

**People's revolution or state imposition?
Working the spaces between the contradictions of
community development.**

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CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled

People's revolution or state imposition? Working the spaces between the contradictions of community development

Submitted for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**

Except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone.

The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award.

The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

Any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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ACRONYMS

CBDP	Community Building Demonstration Project
DoJ	Department of Justice
DoI	Department of Infrastructure
DVC	Department of Victorian Communities
FRED	Forum for Research Education and Development
GTG	Growing Together Group
IEC	Interim Establishment Committee
OCB	Office for Community Building

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

- 28th April 2004, DVC Department for Victorian Communities, Senior manager
- 5th November 2004, DVC Department for Victorian Communities, Middle manager
- 10th December 2004, City of Darebin, Senior manager
- 10th December 2004, City of Darebin, Councillor
- 9th May 2005, Community Building Interdepartmental Project Officer
- 15th June 2004, City of Darebin, Middle Manager
- 13th November 2005, people who had resided in Preston in the 1950s

Summary

My aim in this study is to develop more theoretically informed praxis – and practically informed theory – about two seminal questions: “What is the good life?”, and “How we are to live together?” This thesis explores community and development through the lens of a small Community Building Demonstration Project that was conducted in Melbourne’s Northern suburbs between 2001 and 2005. This project, at the time, was promoted by the State Labor Government as a radical strategy that would overcome deeply entrenched social problems.

I argue that we are indeed in a predicament that does not easily lend itself to deductive-positivist methods of problem solving. Given that ‘reality’ can be interpreted in many ways, and knowledge itself is coloured by the interests of powerful groups, how best are we to investigate from within the frame of our own culture? Questions of the social are deeply implicated with those of the environmental, economic and cultural, thus part of the research challenge is to circumscribe a methodology that is appropriate to asking questions about how we are to work together towards the human good.

The thesis progressively contextualizes the hidden connections between the day-to-day lived experiences of those in the project and broader factors at the regional, national, and ultimately global political-economic levels. The research re-views the history of Western expansionism over the globe, firstly in the form of the colonial ‘adventure’, and more recently the efforts to ‘develop’ the Third World, in what has come to be accepted as ‘modernism’ and ‘progress’, but most typically at the cost of community. The research necessarily grapples with the contemporary litany of fashionable ideas like social capital, the Third Way, ‘joined-up’ government, and Participatory Rural Appraisal.

The questioning throughout the thesis of the holistic relationship between the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ leads to various propositions about dealing with our predicament, ranging from how we may seek more respectful interpersonal relationships, to how a community-based committee might represent local interests, as well as what guiding philosophies of the state may be consistent with the goals of such ‘development’.

As the nature of the predicament becomes clearer, I begin to focus on the question of the opportunities for personal agency given the seemingly overwhelming structures that surround us. The empirical study of the Community Building project reveals the contradictions and dialectics that occur when change is attempted in such a milieu. It shows the interplay of contradictions when imposition meets resistance, and what opportunities there are there to work in the space between these dialectics. It finally reveals other possibilities for understanding and acting, or for ‘other discourses’ that we might use to make a better future together.

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE

Journal: 15th December 2001

The Darebin Community Building Project Interim Committee has accepted my offer to be a part of that project. This Christmas break-up get-together is the first time I will meet committee members and residents of the neighbourhood. I'm a bit apprehensive, because I want to make a good impression. What am I to expect? After all, this is my initiation into a cutting-edge, Twenty-First Century, state of the art community development project. This is my chance to do real community development – the equivalent of studying violin with the Vienna Philharmonic.

An hour later, after some polite conversation, I'm standing here scraping the barbeque plate. It is neither romantic nor sexy – it just seemed the most helpful thing that I tidy up. So this, it would seem, is the latest in community development! It's just so ordinary – doing the most obvious thing that is practical for the people around me (and getting fat splashed on my pants). After all the build up, and the libraries of literature, it seems like an anti-climax.

Journal: November 2003

I have now been immersed in Bangladesh for one week of this three-week study tour. The country has a population of 120 million people, mostly rural. The average wage is \$1 per day. Over the next forty years, the population is predicted to increase by 100 million people. There are two great hopes for the nation: one is the 3,000 development organisations that are mostly sponsored by overseas aid - many claiming to enact 'bottom-up' development with the people; the other hope is for increased trade with other countries, so the nation can industrialise.

During the evening, I mull over the fact that, for the price of my study tour, ten Bangladeshis could have had an average income for an entire year - or, for that matter, would have financed a local community development project with three local workers for three years, the usual duration of AusAID development projects. How do I make sense of this? What is my role? Am I the cause, the solution, or both? Is there some "right action" I can take, or am I just an onlooker, neither poor nor – so it seems – disadvantaged? And how many more are there like me?

