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BUILDING COMMUNITY COMMITMENT FOR A REGION'S FUTURE: THE CASE OF PORT STEPHENS, AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

With tremendous growth in coastal communities of Australia within the last two decades, intense pressures have been placed on local communities, especially in the areas where tourism is a growing phenomenon. People living in these sensitive regions have been searching for long term solutions. There are many challenges, however, in meeting the needs and dealing with the complex relationships between tourists, residents, investors, providers of tourist and lifestyle experiences, non-government and government organisations. To meet these difficulties, community groups have attempted to gain local awareness of the costs and benefits of more responsible, community based approaches to tourism and other types of developments. This paper looks at how a community that has been embracing tourism while allowing increased residential development in a sensitive region, is also attempting to facilitate interaction and influence decision making within the community.

INTRODUCTION

A number of coastal communities of Australia have seen tremendous growth in the last 10-20 years due primarily to increased interest in domestic and international tourism. In addition, there has been strong movement away from cities (over 80% of Australian live in cities), where people have sought "lifestyle" changes and the dream to "live in paradise." This growth has created intense pressures on local communities in culturally and environmentally sensitive regions. (Figure 1 graphically shows this exodus of people in the regions near Sydney.)

In order to minimise the potential negative impacts of increased tourism, recreational home and residential development, people living in these sensitive areas have looked for long term solutions. The complex relationships between tourists, residents, investors, providers of tourist and lifestyle experiences, non-government and government organisations, however, have created great challenges in meeting their needs. With their diverse needs and little interest in integrating their needs, communities have often felt disenfranchised.

To meet these difficulties, community groups have attempting to gain local awareness of the costs and benefits of more responsible, community based approaches to tourism and other developments. In addition increased interest, involvement and a feeling of empowerment of people in the decision process has led to potential for decisions that are "in the best interests" of a broader range of the community.

This paper will look at how a community that has been embracing tourism as well as a strong growth in residential development, is also attempting to facilitate interaction and influence decision making within the community. The issues covered by this paper include aspects of community participation and involvement in the decision processes and how cooperative actions can affect the potential for balance or parity within a community regarding its future sustainability. In discussing these issues, the community of Port Stephens in New South Wales, Australia, which has seen sizeable pressures from tourism and recent lifestyle change, will be traced over a ten year period up to 1995. Finally, a number of approaches, gained from the Port Stephens case study will be suggested in moving toward balance and long term sustainability within a community.

COMMUNITY INPUT AND PARTICIPATION

Input from the community has been a crucial area of consideration in tourism as well as other types of development. Community participation in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of tourism projects has been mentioned by numerous writers as an important component in the decision making process.

Others have expanded on the nature by which the community participation process is effective (4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 20, 33). A number of key elements in community involvement are identified below.

Elements of Community Involvement

Elements of community involvement have included: the commitment communities have to provide for local involvement, the understanding of local attitudes toward decisions on future policy as well as individual projects, the development goals and priorities coming from local residents, the extent of involvement and consultation including a multi-level and multi-sector approach, the stages of the planning and development process that should include community participation, the continuous nature the involvement process, the flexibility in attempting different approaches for different situations, and the synergistic approach a community can take in order to achieve a "win-win" type of outcome. A number of elements that have been embraced by a number of writers are included in Figure 2.

These elements of community involvement are elaborated further below:

Providing opportunity for local involvement: A number of writers have pointed to the need of providing real opportunities for local involvement and consultation in the decision process (7, 9, 10, 14, 17). Few, however, have discussed how that process might take place and what approaches are the most effective or ineffective. There is some evidence that has shown a lack of comprehensiveness in the involvement of local residents due to motivations and interests within the community (26).

Understanding local attitudes: Dowling discussed the importance of tourism developers taking account of local community attitudes, including: "the way that a local unaltered environment contributes to a community's sense of place" (7). Keogh, however, discussed the difficulties in gaining representative understanding of first, the information needs and then the attitudes of local community residents (15).

Goals and priorities that come from residents: D'Amore, in his studies of tourism development in Canadian communities, suggested that tourism development goals should be identified primarily by local residents (4).

Multi-level involvement of diverse sectors including the community: While involvement in an integrated manner of a diverse group of affected parties, has been proposed, (14, 3) recognition of the need to increase the involvement of "community groups, environmental groups, industry groups and the general public has also been put forward (3). Public participation through a multi-level approach has recently been discussed in the development of local and regional coastal planning. This includes a range of levels from the development of more comprehensive policies to involvement on specific development projects (3).

Participation during each stage of the planning process: Public participation has been shown to be more effective at each stage of the planning process, and especially at the earliest possible stage. This is "before commitments are made and battle lines drawn (21).

Continuous process of involvement: Dowling suggested that the community tourism planning approach should not be static, but should be an interactive and continuous process in seeking out and incorporating diverse views (8).

