemployed suffer the consequences.

The powerful influence exerted by the environmental sector has also discouraged the farming community from working more directly with the Shire to lobby for their specific needs that require both state and federal interventions including vital infrastructure and instead advocate directly to politicians for their own cause. However, the farming community does work directly with the Shire

on issues related to fire and emergency and in this case the Shire does facilitate access to funds and resources to ensure essential services are provided in the community. The Shire also works very successfully with the Hospital civil society coalition as they have been able to instigate political action needed to gain the necessary funds and resources. This is referred to as the *fully integrated approach* (Reddel, 2002) where local groups are integrated into the local structure of the Local government to improve participation in decision-making. Alternatively, the civil society coalition with the community Arts network and the Soup Kitchen is less successful in attracting the funds and resources needed to address community needs.

In terms of participation these groups are referred to as *passive* (Goss, 2001) in terms of governance relations and are less able to affect the local decision-making process. While the Shire recognizes the extent of the social issues facing the community the civil society coalition is not powerful enough to demand the resources needed from government to address the multiplicity of human issues. Instead vulnerable groups are reliant on the voluntary capacity and generosity of the community to meet their needs – clearly not an empowering process or outcome.

This is not to suggest that the Shire lacks administrative capacity to manage the enormity of community issues. What it does suggest is that civil society coalitions are only as effective as their power to attract the funds and resources needed to meet the needs of the community. Also significant to community development and sustainability is that environmental issues resonate ‘magnetic appeal’ and all generations are attracted to participate in this worthy cause. However, in comparison social issues are not perceived as sexy politics and fail to attract the support needed to make a difference as a civil society coalition. Perhaps promoting market appeal by adopting a catchphrase similar to the anti-capitalism movement might exert the pull necessary for political action. Although many factors contribute to the success of civil society politics, one major dynamic is that governments have relinquished their responsibility to such an extent that communities like Denmark struggled to cope with dwindling

funds and resources. The consequence of intense competition among diverse sectors for limited resources means the Council can only deal with limited aspects of the entirety of issues and are more prone to influence by the more powerful sectors with the ability to access more funds and resources.

*The Dark Side of Civil Society*

There is no doubt that Denmark has utilised the political power of civil society to gain a number of outcomes for the benefit of the community including promoting greater sense of community and cohesion. Some examples of the positive role of civil society include community *conscientization* (Freire, 1972) of environmental values; an upgraded hospital facility; protection of pristine environment; restriction of development to ensure environmental sustainability; accommodation for the elderly; provision of social and recreational activities to enhance community cohesion; promotion of strong sense of community and identity as groups work together to enhance community life – just to list a few. However, there are also a number of risks associated with the minimal state approach as a form of public intervention that involves utilizing markets and quasi-markets to deliver public services (Bishop & Davis, 2002; Rhodes, 1996). Lockie (2000) poignantly captures the paradoxical perspective of civil society transpiring in economic governance in Australia, where it has been applauded as an effective approach to empower non-state actors, and as a cynical effort by government to displace responsibility for crippling problems of agricultural and environmental degradation.

Critiquing the state's role in driving local civil society imperatives, O'Toole & Burdess (2004) highlighted a number of limitations. Firstly, competitive funding provides community groups with little option but to play within the 'rules of the game' set by funding agencies. For example, community groups have to fit within the political agenda of the funding bodies setting the guidelines. Therefore, even though communities identify a local need, they have to reconfigure their approaches to match the priorities of higher levels of government (Bowles & Gintis, 2001). In this funding context local direction of

societal steering is constrained. Also a significant issue for the community groups in Denmark constrained by human and social capital is the task of submission writing. As Bowles & Gintis highlighted, funding submissions requires a range of resources, including time, expertise and information. Consequently, many groups are restricted by their dependency on expertise from within their own ranks. These limitations are highly pertinent for many of the groups dealing with the needs in the economic, social, psychological, including Arts and recreational sectors in Denmark. Nevertheless, social capital and civil society processes can be harnessed where the Shire and other more professional environmentalist groups can and do (although ad hoc) provide the education and training necessary to promote the skills and information necessary to identify a potentially larger pool of funds.

#### *Civil Society & Inclusive Representation*

Also depicting the dark side of civil society Lane & Morrison (2006) distinguished a number of key issues implicated when non-government organizations (NGOs) are utilized in public policy processes. Whilst referring to the risks involved with one kind of political grouping of civil society - 'environmental NGOs'. The author locates a number of key concerns including the potential for elite groups to use it to advance their needs at the expense of others. First and foremost is the issue of representation, his analysis of environmental governance in Australia found that NGOs participating in policy processes are not necessarily inclusive. Despite the rhetoric of community representation, the authors report that NGOs are private organizations and pursue privately conceived agenda. As a result "organizations, or assemblages of such organizations, are often poor proxies of the public interest because they often fail to give expression to the full array of values and opinions" (p. 238).