Mapping the current predicament

This thesis has had a very long gestation period, which has deeply affected my approach to it as well as its eventual outcomes, presently in front of you as a PhD thesis. When I did my undergraduate training to become a youth worker, many units in our curriculum focused on *individual* young people's lives, their psychology and their micro-experiences in their nuclear families or schools; yet simultaneously intermingled with rhetoric about 'empowerment' and 'social change'. After a limited experience in the field on placement, however, it became obvious that young people were inextricably linked to neighbours, family, local institutions and "place" (Booth 2001; Edgington, Kowalski & Randall 2005) – consistent with the folk-saying that "it takes a village to raise a child". A course unit on Community Development promised to answers questions about the link between young people's

individual flourishing and community wellbeing. The “model” we were taught suggested that Community Development was to be conceived as a linear, rational process containing the following steps (Henderson and Thomas 1980):

1. Get to know the area, make contact.
2. Form groups, identify needs and priorities.
3. Sustain and develop the group.
4. Exit strategy.

As well as appearing relatively straightforward, this approach was presented as complementary to other modes of practice like individual work and group work, because it aimed at and instigated ‘structural change’ and initiated people’s self-organisation, while avoiding the ‘spectre’ of welfare dependency. Over my ensuing two decades of study and practice, I increasingly experienced a disjunction between the ideals of development and the realities “out there” (Wadsworth 1997). I had anticipated that my acquired technologies would equip me for playing my part in our society’s overall progress to achieving fairness, justice and equity for all, especially for the young people and their communities I had been drawn to work with.

It has become increasingly clear, however, that, while society is becoming more affluent, social problems are on the increase, both in terms of their number and severity; ‘community’ is evaporating if still existing at all, and environmental breakdown threatens to overwhelm all our other efforts. And this all occurs in spite - or perhaps because - of a plethora of tumultuous political ‘revolutions’ and ‘landslides’ and economic ‘developments’, all promising to achieve the ‘good society’. Worse, I have developed serious doubts about my own role in the process: I seem to be doing well professionally and financially through working in a sector that has a rhetoric of change, while evidence grows that I was part of the predicament. I found later that this ‘problem without a name’ is what the French sociologist, Durkheim, in the late 1800s referred to as ‘*anomie*’ (1893 [1997]): the state of losing a sense of what is expected of one in one’s society and community, a state of relative ‘*norm-less-ness*’. More recently, Theobald re-named this condition as ‘*amondie*’ or being ‘*without a world*,’ “...*the rather general feeling that events no longer make sense, and that the world they once inhabited has apparently disappeared*” (Theobald, 1997 p15).

Having worked in the context of Local Government, with non-government organisations and – finally – as an educator in Youth Work, the sense of despair and failure deepened and when, in the year 2001, the newly elected Victorian Labor Government announced a number of state-of-the-art Community Building Demonstration Projects, I decided to become involved in researching ways and means of developing better responses to the half-submerged issues I have pursued for all that time.

There are a number of concerns, therefore, that this research sets out to circumnavigate and get immersed in and, by doing so, hopefully better understand. The overarching questions for this

investigation are – in simple terms – how are we to live together; how are we to construct the good life in an inclusive way, affirming of all people and respectful of the gifts and limits of our natural environment? Can we achieve this just by developing better ‘intervention’ techniques, or do we face a real fundamental conundrum, the untangling of which is beyond current methods? What can I learn from past and current change efforts about ways of ‘understanding’ and ‘doing’ that are more likely to achieve the results I desire? What might ‘community’ and ‘development’ have to do with our goals of achieving the ‘good life’? Is there hope for a progressive, empowering approach, or should we better give up on the expectation of a positive outcome for people, thereby accepting that society will always be unequal, while the best we can do is to pursue our individual survival?

Over time, I have come to see the above questions and issues increasingly as different dimensions of a cluster of interrelated concerns, less as individual problems just in need of some discrete solutions. In conducting this inquiry, I have attempted to avoid what Peters derided as, “...*the debris of abstract thinking, compartmentalised knowledge, warring specialisms, fragmented facts and a general sense of alienation between human consciousness and wider reality*” (1985, p193), instead trying to give the often used notion of ‘holistic approaches’ both a more substantial as well as practical meaning. In the following few paragraphs, I will attempt to sketch the various issues I locate at the centre of this research and, in doing so, identify the ‘territory’ I intend to cover.

As I alluded to in the above vignettes, one overarching dimension in this cluster of issues includes the phenomena referred to summarily as poverty, inequality and disadvantage. I am interested in exploring what they mean and, particularly, whether their understanding moves beyond the commonly used descriptors of class, gender and ethnicity to include cultural and relationship poverty as well. Thus, might poverty be considered to be a condition of the materially well-off – and what potential might ‘community development’ have for positive change, indeed, for reaching the ‘*common good*’. My central concern is, therefore, to examine ways and means (including the ‘ways and means’ of community development) through which people can be enabled to reach their human potential – those groups who are oppressed by others and have little power to change their situation, as well as those of us who are relatively privileged and are challenged to take responsibility for the state of our world (whilst equally recognising the darker sides of that privilege for ourselves as well as its causative effects on the former groups). This is a very large canvas indeed: I could be accused of wanting to ‘save the world’ - but I more modestly hope to make best use of this opportunity to ‘pluck a few threads’ on what I have come to suspect is a ‘web’ of interacting and intersecting issues.