Flexible approaches to tourism planning: A number of approaches have been attempted in utilising community participation in tourism planning. Some of these are elaborated below: Inskeep outlined a method for maximum involvement of the community in both the planning as well as the decision-making process of tourism. This would involve "participation in the actual development and management" of tourism projects (13). Haywood discussed "a tourism planning committee with representatives from all sectors of a community" (12). In a more involved approach, Inskeep suggested the creation of "tourism advisory boards that involve all stakeholders" (13). In the late 1980's, Alberta put forward an elaborate "Community Tourism Action Program" which included a four step awareness, information sharing, assistance and public input process. This process was intended to assist communities (defined as any incorporated municipal jurisdiction) to take ownership of where they wanted to aim, regarding tourism (33).

Synergistic relationships and a consensus of opinion: Murphy's work suggested "that if the public and private groups are given the chance to participate at an early stage there is sufficient consensus of opinion to permit broadly based planning objectives" (21). This indicates that, with constructive and facilitated contact between diverse groups on policy and specific projects there can be greater potential for consensus, and therefore improved results. Murphy also suggested that the most positive working relationship will be a "synergistic one, where...parties are seen to gain from each other's involvement" (20).

Difficulties in Public Participation

As has been shown previously, there are many positive merits in gaining input from the community on tourism and development issues. Some writers, however, have also addressed the potential ineffectiveness of the poorly represented nature of some public meetings and other citizen participation solicited by local government authorities as a method of representative community input (15, 20, 19). This suggests the need to seek the broadest possible input and involvement from a diverse group of affected players. By only attempting what some decision makers offer as: a "tokenism approach-- allowing citizens to provide data and react to the proposals of experts, but not letting them become involved in setting priorities or participating in the decision making" (21), true community participation will not have been accomplished.

Many of these elements above have potential for positive results for planners and developers. These elements, however, are normally approached from the point of view of the developer, either developer driven or planner driven. They are seldom viewed from the point of view of community initiated and driven decision making. This paper attempts to shed some light on a community driven approach that has seen some success within the community of Port Stephens.

COMMUNITY SUCCESS MODELS IN TOURISM

Community input and participation are not alone in approaches to building community commitment. A number of models have been developed recently in the tourism arena that have broader appeal to communities who are encompassing tourism regions.

Theorists such as Anderson, (1) Richardson, Young, Thomassen, (30) Krippendorf, (16) Lane, (18) and Butler (2) have discussed models of responsible tourism principles which normally tend to reflect first, an approach to planning, managing, under-standing, participating in and/or encouraging tourism and second, the probable degree of impact the particular approach may have on a community. These principles have as major categories (31): Community planning, management and control, facility planning and management, tourism impact orientation and tourists and their behaviour. Community planning, input, vision and sensitivity to the development process are some of the key aspects of these criteria. A number of these ideas, their successes and challenges, are expanded further below in a case study of a region 200 kilometers north of Sydney, Australia: Port Stephens, New South Wales.

PORT STEPHENS AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN DECISION MAKING

Over the past ten years a growing regional community of about 40,000 people, Port Stephens, has experienced dramatic growth in popularity as a place to live and as a tourist destination. As a result of a pro-development/pro-tourist stance by local government, this has resulted in a rapid program of both tourist and residential development.

Community Concerns in Port Stephens

In the 1980s and early 1990s, after seeing their "Blue Water Wonderland" (as the promotional brochures have called the area), change dramatically, numerous people in the

Port Stephens community began to express concern and at times strong resentment of Council policy. A number of issues and concerns emerged regarding proposed developments and the directions in which the local Council of Port Stephens was headed. Most of the concerns include either those affecting natural attractions or those affecting built attractions in natural settings.

Prominent Community Organisations Formed in Port Stephens

Since these concerns have arisen, collaborative actions have taken place through numerous community meetings, regular correspondence with local press, submissions to council and other activities aimed at either blocking "insensitive" development proposals, or changing the direction and emphasis in the region to a longer term "responsible" approach (34). Concerned community members who did not feel their positions were being heard by decision makers, formed into a number of pressure groups, (29, 28) organised a series of meetings and extensively used the "letters to the editor" section of local newspapers as a grass roots effort to address community concerns.

The following Figure 3 identifies some of these prominent community organisations. Figure 4 combines and describes the Port Stephens concerns and community groups involved in addressing each concern. These pressure groups and concerns were seen as a natural result of the desires of a growing number of the community.

Community Relationships Initially Seen as Ineffective

Before 1992, community relationships regarding tourism and residential development were seen to be in a state of chaos. Little communication existed between affected players with development plans shown to the local community with little or no input nor time for response. There was seen to be an adversarial role between such diverse players as local council and council management, developers, and various concerned community groups. There were few, if any mechanisms for organised and effective dialogue. "Experts" were brought in to argue for each vested organisation while showing limited concern for other resident's issues. Figure 5 graphically represents a picture of these ineffective and quite chaotic community relationships.