Furthermore, the processes of policy discussion often leads interests groups to win policy contests at the expense of promoting public deliberation of normative ethics. Clarifying this position, Young (1990) noted that 'these outcomes are possible because interest group pluralism makes no distinction

between the assertion of selfish interests and normative claims to justice or democracy' (p. 72). The dark side of social capital has been observed in Denmark and is clearly an issue the community needs to address to promote more inclusive civil society coalitions that promote public deliberation of normative principles for action.

This supports Backstrand's (2006) argument that partnerships are 'supply driven' rather than 'demand driven. This emphasizes the situation where actors with the most advanced capacity are engaged rather than those with the largest functional needs (Andova & Levy, 2003). Hence, partnerships mirror rather than transform existing relations of power between the elite and the disenfranchised, governmental and private authority and global professionals and local grassroots, which is not surprising given their voluntary and self-governing nature (Hale & Mauzerall, 2004). Essentially, partnership networks represent 'coalitions of the willing': they can, but do not have to be collaborative endeavors (Sabel, 2001). They can also have narrower stakeholder representation compared to the formalized multi-stakeholder processes endorsed under UN auspices that emphasize responsiveness to marginalized groups (UN, 2004b). Whilst the environmentalist sector in Denmark have been instrumental in paving the journey towards 'just sustainability' in Denmark and contributed greatly to community directed processes and outcomes there is room for improvement to ensure inclusive representation and interpretation of sustainability policy and programs as well as responsiveness to those excluded.

### *Collusion & Democracy*

A second risk arising from civil society is when a small number of private actors collude to produce policy outcomes that suit their own, narrow interests (Lane & Morrison, 2006). Thus, civil society relations can create the preconditions for a system of *clientelism*, that is patronage relationships between state and key non-state actors that serve to exclude (Fox, 1994; Tandler, 1997). Urban planning analysts have also warned that public participation have at times produced for *corporatist* agreements between elite actors, rather than renewed democracy



in planning and decision making (Kuhnle & Selle, 1992, cited in Lane, 2003). While these intentions are not evident in Denmark the power of elite environmentalist groups to direct government environmental policy at both state and federal levels is well documented in Australia (Lane, 2006). In his review of rural governance, Little (2001) also raised concerns about the continued domination of local elites and the ability of particular sections of the community to mobilize support around particular interests. Hence the imperative for governments to be cognizant of local development histories and how this interacts with the formulation and implementation of community based initiatives (Ray, 1998).

A third risk is the assumption that NGOs are democratic actors. As Warren (2001) noted, while the resistance, agitation and participation of NGOs possess democratic effects, many are not necessarily internally democratic (Warren, 2001). Lipsky and Smith (1990) noted that: "Nonprofit organisations invoke images of community, voluntarism, civic dependability, and neighbor-helping neighbor that have always exerted a powerful impression on public consciousness" (p. 625). However, since the expansion of their role into public service provision, these images conflict with current realities. Arato (1999) expressed alarmed by the common presumption that NGO participation can be a substitute for institutional arrangements of representative democracy – "NGO participation is one thing; democracy is another" (p. 19).

### *Independent Versus Interdependent*

A fourth risk relates to the independence of civil society actors. Lane (2003) is emphatic that both theoretically and empirically it would be a mistake to assume, a priori, that NGOs are independent of government. As many "have formed as a result of particular policy or funding opportunities, are largely compliant with state dictates, and unconcerned with 'keeping the bastards honest' (Breckenridge, 1999; Ehrenberg, 1999; Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Young, 2000; Wagner, 2000, cited in Lane, p. 239). Hence, we cannot necessarily depend on private (publicly funded) organizations to defend public interest, nor can we

have total confidence that they will be more effective at delivering community needs. To paraphrase Bowles (1999) "if states and markets can fail, so too can civic organizations: (p. 239).

Although Lowi (2000) makes his point somewhat facetiously, he poignantly captures an important irony of private involvement in public affairs: "The problem here is that organizations whose technical and organizational abilities may be limited are being empowered with what may be significant public policy roles" (p. 239). Additionally, insufficient technical ability, volunteer 'burnout', a deficient organisation and a host of other frailties, is called social learning (Friedmann, 1987). The paradox here, of course, is that "extensive reliance on community directed governance is based on the presumption of their capabilities and now that their efforts are pivotal, we need to concern ourselves with the development of their capabilities" (Lane & Morrison, 2006, p. 239).

### *Accountability & Transparency*

Another area of concern implicated with civil society governance is the issue of accountability, which refers to the relationships between actors (principal-agent, citizen-decision-maker etc.) (Lane & Morrison, 2006). Contrary to governance, in democratic systems rulers are accountable to citizens through mechanisms of representation. Hence, citizens can participate in elections and vote decision-makers out of office if they fail to live up to expectations (Fischer, 2000). Decision-makers are also required to justify and explain their action *vis-à-vis* citizens (Fischer). Where no coherent *demos*, electorate, or mechanisms of representation or parliament exists, the legitimacy of governance networks has to be enhanced through indirect means (Backstrand, 2006). Highlighting the danger of multi-stake-holder governance relations, Benner, Streck & Wittle (2003) point out that "networks are diffuse, complex weakly institutionalized collaborative systems that are neither directly accountable to an electoral base nor do they exhibit clear principal agent relationship' (p. 3).