As already intimated, a second and overlapping dimension to my inquiry is the cluster of ideas and modalities surrounding “community development”; I will look critically at community development in order to better understand its potential contribution to social change within the context of what has been suggested in the previous paragraph. Community development claims to “empower” and

“liberate” participants from their current constraints, and enable them to collectively take control in shaping their world(s) (Clarke 2000; Jack 1995; Hanna 1994; Kenny 1999; Ward 1994; McArdle 1993). As the following historical and theoretical review of the relevant literature will show, community development has been widely regarded as a putatively revolutionary way to overcome social problems and enhance human flourishing - especially being ‘prescribed’ when other traditional strategies appear to have failed or, worse, had caused harm. My intention is to arrive at some initial starting points for a practice framework that may guide me and other practitioners towards an increasingly theoretically informed practice and a practically informed theory, or a critical ‘praxis’ of community development.

The social constructs of ‘community’ and ‘disadvantage / poverty / inequality’ are, of course, not pertinent without consideration of the *people* to whom they are being applied and those who see themselves as ‘developers’. At first, my taken-for-granted focus was exclusively on people at the ‘grass roots’ who were experiencing disadvantage - and who, it was assumed, would experience liberation and empowerment through the ‘application’ of the ‘intervention modality’ variously labelled ‘community development’, ‘capacity building’, ‘community strengthening’, ‘social inclusion’, and so on. However, my focus gradually shifted to include those people who work for social change, either paid or unpaid, and I became more and more interested in their experiences of ‘*working at the hyphens*’ (Fine 1994). By this phrase I mean to indicate the positioning of ‘animateurs’ or ‘activists’ as between imposition and resistance – simultaneously reproducing and challenging a system of unfair social relations. This final group also involves those individuals and groups of actors who have a role in creating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating social policy and change efforts ‘from the top-down’.

As I include myself in the last two of these groups, my field of study includes what I do as a state-funded worker, but also what I do in the ‘private sphere’ as a citizen in interaction in community. bell hooks’ statement in relation to racial oppression helps to articulate such positioning of so-called ‘social change agents’ as both the source of oppression and its solution,

One change that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness. It would be just so interesting for all those white folks who are giving blacks their take on blackness to let them know what’s going on with whiteness...only a persistent, rigorous and informed critique of whiteness could really determine what forces of denial, fear, and competition are responsible for creating fundamental gaps between professed political commitment to eradicating racism and the participation in the construction of a discourse on race that perpetuates racial domination” (hooks 1990: 54 in Bishop 2002, p21).

hooks goes on to conclude that understanding the process of a shift of perspective by the oppressors, who learn to work in solidarity, “...can enhance awareness of the epistemological shifts that enable all of us to move in new and oppositional directions.” (ibid). Her ponderings about race obviously

apply equally to my previously mentioned questions about poverty, hunger, alienation, disadvantage, and so on.

The issues I have alluded to are conventionally treated as discrete “problems” which can be separated from their context and of which the causes can be found and “treatments” provided. However, our efforts at applying this paradigm have proved unsuccessful. In searching for an alternative construct, I have found the concept of a ‘predicament’ or ‘issue’ to be more useful to describe what I am attempting to address (McWhinney 1992, p82),

Predicaments require interpretive thinking. Dealing with a predicament demands the ability to put a larger frame around a situation, to understand it in its many contexts, to appreciate its deeper and often paradoxical causes and consequences. Alas, predicaments cannot be handled smoothly. (Farson 1996, p42)

The investigation circumscribed above is unbounded, complex and replete with mutually interactive elements. Thus, we are embedded – even trapped - in the cultures and ways of understanding that *maintain* and confirm the assumed problems and our previous attempts at solving them have often made them worse, or have led to new “problems”, as eloquently stated by Goodman,

For the past few hundred years and especially the past few decades, we have lived in a system that is literally pathological. We have relegated the things that really matter to us to the margins of our culture (Berman 1989); we have denied all our experiences that do not fit into the rational, language-based schema of modernism (Spretnak 1991); and we have alienated ourselves from nature and our natural selves (Susan Griffin, 1984). We see our institutions crumbling and our planet hurtling toward destruction, yet we seem to be unable to even see a way out of this morass. (2003, p20)

Moving my quest away from the idea of ‘solving problems’ and rather being aware of the intricacies and interdependencies of the predicaments we face as a species on this increasingly vulnerable planet, I will follow Paulo Freire’s suggestion that, instead of assuming that our task is to ‘solve’ already well-known problems, we should espouse an attitude of ‘problem posing’, thus allowing our questioning mind to penetrate and interrogate what has become the familiar and, through our critical practice, carefully try out other ways of being and doing (Freire, 1972; 1973). This thesis intends to be one humble contribution to such problem posing.