Movement Toward More Effective Relationships in the Port Stephens Community

In late 1992, a one day conference was organised and supported by a number of the community groups with the primary objective of discussing the major issues, impacts and opportunities regarding the future of Port Stephens. The Council President and local State member for parliament attended and were involved in the conference. Integrity of wildlife habitat was chosen as a focus during the conference and a number of philosophical conservation and ecologically sustainable development principles were put forward and endorsed.

One major endorsement of the "Wildlife Summit" included the underpinnings of low

negative impact tourism development within the Port Stephens region as a viable and more responsible alternative to the primary mass tourism--large scale development emphasis that had been promoted until this time.

It became clear from discussions with various pressure groups, that the natural and socio-cultural assets of the region could be utilised to potentially meet the diverse needs of these community groups (primarily conservation of Port Stephen's natural, social and cultural assets) while giving incentives to promote "appropriate" approaches for economic well being through increased visitors to the region. So-called types of "sensitive", "responsible" or "eco-oriented" tourism were viewed as positive solutions to increasing income to the region while not adversely affecting the area.

Integration and Formation of EcoNetwork

Within three months, the concept of building a proactive and more united community mechanism with a network of shared communications was developed. Many of the Port Stephens community pressure groups supported the ideas and directions from the 1992 conference and a new organisation was formed called EcoNetwork--Port Stephens. As of 1995, Nineteen Port Stephens community groups have become members of EcoNetwork--Port Stephens. In forming this direction and bringing these groups together, there were a number of key leaders whose influence, tenacity and facilitation skills were fundamental to EcoNetwork and its future interactions. The primary directions of EcoNetwork are outlined below:

EcoNetwork's Vision

EcoNetwork's vision projects an eco-oriented culture that addresses the total human condition, nurturing a holistic quality of life now and the transfer of intact natural systems to future generations.

EcoNetwork's Aims

a)   To unify members, affiliates, communities and their organisations in co-operation around shared values, common interest and objectives.

b)   To conduct an educative and awareness program within local communities on ecological values and systems.

c)   To conduct workshops, seminars, forums on complex and contentious issues impacting upon ecosystems and related concerns.

MODEL OF EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS REGARDING TOURISM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN PORT STEPHENS

These developments described above in the case of Port Stephens have resulted in a significant change in the directions, attitudes and participation approaches with decision makers. Figure 6 represents graphically, this movement toward effective community relationships regarding development projects (as well as policy formulation) in the Port Stephens community.

Though the model described in Figure 6 is not yet completely functional, under this set up, the major aspects include improved

communications and organisational relationships, sharing of expertise and resources, and integration of the decision making process. Ideas on projects and policies are nurtured and fed into the community at earlier stages (and at each stage) for feedback and identification of potential problems. Through an effective negotiation process, these potential problems are dealt with through involvement, education, compromise and change.

Of note: Recently the Port Stephens General Manager has had discussions regarding the formation of a panel similar to the "community development panel" as shown in Figure 6. He also commented that he wanted "council to put in place a 30-year concept plan for the shire with community support to help stop the continuing debate on the environment versus development" (27). This 30-year concept plan is currently being developed and the author was requested to be a member of the planning council for this plan.

PORT STEPHENS ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES FOR LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

There is still much to be accomplished in determining Port Stephens future, however, these positive directions are an effective beginning to achieving long term sustainability within this community. Major examples of the numerous actions, initiatives, groups, forums and meetings that have been organised to meet these improving relationships and decision processes within the Port Stephens community are described in some detail below.

Actions and Initiatives

Tomaree Geographic: The Tomaree Geographic was established to encourage people through educative initiatives to take an interest in protecting the local environment and foster awareness and understanding of the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Tomaree Peninsula. Promoting the Tomaree Peninsula as an ideal place to visit for educational tourism, and putting local business first are two additional aims of the periodical (32).

Trust fund proposal: This is designed to attract large corporate and private donations, legacies and inheritances that may be used for the purchase of significant places of importance to tourism, the natural heritage and future generations.

Aboriginal liaison officer appointed: An Aboriginal representation and liaison officer has been appointed to council in order to assist in preservation of the local aboriginal culture, historic sites and the environment.

Centre of Coastal Zone Management Proposal: This has involved a regional approach to the formation of a Centre for Coastal Zone Management that attempts to combine the functions of research, applied management, ecotourism, education and training. The ultimate goal would be a national centre of excellence that would give the region a national and international profile in coastal zone management and help to redefine the image of Newcastle (including the regional area) as a 'green city' (6).