Networks pose serious challenges to accountability as the sites of governance are multiple and power is diffused among different actors (Keohane & Nye, 2003, p. 401). The risk is that the state becomes “a collection of inter-organisational networks made up of governmental and societal actors with no sovereign actor able to steer or regulate” (Lane & Morrison, 2006, p. 234). The consequence is that lacking accountability within decentralization poses a serious risk to social justice and self-determination (Ribbot, 1999) as decentralization can result in the marginalization of minorities (Diamond, 1999). Reporting on the highly limited levels of indigenous access to and participation in environmental governance, Lane (2003) linked it to their marginality and the processes of localized decision-making. Decentralization in this case served to magnify the importance of the contests in which groups at the local and regional levels were engaged (Lane). Identification of the some of the risks described above has led to calls for greater scrutiny and government control over NGOs. In Australia, for example, the current Federal government has given voice to a view that civil society organizations cannot simultaneously be charities and political lobby groups (Nahan, 2003). There is also a plethora of calls in the environmental governance literature for new mechanisms of accountability (Lane & Cowell, 2002; Ribot, 1999).

Also implicated is transparency, Backstrand (1996) indicated that transparency and accountability are closely linked, as accountability hinges on access to information on the performance and progress of partnerships. Based on research conducted on the Johannesburg partnerships, Hale & Mazurell (2004) found that less than fifty percent of the partnerships have a mechanism for monitoring effectiveness and progress of partnerships. Backstrand on the other hand, attributed weak transparency mechanisms to unclear guidelines and lack of mandatory reporting requirements. While Denmark clearly suffered from weak transparency mechanisms, this could also be related to lack of guidelines and mandatory reporting requirements. As a result of presenting research findings of this study to the Local Council, management has acknowledged this as a site for further improvement. As the Shire is committed

to improving its governance relations, the next stage of Denmark's focus involves developing a list of community derived process and outcome indicators to monitor the progress of sustainability initiatives and these will be shared with the public via periodical reports and website information.

The imperative therefore is for decentralization to be accompanied by efforts to mediate contests between the powerful and the powerless by building the capacity of marginalized actors who may otherwise remain entrenched in inequality (Mitlin, 1999; 2001). Given the enormity of potential risks associated with civil society governance it seems pragmatic that governments as the overriding authority would mandate the monitoring of partnership initiatives to ensure a level of fairness for all its citizens. As the implication of government absence from managing civil society enterprises in communities like Denmark is that it will lead to uneven development between the sectors and those who are excluded from participation are likely to remain marginalized and disadvantaged. Mitlin (2001) is convinced that the importance attributed to grassroots and NGOs in poverty reduction is over-stated, as the relationship between civil society organizations, social capital, economic growth and social transformation are more complex and long term. The author also found that many civil society organizations seem more concerned with immediate alleviation of pressing problems than with either empowering the poor or achieving substantial material improvements in their situation. Evaluation of partnership initiatives in Johannesburg suggests that civil society fails to be effective even in poverty alleviation except on a small scale (Devas & Korboe, 2000; Duta, 2000; Etemadi, 2000). If policy-makers are committed to social justice and earnest about poverty eradication then all tiers of governments, particularly global institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank must move beyond prescribing initiatives such as horizontal democracy by focusing on mechanisms of monitoring that ensures transparency and accountability are legally binding.

*Adversarial Context - Institutional Challenges*

Another important challenge to collaborative governance is that the institutional context is structured around adversarial approaches and is antithetical to collaboration when making collective decisions. Hence, collaboration may conflict with the political and bureaucratic styles that reflect much public policy practice (Lane & Morrison, 2006). A significant barrier to civil society coalitions is that many public officials and members of the public are unfamiliar with methods of collaborative governance practice: "... mediation and facilitation, process design, authentic public participation, cross-cultural communication, and reflective dialogue, nor do they have the skills to participate" (Lane & Morrison, p. 235). Many traditional agencies may also perceive it as risky as it could upset long-established arrangements and have unknown consequences (Goss, 2001). While traditional practices, such as holding public hearings, are not designed to involve the public in decision-making, many structural aspects of these institutions have unintended perverse effects that discourage deliberative dialogue (Reddel, 2002).

While the Denmark experience revealed many successful multi-sector coalitions, there were also instances where government agencies acted without consulting the community, acted illegally and were opposed to community involvement and participation in decision-making. Although these institutional challenges present practical obstacles for collaborative governance, it can be addressed by focusing on strategies aimed at increasing awareness, education, mentoring and mechanisms of monitoring. An independent body similar to the Productivity Commission may be a mechanism by which communitarian approaches can be monitored while also imparting new skills and methods to public officials and the public. Most pertinently, community psychologists are uniquely placed to play a key role in social transformation, as Iris Marion Young has argued, activists seeking to promote justice need to engage both in discussion with others to persuade them and in direct action when it is necessary (1990).