The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters, each helping to contribute to an investigation of the dynamic intersections that occur where imposition meets resistance. It begins with a general outline of the problem, as discussed above, followed by a substantial historical and theoretical overview of both community and development. Next, I explore the political and discursive contexts of the contemporary Victorian government’s construction of ‘community building’, followed by an analysis of a locality

that was selected for a demonstration project. Finally, there is an overview and examination of a three-year community building project in that locality. I will now set out each chapter in more detail.

In the first chapter I set the context, tone and parameters of the thesis and establish the questions that guide the rest of my investigative journey. As I explain, my emphasis is on community, development, disadvantage and the various groups of actors who co-exist to construct these social realities. Rather than seeking linearity and disciplinary boundaries, I take the position that complexity and holism is critical to framing the area of study, which I conceive of principally as a predicament I am in, rather than as an object to be analysed.

In Chapter Two I review the main social research literature in order to create a rationale and approach to study that is consistent with my topic area. My exploration into researching, interpreting and acting in the social world leads into questions of epistemology (how do we come to know the world) and ontology (how might we conceptualise humans in a living universe), as well as issues associated with studying people who are oppressed. Ethics and contradictions of power in research are more particularly examined, as are those methods of study that lend themselves to illuminating predicaments as I articulated them above. In my methodology, I attempt to deal with concerns like how can we deal with wholes and parts? How can we manage the dynamics of changing a situation, studying it, and simultaneously being changed by it? How might we come to better understand how discourses act to privilege the already-powerful knowledge producers (such as researchers) over ‘others’? What attempts have been made by previous researchers to describe ‘community’? What methods of data collection, analysis, reporting and verification will I use? I argue for a critical participatory epistemology; a methodology that ‘tilts’ toward qualitative, heuristic, reflexive field research; and methods that include community study, interviews and document analysis. The overlap between the concerns of action researchers, community organisers and community development are illustrated and illuminated as I give a detailed account of how I entered into the field, negotiated relationships with collaborators, gathered ‘data’ and sought authenticity of my findings.

Chapter Three is developed as a historical investigation into the ‘evolution’ of community and development in Australia, as well as in two other countries that have historically informed community development here, namely England and the United States. I structure this potentially very large investigation by making special mention of indigenous communities and early settlers, while foregrounding two major ‘projects’ since the industrial revolution: one is the efforts by various governments and philanthropists to use community development as a mode of ameliorating social problems; the other is to demonstrate that much nation building in the ‘West’ has been built on the systematic oppression of ‘others’. This is contrasted with a view of ‘development’ as it has been applied in the ‘Third World’ – first as colonisation by more powerful nations, and, since the post-war period, development as economic management. This section is concluded with a more conventional

review of the literature on community development, culminating in an explication of the critique and abandonment of this approach in some fields while simultaneously heralding it as a radical alternative in others. This sets the scene for a more theoretical exposition of the question of ‘agency’, given that we live within very large national and international ‘structures’ that apparently leave us with ‘no alternative’ other than competitive, damaging and self-destructive forms of living. Throughout these descriptions I touch on key debates about localism, place, economic policy, social theory, ideology and change. The final part of the chapter attempts to arrive at a more informed and integrated understanding of our predicament, and thus holistic model of development which might inform praxis. They thus offer fragments of a theoretical and epistemological framework, helping to interpret the empirical and experiential material presented in the following chapters.

Chapter Four investigates the Victorian Government’s Construction of Community Development. This introduces the empirical case-study material by detailing elements of the political–economic context in which the community development project that is the focus of this study evolved. A historical approach is taken to analysing the context that led to this project, as well as the current political environment in which it occurred. The chapter uses a range of texts to arrive at an understanding of how the Victorian government defines community development (which it labels ‘community building’), as well as analysing the mechanisms, administrative arrangements and policy processes used for putting these ideas into practice. I introduce some of the public policy discourse being used by governments to purportedly ‘resolve’ the tensions between states and markets, including ‘enterprising states’ and ‘joined-up’ government. I form a view that the government sees little alternative other than economic management as a means to staying in power, while well-intentioned notions of community are used to ameliorate critics and supporters on the “left”.

Chapter Five provides a brief description of the “target” community in the municipality of Darebin and its purported problems to which community development was hoped to offer a response. The historical and contemporary facets of this analysis refer back to earlier discussions related to studying people who are oppressed; indeed, ‘disadvantage’ is mainly interpreted as a force of systemic oppression, anticipating the questions as to how community building will be able to respond to this. I integrate a range of data sources in an effort to provide multiple perspectives of the locality, including Australian Bureau of Statistics data, visual imagery, historical events, and quotes from residents.