Draft Eco-tourism Strategy for Newcastle Bight/Hunter River Wetlands: This strategy argued for the three environmental features adjacent to and part of Port Stephens and the city of Newcastle to be enhanced for use as

ecotourism attractions for regional, national and international tourism. These include a 35 kilometre coastal high dune system and coastal bushland of Newcastle Bight, the 43 square kilometre Kooragang Island Nature reserve and Hexham Mangrove Swamp, which are internationally recognised habitats for bird and marine life. Included in the proposal would be to develop controlled access to the waterways, bushland and dune systems through interpretive signage and educative approaches and access by shallow draft boating, use of boardwalks, viewing platforms, cycleways, maintained trail systems and historic visitor and education centre (5).

Groups

Newcastle Bight Coastal Park Coalition: In 1993, five diverse groups: Newcastle Bight Nature Reserve Group, Fern Bay Residents Group, Stockton Rifle Range Preservation Committee, Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement, Hunter Region Community Forum added support to form the Newcastle Bight Coastal Park Coalition. The purpose of this coalition group has been to press for the inclusion of all public land along Newcastle Bight into a Coastal Park System. The large park of more than 35 kilometres in length is intended to enhance passive recreation and ecotourism by improving access and interpretation of the natural heritage of the Hunter Region of New South Wales (22). This park has been recently endorsed by the local and state governments.

Precinct Committee for Council: A committee was established to discuss openly with local government, the challenges of diverse, yet specific local needs in the community and to offer community

consultation and support to tourism, recreation and development projects.

Ecotourism workgroup: A workgroup was recently organised to offer support for responsible and innovative ecologically sustainable tourism in the Port Stephens region. This includes networking, developing responsible tourism strategies for decision makers, conduct workshops on ecologically sustainable tourism. Joint multi-council funding has been sought to develop in 1996, a regional ecotourism educational manual which will include (a) understanding of the key principles of ecotourism, (b) regional information on geological, geographical, historical (koori, white settlement, maritime), biological and ecological, cultural and social aspects, (c) criteria and considerations for ecotour operators in Port Stephens, (d) potential ideas for developing, marketing and managing a small ecotourism operation, (e) photographs and interpretive maps of key sights of interest in the region, (f) interpretive methods to enhance visitor's experiences and (g) list of current operators who are committed to with the basics of ecotourism.

Port Stephens Wetlands Action Group: The Port Stephens Wetlands Action Group was formed in early 1994 with a purpose of lobbying all levels of government to save the remaining wetlands areas and cultural sites in the Port Stephens Local Government area.

Dolphin Watch Boat Charterers Group: The Dolphin Watch Boat Charterers Group was formed in 1994 to begin discussing the potential problems and look for cooperative solutions to sustaining the 90-100 dolphins who live in the Port Stephens Bay. In early 1995 a voluntary "Code of Practice for

Dolphin Watching" was developed and endorsed by Port Stephens Council.

Aboriginal Heritage Workgroup: An Aboriginal heritage workgroup was recently formed with a three part agenda: (1) identification and protection of sites, (2) education and interpretation for local community, decision makers and visitors, and (3) identify and support business, tourism and funding opportunities.

Meetings and Forums

Coastal Care Crisis Forum: This will be conducted in early September, 1994 as a region forum of community, government, affected industries and non-government groups to address issues and challenges of managing and assuring sustainability of the geologically, socio-culturally and economically diverse coastal region.

Mambo Wetlands Council panel: A discussion and decision panel is being organised, to address the diverse tourism and land based needs and direction of Mambo mangrove wetlands. This involves setting up a panel of about eight to twelve people representing the local community, experts participation, and council decision makers. A cooperative approach may be taken to compromise for 70% of land set aside for protection and development of aboriginal interpretive centre, with 30% on less sensitive land utilised for housing development. This panel may be looked on favourably as a model for the possibility of organising a Community Development Panel (as shown in Figure 6).

Joint regional workgroup for establishing cross-council responsible tourism strategy: In June, 1994 a meeting was set up between community leaders, tourism academics and council representatives to review and look at the feasibility of developing a regional responsible ecotourism oriented strategy for the regions of Port Stephens, Newcastle, Dungog, Great Lakes local government areas for regional tourism in natural environment.

Tomaree National Park open forum: In May, 1994, a speaking and information forum was conducted with community, government, operators and non-government organisations for the purpose of discussing limitations and opportunities for the expansion and enhancement of Tomaree National Park and Reserves. This is expected to represent eight unique ecosystems and establish an asset base for the development of nature oriented tourism in the region.

Marine Summit: A workgroup has been meeting to organise a regional marine summit for the development of key management strategies involving the diverse recreational, fishing, tourism, and wildlife needs of one of the largest inland coastal waterways in New South Wales (11).