*Civil Society & Optimism for the Future*

Despite the inherent risks, the arguments in favour of a robust and vibrant civil society are compelling. Miller (2005) also boasts that the advantages of this kind of network are its flexibility and ability to adapt its procedures and partnerships to widely varying circumstances from site to site. Civil society organisations can (and do) provide services that government does not; and they monitor and challenge and hold government accountable to the various citizenries they represent (Lipsky and Smith, 1990; Young, 2000; Wagner, 2000). If Putnam (1993) is to be believed, a vibrant civic life can also ensure that government is made more democratic and more efficient. For example, the work of environmental NGOs has been of enormous importance in terms of raising awareness, 'whistle-blowing', and resisting the development of important areas (Lane, 2003). Nevertheless, the re-drawing of boundaries and relationships is not without its dangers. The identification of some of the risks described so far has led to calls for greater scrutiny of NGOs and enhanced government control of NGOs. In Australia, for example the current Federal government has voiced the view that civil society organisations cannot simultaneously be charities and political lobby groups (Nahan, 2003).

A plethora of calls for new mechanisms of accountability have also surfaced in the environmental governance literature (Lane, McDonald & Morrison, 2004; Ribot, 1999). While no simple solution exists to this conundrum, Lane & Morrison (2006) appear convinced that "...the structural democratization of the public sphere, combined with the crisis of legitimacy in state action and regulation, makes 'horizontal' governance in which public-private partnerships are a key feature inevitable" (p. 240). In view of this destination towards horizontal governance the authors suggest engaging with civil society organizations in a critical way that rigorously assesses both their strengths and limitations and reserving political space for public interest. Finally, they suggest reflecting on methods to protect democratic representation, the public interest in public policy and accountability in these emerging approaches to governance.

*Justice, Activism & Governance*

In short, good governance is essential for 'just sustainability' (Agyeman & Evans, 2004). The democratic benefits widely associated with public participation in public policy and governance need to be protected and nurtured if democracy is to flourish (Lane, 2003; Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Hence, the purposeful involvement of citizens and stakeholders must be nurtured and supported while recognizing that 'governance' cannot be accepted as an unquestioned 'good'. If more 'governance' simply means that those who are already well represented in the processes of public decision-making have greater and more effective access, then the move towards better governance will have failed (Agyeman & Evans). The task is to ensure that all voices have a say, and specifically that the under-represented – women, the young, the elderly, Indigenous Australians, members of ethnic minority groups, for instance – are facilitated a higher profile in the process of horizontal governance. It is evident that the dialogue of 'just sustainability' is restricted to progressive NGOs, academics and local community organizations worldwide (Agyeman, Bullard & Evans, 2002).

To promote the goal of equity and justice, Agyeman and Evans argued that governments from local to international levels need to learn from "environmental justice and progressive, or 'just sustainability'-based organizations and to seek to embed the central principles and practical approaches of 'just sustainability' into sustainable development policy". This would enable public policies such as sustainability to be placed within a context of social justice, equity and human rights.

Also highlighting the role of cultural imperatives in masking inequity and social injustice, Hart & Sharma (2002) argued that while it is difficult to see how economic equity could ever be achieved without social equity and vice versa. They would rather emphasize the role of the capitalist system: "within the present system there is clearly a conflict between social equity and economic growth, because the economic system, on which current growth rests, is inherently and

increasingly unjust ... the capitalist system generates economic development for the few and underdevelopment for the many" (p. 210). The move towards just and sustainable societies is therefore dependent on enlightenment and public officials' vigilance to ensure that public policy does not disproportionately disadvantage any particular social group, and affords opportunity for all (Agyeman & Evans). Sharma and Ruud (2003) beckon researchers to visualize holistic public policies and regulatory structures that can amalgamate beneficial effects for all by promoting the following: "create a business incentive for undertaking sustainable models that generate competitive imagination for creative destruction and disruptive innovations simultaneously with the alleviation of global ecological and social problems such as hunger, poverty, human rights and illiteracy (p. 211).

### *Intentional Change & Transformation*

This study attempted to gain a holistic understanding of the impacts of globalization in a rural community setting possessing a vibrant democracy and high levels of sense of community and identity. More specifically this research attempted to gain clarity about the transition process where a community adopts a grassroots approach to combat the multiplicity of issues within the UN's framework of sustainability and the prevailing neoliberal economic ideology. While the community has been impacted by negative social and economic consequences, it is clear that some sectors are more resilient than others. While some groups are advantaged by the context of neo-liberalism and a civil society political governance approach to deal with individual, organizational and community issues. Other groups are disadvantaged by ineffective power positions and lacking access to networks of social capital resources, particularly linking social capital.

In spite of the uneven outcomes, the community has nevertheless embraced the discourse and values of sustainability, including adopting the new regime of governance relations where multi-sector stakeholder groups through collaboration steer the community's development and future visions. It is evident



that the community of Denmark has leapt on a splendid journey towards potential transformational change. However, implementing 'just sustainability' is a formidable challenge and Denmark's transition can best be articulated as in the early phases of a long evolutionary process of change. However, what is most significant to theory and practice is that third way approaches endorsed by governments to promote community resilience are not based on critical analysis of modern capitalism, power or structural disadvantage.