Chapter Six examines the unfolding of events in a publicly funded activity called the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project. It chronologically shows what happened over the three years of the life of the project, including the evaluative research that has been implemented, the themes targeted for action, the projects that were undertaken, and how the ‘stakeholders’ collaborated or interacted in the pursuit of their respective and common goals. This is completed with a presentation of interview data from respondents located at a range of levels within the project – from

senior executives within local and State Government, middle-level managers and project officers. This description is integrated with an evaluation and analysis of how the different ideas, understandings and practices of community development have played-out in the project; critically linking this discussion to themes raised in earlier chapters.

Chapter Seven provides reflections and concluding comments in relation to the main issues and lessons that have been learned through the experience of the community building project, such as grass roots self-determination, local governance, working with community people, relations between State and Local government, and the role of community research. I use this exploration to query the interests of the various stakeholders and ‘governers’ of the project, and ask what was facilitating or preventing them from resolving the contradictions they inevitably encountered in the “demonstration” project. I conclude with a rather hopeful scenario that speculates imaginatively on what might have been, had a range of the foundational and managerial aspects of the project been undertaken differently – or more specifically, according to a more holistic understanding of how the various stakeholders might have used their ‘agency’ to address the predicaments facing us. In this sense, I propose some pointers, as well as speculative questions, about how social change might be facilitated in future.

CHAPTER 2: A THEORY OF METHOD FOR INVESTIGATING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

...an exploration is an entity, different from all other journeys. It has personality, temperament, individuality, uniqueness. A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless... We do not take a trip; a trip takes us... a journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it. I feel better now, having said this, although only those who have experienced it will understand it. (Steinbeck 1962)

Introduction

In this chapter, I engage with the literature that has been written to guide the study of humans who are in a process of understanding their life-world, liberating themselves from their limitations, and attempting to more consciously construct a world that provides the ‘good life’ for all. I want to reflectively elaborate how I have engaged in a *form* of inquiry that is consistent and congruent with the topic’s *substance and process*, as well as with the questions, values and intentions of the ‘agents’ involved in the process and with the *context* it all happens in. I have gradually sought to evolve a way of inquiry that deliberately ‘tilts’ towards *emancipation*, the main goal of the process and project being investigated, ideally by treating participating people as active, knowing subjects (or, as ‘stakeholders’, a favourite notion at present used in community development), who are ‘*in the scene*’ and are willing to work with others to gain understanding and take action within their life worlds.

In more traditional research, I would be writing in the third person, with the aim of separating myself from the world in order to study it ‘*objectively*’; in an inquiry such as this one, however, which I consider to be participatory in the broadest sense, I have chosen to write in the first person and be more ‘present’ in the text. I aim to share my ‘positionality’ as one aspect of the research and consider my writing as a conversation with readers I assume to also be ‘*empathetically*’ positioned in their own context. In this sense, I truly have been and continue to be involved in an ‘*exploration*’, fully in the sense of Steinbeck’s quote introducing this chapter and to which the reader is invited to enter as well.

As I undertook the literature review of community development, I most acutely realised that *epistemological* questions were critical to understanding how we might better develop and study communities. Unlike traditional investigations, I did not ‘choose’ a particular methodological approach *before* embarking on my research; rather, the implications of my desire to choose a *participatory* approach became clearer as the work itself evolved and, as its implications became clearer, necessitating several adjustments ‘*on the road*’.

The structure of this chapter is, therefore, as follows; I first engage with *ontological and epistemological* literature about the nature of the ‘object’ of my study, *people*, about how we can know what we (think to) know and how we construct our ‘acting’ and ‘understanding’ relationship with reality. Following this, I explore some of the *methodological* questions, discussing how we might best ‘*walk the (research) road together*’, in order to gain understandings that liberate all those doing the walking. In particular, I discuss practical issues about how participatory and liberating methodologies have been and could be best applied in the context of research of the kind that I have undertaken. I will show that, at times, these method(ologie)s applied very comfortably and ‘seamlessly’ in the community development context of the project, whilst at other times the methodological ideals suggested in the literature clashed with many practical constraints, and how I made compromises to accommodate these. In the final part of the chapter, I explain the *methods* used, that is, how I went about collecting the information that makes up the body of this report.

For the sake of chronological accuracy and of logical argument, I also need to point out the order in which my methodology developed – as it differs to the order I am about to present. My ‘immersion’ into the field of community development goes back many years and my questions have formed – more or less consciously, over that period. When my formal research commenced, my ‘research strategy’ extended no further than to simply become involved in a newly funded and – according to the intention of its funders - innovative community development project. I kept as many records as possible, while I did not yet know what my focus, questions or methodology would be – or how I would turn this involvement into a research project and resulting doctoral thesis. Clarification of my questions and methodology eventually progressed through – what could be usefully referred to as - an action learning process, accelerating in the very late stages of the research, once I began to intensively engage with the various literatures. Thus, it has become an iterative process of *coming to know better* – and one that has also opened up exciting new paths of investigation which I intend to continue to pursue in future. The renowned ‘development’ author Robert Chambers, when speaking about his own efforts to write his thoughts, uses the metaphor of bridge painting – stating that by the time he reaches completion, he realises the need to go back to the beginning and start again, or even wonders if the bridge was laid across the correct river, or whether a bridge was in fact the needed solution (Chambers 1983). My experience with research is similar to this, except that it rather feels as having been surrounded by hundreds of bridges, all with their own claims to ‘solve problems’. In hindsight, I can now more confidently build or cross them with people who are prepared to ask questions and not necessarily the same ones I still have in my own mind.