Tilligerry Habitat Special Public Meeting and Community Forum: In June, 1993 a speaking and information forum for the development of Tilligerry Habitat nature centre was organised, including tourism, animal and land management approaches and strategic planning development (23). Then in June, 1994 an open community forum was coordinated to discuss the development of ecotourism for expanding the economic base of the Tilligerry Peninsula. This would be done through development of the Tilligerry Habitat, Tanilba Historic House and Lemon Tree Passage Mangrove Boardwalk, well known for abundance of marsupials, sea and land birds, aboriginal and settler history. An

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open forum was organised to discuss the future direction of job creation through ecotourism and to develop commitment and understanding for local community members (24, 25).

APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY DRIVEN DECISION MAKING: WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE PORT STEPHENS SITUATION?

When a community is disoriented and disenfranchised regarding its future, decisions that affect the community are seen to be in a state of chaos. Attempts initially made to determine the community's future may first involve increased fire-fighting on many fronts in order to influence community decision making. Utilising a "firefighting approach", however, may lead to feelings of frustration, hopelessness and disenchantment with results. This may occur because of too many new "battle fronts", and an adversarial approach to influencing decision making. The community may feel that there are no real winners but only losers.

If conditions exist, however, a change of approach may include communication, cooperation and integration in the decision making process. The diverse players may then see the advantages of attempting to work together toward more resolution of problems and planning for the future and at an earlier stage in the process. Under this "ideal" looking scenario, the diverse players move away from adversary positions toward a focus on synergy and the community begins to progress closer to parity and balance and a sustainable future.

As was mentioned earlier in this paper, there are a number of community participation elements that have potential for planners and developers. These elements, however, have normally been approached from the point of view of the developer, either developer driven or planner driven. Many writers have looked at this form of participation of the community from the position of "community input to decision making" where higher bodies look for ways to gain community participation. This case of Port Stephens, however, has shown that under some conditions the position of "community driven decision making" can be an effective means of producing sustainable change in a community's future.

Figure 7 shows a number of these principles as discussed previously which were found to be applicable in the Port Stephens situation. In addition, Figure 7 also lists a number of conditions which existed or were created in the Port Stephens situation. Both these principles and the community's conditions may have some relevance to tourism oriented coastal communities in other regions. It was quite clear that, at least in the Port Stephens case, to be effective in community oriented tourism and development decision making, a community must move beyond just community input and it must nurture an atmosphere toward empowerment and synergy in a community driven decision process.

CONCLUSION

This paper has looked at how community's may attempt to facilitate interaction and influence decision making within the community. Community participation was looked to as a major focus in decision processes within community's that are embracing tourism and other related development pressures. In discussing these issues, the community of Port Stephens in New South Wales, Australia, which has seen

intense pressures from tourism and residential holiday development, was reviewed as a model case in gaining insight into community decision processes.

In order to embrace the aspects of community driven decision making in the movement toward long term sustainability, a community must become committed to creating effective relationships between its members so that advisory roles are minimised and communication, education, cooperation and consensus are achieved.

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Figure 1: Net Intrastate Migration 1986-91