Offering a confronting critique of third way discourses, Hamilton (2001) has skilfully captured the flawed premises of these philosophical foundations that have shaped policy and practice. Firstly, he notes that proponents have grafted traditional concerns for equality and social justice onto an economic system based on free markets. Hence, they fail to consider whether attempts at reform are neutralized by the nature of consumer capitalism. Furthermore, by linking outcomes to 'lifestyle choices' advocates assiduously avoid any discussion of the sources and exercise of power. Lastly, by focussing on 'education' as the solution to inequality and exclusion, not only is structural disadvantage ignored, but individual failings are also emphasized. From this angle, it is apparent that communitarian approaches need to be guided by more complex frameworks for action that articulate transformational visions beyond growth-oriented capitalism.

As many authors have suggested making a shift toward a transformative paradigm in beliefs and practices of communities will require an intentional process of change (Nelson & Prillentecky, 2005; Perkins, et al., 2007). This kind of change requires more than simply refining strategic planning statements or adding programs ad hoc, it requires change of a transformational kind (Evans, Hanlin & Prillentecky, 2007). Many organizational theorists and social change intellectuals have professed the distinction between incremental, developmental, evolutionary, or "first-order" change and transformative, discontinuous, revolutionary, or "second-order" change in human systems (Burke, 2002; Gersick, 1991; Kuhn, 1970; Nadler, Shaw, & Walton, 1995; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974, cited in Evans, et. al., p. 332). In spite of the diversity of

terms, these authors would support the key observation, that with first-order change the system remains, structurally, unchanged, whereas, second-order change alters the system (Evans, et. al.). More specifically, transformative change challenges the status quo - it means that power is being distributed differently to enhance community conditions for those most powerless (Fay, 1987; Ife, 2002; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

When talking of a paradigmatic change in collaborative partnership networks, changes in the system's structure, role relationships, premises, rules, or assumptions governing the system as a whole need to alter (Evans, et al.; Seidman, 1986). While Denmark has embraced the third way approaches and witnessed a major shift in values, beliefs and practices, power differences between the powerful and the powerless remain the same. Hence, the community has some way to go to challenge the fundamental issues of structural disadvantage and consumer capitalism as major impediments to transformational change. While civil society coalitions offer enormous prospect for liberation its universal application without sensitivity to the social and cultural milieu of place can also lead to adverse outcomes. Whilst referring to the transitional process of post-communist communities, Letki & Evans' (2005) examination of the relationship between moral trust, capitalism and democracy found an adverse reaction to the processes of civil society. As the authors highlighted where once cooperation between family and friends emerged as a means of coping with a dysfunctional system, sense of community has been broken down by reliance on the market and democracy - leading to a loss of trust and to an increase in opportunism.

### *Macro Influences & Community Resistance*

The community narratives powerfully captured the way in which macro structures shape the political and economic environments of local communities. This macro-level influence is eloquently captured by Agyeman & Evans (1997) who noted: "... it seems that central government, fearful of the supposed anti-competitive effects of environmental regulation, has allowed much

environmental policy to 'leapfrog' from the international level (UNCED and the European Union) to the level of local authorities and community organisations' (p. 118). National and international policies therefore establish the context in which local networks, associations, and organizations exist (Thomas-Slayter, 1994). Nevertheless, while they set the terms of reference, the action is played out in the local community and local organizations constitute an important part of the local landscape.

In spite of macro-level influences local community autonomy and individual agency is an equally powerful and resistant force. In 'Making A World of Difference Together' Marvin & Guy (1997), argued that the 'new localism' fails to recognize the complex ways in which localities are made and remade, and the frame of local-national-international relations (cited in Smith, Blake & Davies, 2000, p. 220). Authors, Smith, et. al. impart an eloquent criticism of the centralized marketing-based approach: "...the implicit notion of citizenship in such top-down models of sustainability action views the public as willing to act, given the delivery of correct information in the appropriate way. Such a narrow conception of the citizen—of the relationship between information and action—lays expectations upon and assumes capacities about individuals that will not be met (p. 221).

A key issue of the new *localist* approach is that it tends to underestimate the role of other institutions implicated in hindering sustainability actions. For example, the role of privatized utilities shaping the long-term decisions of a household economy to invest in efficiency measures, or on-the-spot decisions about daily consumption have been neglected from the big picture (Burgess, Harrison & Filius, 1998). The fear of these distorting assumptions is a continuing vacuum at the level of national policy, and "the development of hasty and inappropriate half measures based in the promotion of local action and individual responsibility" (Blake, et. al., p. 221).