My initial, more implicit research questions were formulated as follows,

How can we analyse the problems and needs of the area (selected for the implementation of the community development project)?

How can we improve socio-economic conditions, so local people can be better able to gain the advantages that others in society are enjoying?

What community development techniques are best for this task?

How can we report our findings to others who are interested, particularly those who are applying community development in their own areas?

These questions gradually changed as I realised that there were widely different opinions amongst stakeholders as to what community development (or “*community building*” as it was referred to in this project) meant, as to its goals or strategies. Newly emerging questions seemed more like:

What are the major discourses within the field of community development?

What are the conceptions of community building held by the various stakeholders in the Community Building Demonstration Project?

What is the relationship between stakeholder conceptions and program implementation?

How could strengths be built on, or weaknesses overcome in future community building efforts?

It was only at the formal ‘*completion*’ of the project and once I started to engage more thoroughly with the very diverse literature on the history and discourses of community development – and particularly as I wrote and rewrote – that I gained a much better appreciation of the ‘*predicaments*’ I suggested in the introductory chapter. Interpretivism, epistemology, voice, identity, the contradictory nature of change, consciousness raising, global scale, lived experience, the ‘good life’, and environmentalism all became more important factors to consider in the understanding of what initially just looked like a ‘*local*’ project. Thus, the research grew from being a case study of a project and its various techniques, to using this experience to provide insights into ‘*the good life*’ and ‘*how we are we to live together*’. As mentioned earlier, rather than having answers, I consider these evolving questions can help me to better *pose* problems (rather than trying to *solve* them without even understanding them) and develop a better appreciation of my personal role and responsibility in acting in the world (Bohm 1991; Freire, 1987; Skolimowski, 1992).

I will now proceed with an exploration of methodology in a more logical order, rather than the chronological order in which I discovered it.

EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY

A ‘paradigm’ is defined as a world view, or overarching philosophical system denoting a particular ontology and epistemology (Capra, 1982; Kuhn, 1962). What, then, are epistemology and ontology? They are closely related to each other, both seeking to describe ways we make sense in and of the world. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, “...*a way of understanding and explaining how we*

know what we know” (Crotty, 1998 p3), including issues such as objectivity, subjectivity and causal relationships between certain identified ‘factors’. Ontology is sometimes referred to as involving the meta-physical as well as the immanent realms of reality, particularly reflecting on issues like the nature of human beings in our relation to the social and physical aspects of our ‘world’. Crotty explains the often hidden roles that paradigms play in our research and, therefore, the critical importance of bringing these to the surface as they often influence our perceptions and judgments

...at every point in our research – in our observing, our interpreting, our reporting, and everything else we do as researchers – we inject a host of assumptions. These are assumptions about human knowledge and assumptions about realities encountered in our human world.... Without unpacking these assumptions and clarifying them, no one (including ourselves!) can really divine what our research has been or what it is now saying. (1998, p17)

Because the field of social research itself is unbounded, complex and contested, the research literature currently provides no simple formulas or rules for what is ‘correct research’. Denzin and Lincoln acknowledge that there currently exist multiple criteria for research and evaluation, all making a claim to be appropriate and, consequently, an “*embarrassment of methodological choices*” (1994, p11). The social research field is characterised by “*...constant tensions and contradictions over the project itself, including its methods and the forms its findings and interpretations take.*” (ibid. p4); even amongst ‘experts’ there are many disagreements and misunderstandings about each other’s frameworks, interpretations and meanings “[i]n effect, each theoretical framework is a mini-paradigm with its own internal logic and assumptions” (Patton 2002, p135). In discussing attempts to categorise social research, commentators warn that the various approaches “*... may appear more as a maze than as pathways to organised research.*” (Crotty 1998, p1) or, even worse “[t]he mind boggles in trying to get from one [category] to the other” (Miles and Huberman 1994, p5).

A way forward

The discourses ‘raging’ in the (social) research field have led to the breaking down of rigid boundaries between schools of thought and the rejection of a unilateral view of what is right and wrong. In its place, a wider acceptance of the adoption of eclectic and pragmatic approaches has emerged along with the associated strategies of triangulation, mixed methods and trans-disciplinary research (Gibbons et al. 1994; Grigg 1999). Cronbach (1980) argues that designing a study is as much art as science, and this type of researcher has been termed a “*bricoleur*” or jack of all trades, who “*... understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting*” (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p3). Schwandt argues that “*...what we face is not a choice of which label...Rather, we are confronted with choices about how each of us wants to live the life of a social inquirer*” (2000, p205). Therefore an

existential and personal question, rather than a technical or instrumental one, underlies the espousal of an epistemology and its associated or 'appropriate' methodologies and methods.