Net Intrastate Migration 1986-91

NEW ENGLAND

NORTH COAST

ORANA

FAR WESTERN

HUNTER

CENTRAL WESTERN

SYDNEY

RIVERINA

MURRAY

ILLAWARRA

SOUTH-EASTERN
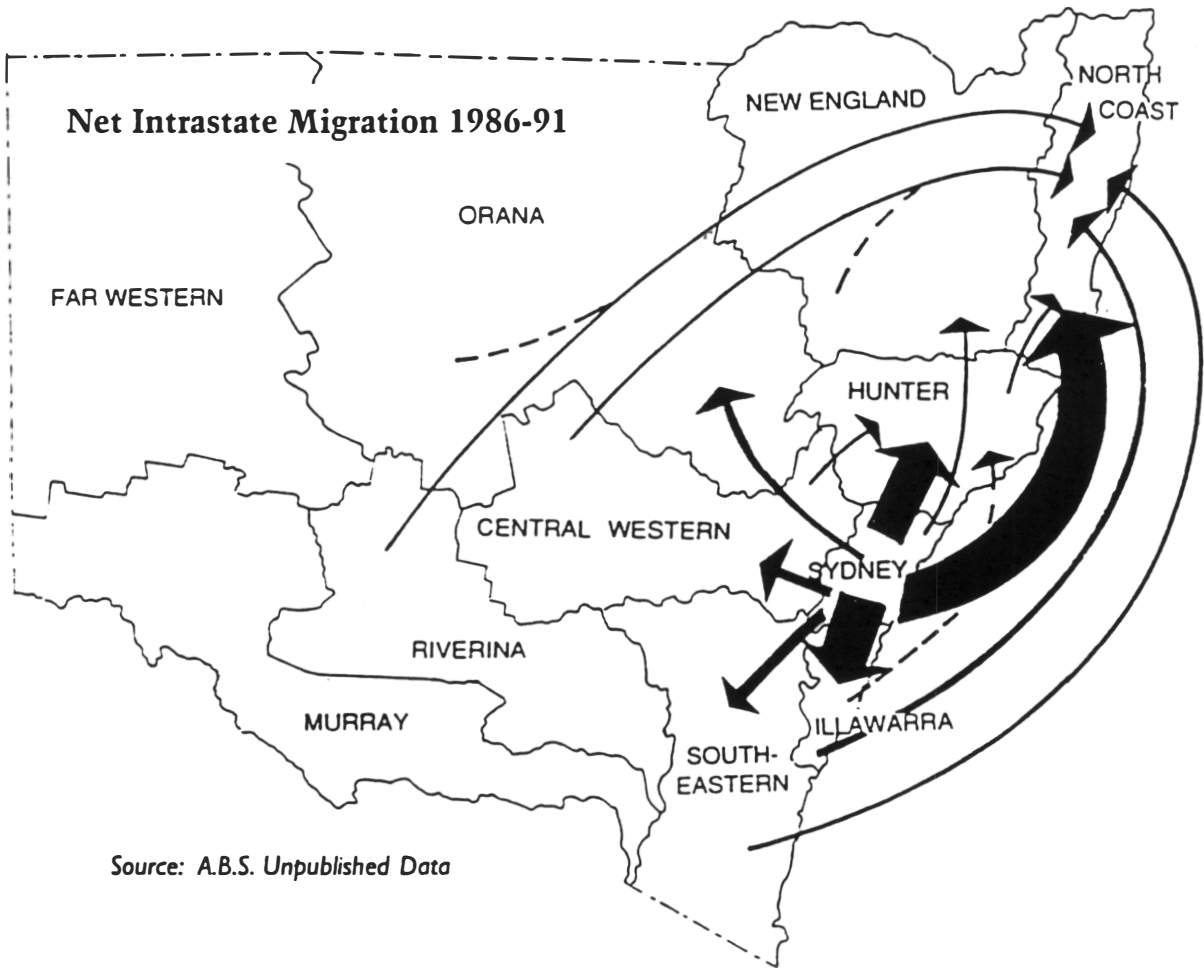
Source: A.B.S. Unpublished Data

Figure 2: Elements of Community Involvement

Providing opportunity for local involvement

Understanding local attitudes

Goals and priorities that come from residents

Multi-level involvement of diverse sectors including the community

Participation during each stage of the planning process

Continuous process of involvement

Flexible approaches to tourism planning

Synergistic relationships and a consensus of opinion

Figure 3: Prominent Community Organisations in Port Stephens

Corlette Precinct	Wallaroo Conservation Group
Fingal/Shoal Bay Progress Association	Conservation Society - Port Stephens
Friends of Point Stephens	Friends of Fame Cove
Boat Harbour Residents & Ratepayers	National Parks Association - Hunter Reg.
Port Stephens Clean Waters Coalition	Hunter Koala Preservation Society
Native Animal Trust Fund - Hunter Region	Newcastle Bight Coastal Park Coalition
Lemon Tree Passage Parks & Reserves	Port Stephens Coalit'n Against High Rise
Port Stephen Precinct Committee	Port Stephens Wetlands Action Group
Port Stephens Planning & Environ. Lobby	Corlette/Salamander Progress Assoc.
Tilligerry Bush Preservation Group	Tilligerry Habitat Steering Committee

Figure 4: Specific Concerns and Community Pressure Groups in Port Stephens

Community concern	Community pressure group	Description of concern
Anchorage Resort	Corlette Concerned Citizens Group	Anchorage Port Stephens resort in sensitive waterfront location of Corlette Headland
Extension to Tomaree National Park	National Parks Association: Hunter Region	Proposed increases to the Tomaree National Park in order to encompass the seven unique eco-systems of the Port Stephens region
Fame Cove Nature Reserve	Friends of Fame Cove	Major yachting anchorage, aboriginal site, and nature reserve was potentially to be sold at auction to private developer
Mambo Wetlands Cultural Centre	Corlette - Salamander Precinct Number 4/5	Proposed residential development of sensitive Mambo wetlands and Aboriginal site
Newcastle Bight Coastal Park	Newcastle Bight Coastal Park Coalition	Proposed coastal park to protect and enhance one of the largest coastal dune eco-systems in Australia. To make available, visitor use of the system with little disturbance. Apposing developers want 17,000 people residential site.
Point Stephens Island	Friends of Point Stephens	Rebuilding and conservation of Australia's third oldest lighthouse residence and island preservation
Port Stephens Flora Garden	Conservation Society of Port Stephens	Conservation and regeneration of waterfront land separating two Port Stephens villages
Shoal Bay beach front forest	Port Stephens Planning and Environment Lobby	Preservation of last natural green water front buffer of mature forest in the Nelson Bay/Shoal Bay area
Shoal Bay Country Club	Port Stephens Coalition Against High Rise	High rise redevelopment of Shoal Bay Country Club beyond the limits set by council
Habitat	Interim Steering Committee of Tilligerry Habitat	Rezoning for tourism development of waterfront land between two villages in Port Stephens: Tanilba and Mallubula
Wanda Wetlands Aboriginal Waterhole	Port Stephens Wetlands Action Group	Proposed residential development of sensitive Wanda wetlands and Aboriginal site