As many commentators have observed national governments have invested local agencies, or individuals and communities, with responsibility for

action as a means to side-step the introduction of politically difficult market and regulatory measures (Agyeman & Evans, 1997; Gibbs, 1998). Nevertheless, there is overwhelming consensus that sustainability has the potential to deliver a 'just society' for all creatures and the planet within pragmatic adjustments (Agyeman, 2002; Jacobs, 1999). There is also the deep suspicion that this promised utopia is nothing more than a grand scheme to globalize American market ideology. James (2007) eloquently captured the disillusionment with pursuing idealist aspirations: "Perhaps the transitional moment was Martin Luther King's 'I have a Dream' speech. It sounded so dramatic, and yet it proclaimed nothing more than hopes for the possibility of different races living alongside each other. It was a good speech, but in retrospect we can see that it projected nothing more than the incorporation of African Americans in the American dream of consumer capitalism (p. 170).

In spite of the hurdles (Hamilton, 2001) and the empty signifiers proclaimed by political leaders (James, 2007), in her review of community change in Africa, Thomas-Slayter (1994) highlighted that the dream should not be dismissed, instead, local organizations should be nurtured for the roles they can play in building sustainable communities. She is adamant that alliances between state and community can make a difference particularly when it is built on voice and accountability. Her optimism for the potential of civil society is poignantly captured: "community resources and aspirations need not be captured by elites, stymied by the state, oppressed by opposing economic interests, or beset by inertia, although, clearly, all the above are hazards" (p. 1486). Indeed, recent analysis suggests that strengthened local organizations can play a crucial role in mobilizing poor rural communities to advance both household and community interests (Thomas-Slayter). While self-reliant localism cannot tackle the largest issues of resource distribution, legal rights, ecological decline and trade patterns, community action through local organizations can alter options for local productivity and, ultimately, the broader political landscape (Duming, 1991). While we must be attentive to the larger ecological and social systems within which local communities exist, we must also recognize that in their communities

and through their local organizations most residents will make critical choices in resource use, economic productivity, and political relations that will shape their future.

*Post-Modern Communities & Dialectic of Difference*

Though we are swayed to think of globalization as destroying local distinctiveness and “homogenizing” local places (Kunstler, 1993) it is clear that Denmark’s transformation has not lead to alienation and placelessness as many have argued (Mander & Goldsmith, 1996). To the contrary it appears that collective struggles against external threats have united the community and created a renewed desire for stability, authentic sense of community and distinct sense of identity. Indeed, Harvey (1993) argued that globalization may actually make place-bound identities more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers. The paradox is that globalization creates a dual tension within communities, to both seek out wider spheres of exchange and movement while provoking an inward and deliberate search for authenticity, a conscious effort to evoke a sense of place and cultivate connections (Williams, 2002).

Given the transformations occurring within Denmark, Bishop and Vicary’s (2003) vexing question about how might sense of community be defined in terms of post-modern communities (see Newbrough, 1992) is worthy of reflection. While this study outlined understandings of community transition in the face of globalization and neo-liberal imperatives it is clear that Denmark represents a community that has become skilled at living with the dialectic of difference. Denmark’s transition and sense of community represents an indicator of one type of post-modern community best encapsulated by Williams (2002) as based on ‘reflexive deep diversity’. Clarifying his conception of the form of post-modern community we should be striving for, the author highlighted that modern liberals are only tolerant of differences so long as they do not challenge the dominance of modernism. Hence, rather than aiming for a politics of modalities based on ‘difference’, ‘identity’, ‘sameness’ or ‘hybridity’, Williams advances the

call to consider how we might live with the dialectic of difference and identity in a way that enhances the complexity and cultural richness of social life. From this view Denmark's transition towards a post-modern community can be viewed as echoing the dialectic of difference founded on a complex and culturally rich social life with strong links to community and identity.

### *Limitations & Implications for Future Research*

The understandings derived from this community research and reflected in this thesis have been arrived at through a collaborative, iterative-generative reflective process. As such, it can be asserted that it carries some local authenticity in that these findings are recognized as meaningful by at least some sectors of the local community. However, beyond the local context of Denmark, the research findings are offered as assertoric knowledge (Polkinghorne, 1983). Where the research findings are not presented as immutable truths but as knowledge, the value of which will be determined by the extent to which others researching or working in areas or on problems with common elements, find it meaningful and useful in their particular contexts (Contos, 2002). In terms of the ideals of psycho-political validity, (epistemic and transformational) (Prilleltensky, 2003b) it is hoped that by adopting an ecological framework combined with collaborative processes with the community that this study can offer some level of knowledge that is pertinent for well-being and social change to evolve within collective, relational and personal domains.

While critical, theoretical analysis of rural development policies and practices is growing in Australia, it is still in its early stages (Cheshire, 2000). It is hoped that this research makes an important contribution to the literature and, more specifically, represents a more comprehensive analysis of an alternative approach to the rhetorics of self-help and empowerment that dominate current discourses of rural development in Australia. While the researcher has derived enormous fulfillment from the privilege granted by the Denmark community to undertake an in-depth case study of their transition process, there are obvious limitations due to pressures of time and lacking resources that can be addressed

by focusing on other areas of research in the future. While a number of key insights have emerged about community functioning, particularly inhibitive and facilitative factors that can be linked to the journey towards a just sustainability future, the analyses would be enhanced by a larger study incorporating a number of regionally and culturally diverse communities, particularly Aboriginal communities.