Some of the ontological and existential positions consistent with a study of community development are to consider humans as *active agents* who *construct* their reality through their beliefs, cultures, structures and practices that we then come to take as natural or 'given'. According to this frame, it is important that we treat each other as intelligent agents – across the traditionally assumed researcher/researched distinction - who are capable of examining our frames of reference and of reflexively freeing ourselves from our experience. Such a transformative process might best occur interpersonally, where people work with each other, in dialogue or conversation, to question what they are doing and reflect on their role in sustaining situations. This process might also be one of generating action in ongoing social contexts as we explore how power and privilege are embedded in everyday culture, personality and institutions (Dant 2003; Reason and Rowan 1981; Schön 1983). Power is conceived of as both instrumental AND self-forming – in effect, reshaping our goals, values, and identities, and thus who we are to become.

An appropriate ontology/epistemology for community development would also regard different actors within the system as having their own interpretations to contribute – therefore valuing that there is no one 'true' voice. We would therefore strive for (research) *relationships* that privilege social connectedness and feelings. In such a paradigm, our efforts for change would not seek answers but understandings; change and truth-building are envisaged as works-in-progress, in which case we are in a process of formulating and reformulating assumptions in order to get a better grip on complexities that exist within dialectical contradictions (Birch 1990; Levins & Lewontin 1985).

I find it helpful to engage with this epistemology by contrasting it against the taken-for-granted paradigm in Western society, *positivism*. This epistemological position and its associated assumptions considers researchers/people as separate from nature, who are, therefore, able to objectively observe and study the latter in order to discover universal truths and general laws governing it. Throughout both the community development project and this thesis, I have encountered almost relentless pressure from various quarters to take a positivist approach – both external demands and within myself. Positivist assumptions were embedded in almost every aspect of the community building project, as well as the 'academy': expectations of stakeholders, policies, project accountabilities, language, institutional procedures, and people's beliefs about what data counted as valid and reliable. These beliefs are also deeply ingrained in my own way of thinking, and continually seemed the 'natural' and credible way to proceed. All my previous educational experiences seemed to have prepared me for the 'scientific' process of 'generating' a hypothesis, developing clear and answerable questions, reducing complexity into manageable parts and aiming for objectivity, systematic rigour, generalisability and putative contributions to established theory (Bernstein 1983; Fay 1975; Levins & Lewontin 1985;

Merchant 1989). I found it very disconcerting to plan, explain and justify my approach through means other than these familiar notions. My efforts to 'walk the talk' can perhaps best be described as a work in progress.

Having established these broad ontological guide posts, I will now enter into a discussion of the epistemology and methodology deemed appropriate for this research.

Epistemological choices

As previously mentioned, I had decided that I could best answer the questions elucidated earlier by becoming closely involved in a project that explicitly set out to address inequality through community development. I intuitively wanted to learn and do at the same time, and thus made a number of de-facto – epistemological choices: that understanding would come from closeness, over an extended period of time, in context, and through successive efforts at planning / acting / re-planning. I hoped this would enable me to gain an in-depth understanding of the project intentions as well as what 'really' happened in practice. My experience of working in community projects had taught me that they are highly complex and that there is often a vast gap between the official documentation and the day-to-day realities. I wanted to get 'inside' a change project in order to learn about its many aspects, to hear various actors' interpretations and, most of all, to collaborate with those actors in regard to the problems, strategies, solutions and learnings – as well as to have them help me with some of my consternations. I also believed that, in order to work at the interface between practice and ideas, I must also occasionally gain some theoretical distance in order to ask more penetrating questions. While this may sound self evident, it is a rare luxury in a sector characterised by stress, business and reactivity to demands for targets, outcomes and 'action' (Chambers 1983; Rees & Rodley 1995; Pollitt 1993; Woodside & McClam 1994).

In choosing a context, I had many ideas, and perhaps prejudices, about what an appropriate community development project might consist of; ideally it would be government funded, long term, geographically based, comprehensive / multi-issue, have goals of systemic change / self-determination, have an action research orientation, and display some willingness amongst participants and stakeholders to be self-reflective co-learners. I believed it would also be a bonus if the project had some sanction and legitimacy in the eyes of government 'authorities', as this would give it more chance to influence the policy process (Hill & Ham 1997). Also on my 'wish list' was the desire to work with an interdisciplinary team of staff who were enthusiastic, creative and inquiring and who might bring to bear their own experiences on the challenges they were facing (Patton 1986; Tope 1996). In short, I assumed a welfare-state funded community development project, albeit with some 'modern' design features, would be state-of-the-art. While many programs exist in the human services

sector that claim a 'community development approach', there were very few opportunities at the time that met the above, rigorous criteria - for reasons which will become clearer later.