Figure 5: Ineffective Community Relationships Which Existed in the Past in Port Stephens Regarding Development Projects
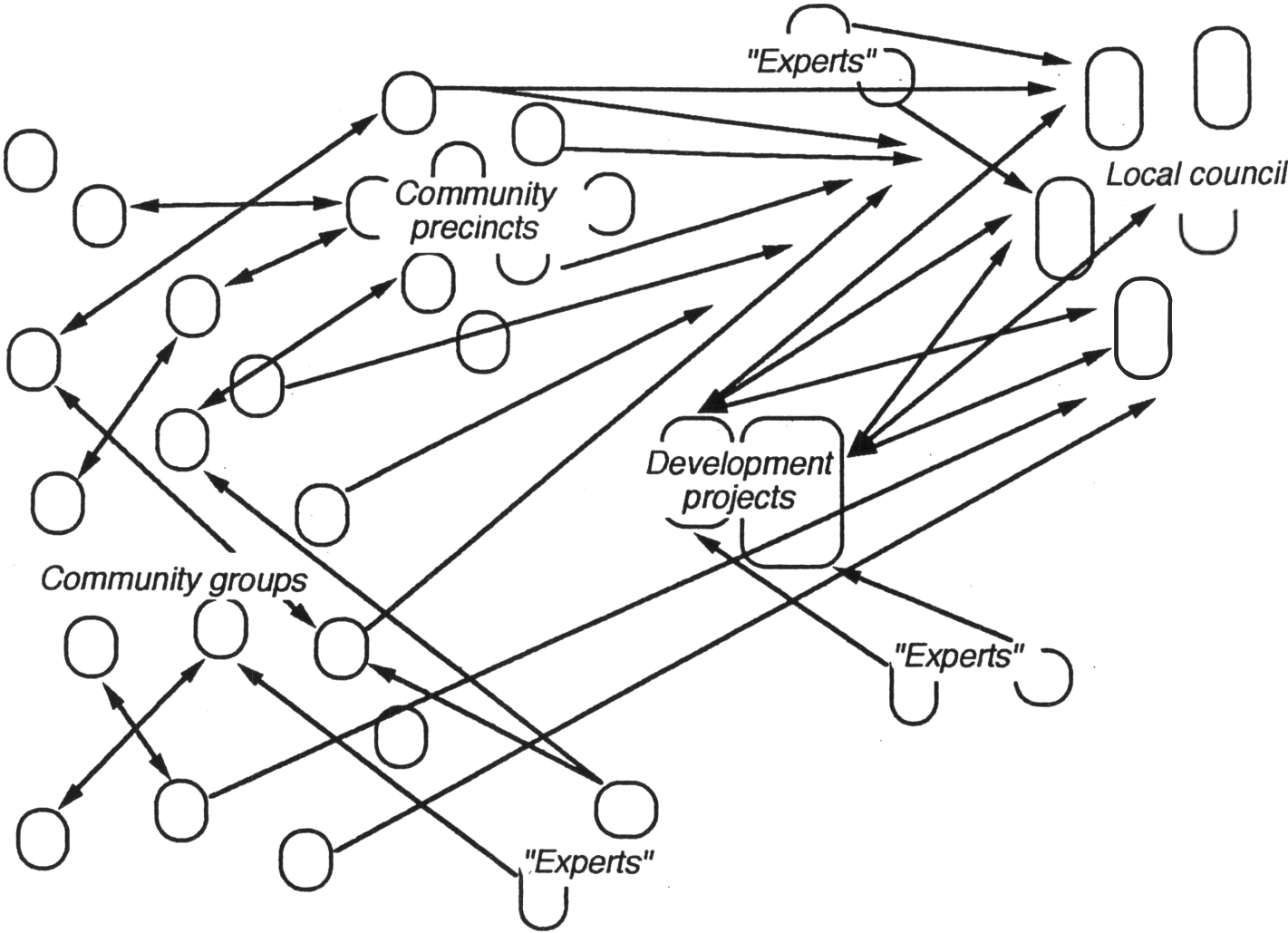
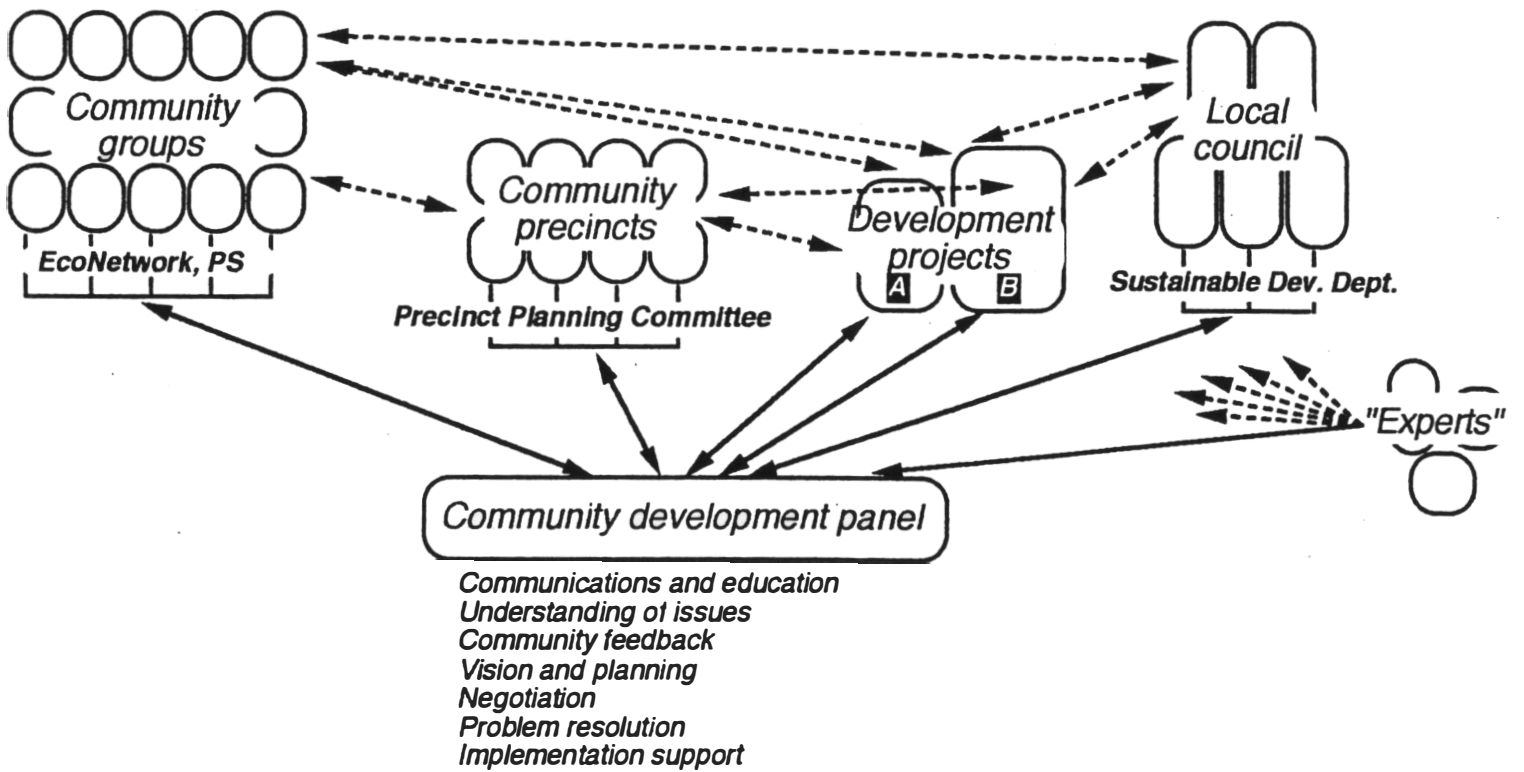**Figure 6: Moving Toward Effective Community Relationships in Port Stephens Regarding Development Projects**

Community groups

EcoNetwork, PS

Community precincts

Precinct Planning Committee

Development projects

A   B

Local council

Sustainable Dev. Dept.

"Experts"

Community development panel

Communications and education
Understanding of issues
Community feedback
Vision and planning
Negotiation
Problem resolution
Implementation support

Figure 7: The Nature by Which a Community Driven Decision Making Process may be Effective

Principles

◆ gain an understanding of local attitudes

◆ goals and priorities begin from local residents

◆ multi-level and multi-sector involvement

◆ community involvement at every stage is important

◆ involvement should be a continuous process

◆ there should be flexibility in attempting different approaches

◆ focus on a synergistic approach to problem resolution

Conditions

◆ sense of community is strong

◆ key person(s) with a vision and tenacity

◆ well established community groups

◆ key issue(s) that span across and mobilise the community

◆ feeling that individual and group efforts can make a difference

◆ unstable council or changing dynamics in the key decision makers

◆ resources available to effectively address issues (i.e., knowledge and skills, money and time)

◆ community commitment for involvement, synergy and sustainability