It is evident that Indigenous communities suffer the legacy of disadvantage from colonialism (Dyer, Aberdeen & Schuler, 2002). Add to this the tyranny of distance, strained race relations and government inaction Aboriginal communities are prone to greater social and economic disadvantages including access to and participation in political governance (Altman, 1993; Lane, 2003). To continue the journey towards critical analysis of rural regional development, further research into the process and outcome of community transformation in Indigenous communities is imperative. To contribute further to this concern, the author was engaged as a private research consultant to investigate the underlying causes of crime in four remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia. This research highlighted that state endorsed discourse on partnerships and governance is practiced differently and delivers divergent social and economic outcomes. First and foremost leaders in some of the Shires embraced governance relations based on pre-existing power differences that favoured the interests of the powerful members of the community. In two communities where race relations were conflictive, hierarchical relations dominated and Aboriginal voice was suppressed as the governance structures consisted mainly of non-Aboriginal leaders with some consultation with key Aboriginal leaders.

In community three with a thriving democracy and sense of community, civil society coalitions developed as powerful mechanisms of social capital to attract more resources to the community. This transformation was attributed to the work instigated by a non-Aboriginal community Doctor who promoted partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to steer the direction of community visions. In the last community where the needs of the local community had been ignored by the Local Government, a visionary

Aboriginal leader achieved collaborative partnerships with private sector entrepreneurs with the financial backing of the now defunct agency ATSIC (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission) to address the economic and unemployment issues of youth including drugs and alcohol problems. In spite of these significant achievements civil society coalitions in these communities failed to meet the social and economic needs of the Aboriginal population. Clearly the underlying causes of Indigenous disadvantage and oppression have been ignored and exacerbated by claims for integrative modernism within a capitalist economy. James (2007) pertinently argues for an identify difference principle to address the inherent disadvantages associated with those who propose that Aboriginal Australians should be treated no differently from other Australians: "Rather than formal political equality with everybody competing with each other in dog-eat-dog competition—the neo-liberal vision of the productive society—this kind of society would encourage negotiated difference across overlapping political, cultural and ecological realms" (p. 180).

Given the complexity of issues related to promoting a 'just sustainability' for diverse population groups within a neo-liberal vision, evaluation of differences in awareness, expertise, education, pre-existing race relations, power, lacking government commitment to social justice, including other institutional factors related to social capital and civil society initiatives are vital areas for further research to promote social justice outcomes in Aboriginal and other communities enduring locational disadvantage. The direction is also pointed to gain greater understandings of the political dynamics and alternative solutions necessary to facilitate the liberation of a diverse range of actors in a number of community contexts including Aboriginal communities disadvantaged by lacking access and participation in determining their future. Given the extent of local disadvantage including the greater social and economic disparity endured by Aboriginal communities, there is urgency to gain in-depth knowledge about the contextual issues faced by the most vulnerable population group – our Indigenous people and how they can achieve, social justice, self-determination and reconciliation.



Given the warnings that without government intervention the needs of the impoverished are further entrenched by social capital and civil society processes, a focus on Indigenous communities including other disadvantaged communities is a priority research agenda. There is also much scope for contextual research to include a spotlight on the policies and actions of communities and governments that promote or undermine sense of community and identity. Other influential factors such as power and leadership that contribute to the success and obstruction of locally determined sustainability visions is also worthy of examination.

### *Slow Cultural Revolution*

As James (2007) noted the last century, has been marked by the horrors of mass wars over territory and cultural integrity. The world faces a crisis of refugees, often caused by fractions, with the old nation-states attempting to hang onto power at all costs. Given these pressures, it is understandable then that the post-modern response is to put the burden of blame on attempts to stabilize relations to place and community. It is equally understandable that, in the new century, the avant-garde late-modernist response is to call for new forms of universalism based on non-exclusionary cosmopolitan citizenship. Advocating a discussion of the principles of “community—reciprocity, freedom, equality, solidarity, and ecology—and critically assessing how they are lived across extensions of space from the local to the global, is intended to take us beyond those responses, linking the particularities and differences of place and identity to the generalities and universalities of ethical debate” (James, p. 183).

What is also clear is that we can no longer afford the Australian dream of retreating to a quarter-acre block and pulling up the national draw bridge, while sending off donations to the needy who live in distant places (Cheshire, 2000). The problems that we face are global problems that impinge upon all localities, and the only way to respond is across all levels from the local to the global. There are no blueprints for change that can be suggested here except to promote future social action research that focuses on how we can actually

promote a slow cultural revolution that will allow serious consideration of living differently. Hence, rather than discarding the concept of 'just sustainability', it provides a useful framework in which to debate the choices for humanity based on an appreciation of the close links between sense of community, the environment and society and the power structures that exploit both people and the planet.

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*APPENDIX*

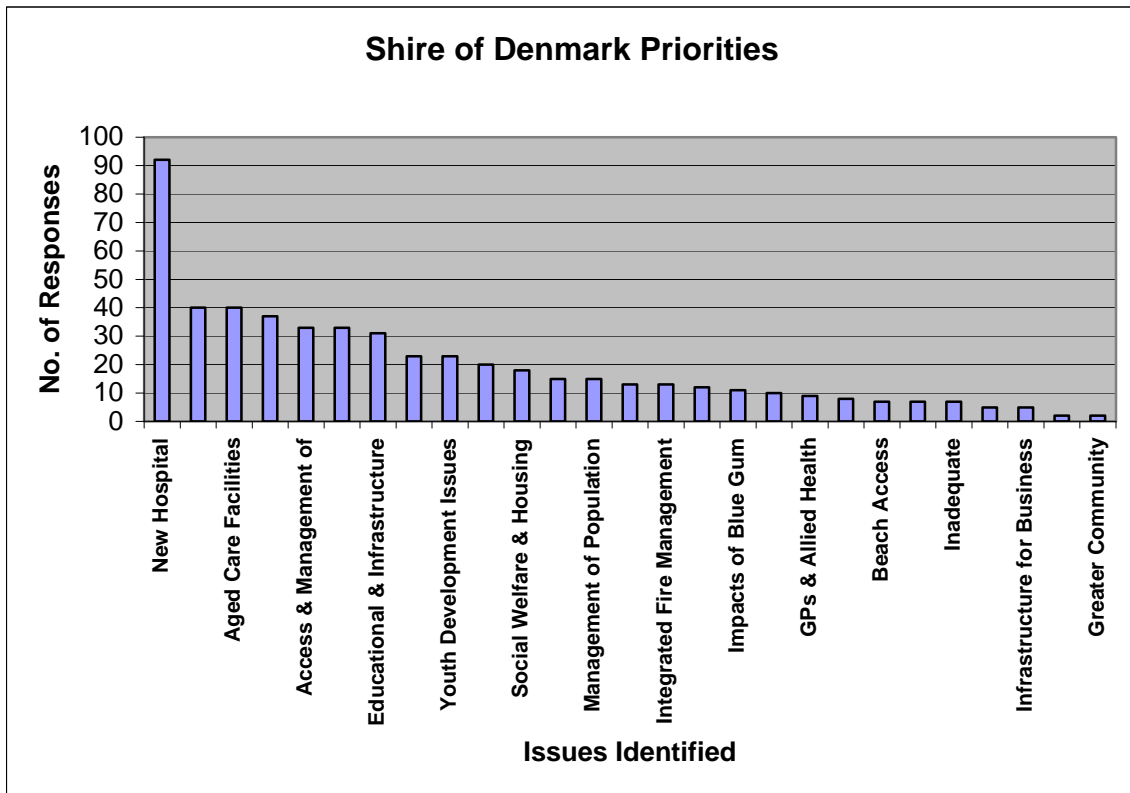
**APPENDIX**

APPENDIX 1 - Table of Issues Identified by the Community

**Table 3: Issues identified from the community survey and the frequency of which it was mentioned. A total of 531 issues were raised by the participants**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
New Hospital	92
Promotion & Development of Tourism	40
Aged Care Facilities	40
Unemployment/Employment Creation	37
Access & Management of Wilson Inlet	33
Protect & Promote Environmental Conservation	33
Educational & Infrastructure Needs	31
Indoor Swimming Pool	23
Youth Development Issues	23
Road Access & Safety	20
Social Welfare & Housing Inequities	18
Crime & Related Issues	15
Management of Population Growth	15
Equity & Access to Public Transport	13
Integrated Fire Management Policy	13
Promotion of Road Safety	12
Impacts of Blue Gum Plantations & Pesticides	11
State Government Cutbacks	10
GPs & Allied Health Professionals	9
Nodal Development Issues	8
Beach Access	7
Group Cohesion & Factional Interests	7
Inadequate Telecommunications Access	7
Impacts of Indemnity Insurance	5
Infrastructure for Business Development	5
GM Food Restrictions	2
Greater Community Consultations	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>531</b>

Appendix 2 - Table of Priorities Identified by the Community



Appendix 3

**COMMUNITY SURVEY**

Thank you for taking part in this community survey. This research examines what issues are important to the community and what visions are needed to promote community sustainability. This information is being gathered for my PhD thesis and at the conclusion of this research a written report will be provided to local community groups; the Shire of Denmark and the Great Southern Development Commission. It is hoped that this report will be used by Local and Regional government agencies to guide future planning and development directions. All information provided is confidential and this research gained the approval of the Ethics Committee, Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, Western Australia.

*Participant Demographics: Please Tick*

Age Group	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>19 to 30</b>	<b>30 –55 yrs</b>	<b>Over 55 yrs</b>
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No. of Years as Resident	
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Occupation/Business/Group	
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Residence - (Distance from Denmark Town-site)	
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Written Questions:

1. Please list the committees and groups in Denmark and the Great South region.

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2. Please describe the source of your income.



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3. Please identify the issues that are important to you.

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4. Please identify what issues are important to residents of Denmark.

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5. Please prioritize the issues in order of importance.

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6. List the things you like about Denmark.

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7. What are the drawbacks of living in Denmark?

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8. What is your one wish for the community?

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***THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY!***