When a new "Community Building Demonstration Project" was announced, containing all these features, I jumped at the opportunity to become involved. I attended a committee meeting and presented a 'letter of request' to participate (see appendix 1) which was graciously accepted on the condition that I would take an active role in the program; I was instructed by the chairperson to "*not just stand around in a lab-coat observing*"! The 'Interim Establishment Committee' was conscious of the funding requirement to conduct a project evaluation, yet had not formulated any plan of how this might be commenced. Because of my relative outsider status and my experience in community development, I was given the somewhat unspecific responsibility for overseeing this task. From this meeting onwards, for the next three-and-a-half years, I participated as an ex-officio member of the 'Interim Establishment Committee' (later to be re-named) of the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project.

Once involved, I soon began to better appreciate the incredible complexity of the project: the multiple stakeholders, the large and complex territorial community, and the various levels of power and interest. I also became increasingly aware of the centrally *social* nature of the process: behind observed behaviours lurked complex layers of personal, group and 'structural' intention, subjectivity, interpretation and politics (including my own) that reciprocally added onto other complexities. There was initially very little documentation to aid my orientation, due to the experimental nature of the program, so aspects of it only gradually became clearer over time, as I talked with staff, read submissions, attended meetings and helped with activities. It also began to dawn on me that the various historical, geographical and institutional boundaries of where such a project started and finished were indistinct: people in the community had implicit interpretations, as did the Victorian State Premier; current activities existed as an antecedent to earlier ones; government legislation affected the area just as did the topography of the land; the community itself had no boundaries but blurred into other suburbs. Thus, I began to inquire into ways such a social, subjective and culturally-situated phenomenon could be studied. Fortunately, the discipline of anthropology has tread these dilemmas, and it is to this literature that I now turn.

Anthropology and 'othering'

In the early- to mid-1900s, many 'ethnographic' studies were done by Western 'experts' who wanted to investigate tribes and cultures who were living in environments unknown to the 'developed' industrialising West. Anthropologists left their home shores to engage in these studies in foreign settings that were often harsh and difficult, claiming to bring with them a range of methods for authentically understanding the nature of these cultures. They believed that they had to spend an extended period of time in the field, living and interacting in that environment, and making

painstaking recordings. The anthropological method dictated that these seemingly bizarre and unfathomable tribal behaviours could only be understood in light of the ‘meanings’ that the actors gave to them – which itself could only be accessed through intensive, progressively deeper, qualitative levels of study (Malinowski 1922; Pelto 1970; Vidich & Lyman 1994).

The researchers often set out with or in the wake of colonising forces and returned with stories about incomprehensible beliefs, lifestyles, ceremonies and systems of organisation. The anthropologists operated with powerful interests and assumptions that served to construct the ‘natives’ as primitive and exotic, while they themselves were portrayed benevolent, altruistic and curious inquirers, intent on uncovering objective, scientific truth. The reports they created were widely read and popularly acclaimed, thus instrumental in forming much of today’s perceptions of the ‘Third World’, stereotypes and all.

More recent deconstruction of this work has revealed a range of prejudices and assumptions that expose this research as deeply biased at best, and actively supporting imperial domination at worst. The assumed Eurocentric framework saw Western culture as the most advanced ‘benchmark’ from which to measure ‘others’ and thus served to support colonial governments in their ideology of conquest, assimilation and subjugation. Euro-centrism was not presented as a bias but as a matter of scholarship (Braudel 1981), as a way of knowing and as a way of establishing truth from fiction

[t]he tendency for Western researchers to impose even their most enlightened cultural constructs on Others rather than creating indigenized theories and methods to grasp the ontological essences of people of color is, of course, legendary. (Stanfield 1994, p.176)

These revelations of academic corruption despite methodological attempts at ‘objectivity’ caused a degree of crisis amongst the research community, and consequent efforts to mitigate against future embarrassing oversights or mis-perceptions. One reaction was to refocus research attention away from exotic ‘others’ to the more familiar terrain of urban ghetto communities – thus commencing the long tradition of (particularly U.S.-based) community studies, started by the so-called Chicago School in Sociology in the early 1900s and continuing as a vibrant ‘specialty’ throughout the century (Park 1952; Park, Burgess & McKenzie 1967; Thomas & Znaniecki 1974). This anthropological research was once again widely read and influential in forming ‘mainstream’ opinion about disadvantaged and marginalised groups, particularly those who were seen as a potential threat to the established order. In many cases, the exposure of these ‘hidden worlds’ led to notoriety for the researcher and credibility for the sponsoring institution, but soon also came under critique from newly-politicised feminists, people of colour and other minority groups. They claimed it repeated many of the mistakes of earlier ethnographies, as middle-class outsiders, once-again, examined an exotic ‘other’ from within their position of power and privilege (Sassen 2000). The research was challenged for being framed from within a sense of paternalistic benevolence and moral responsibility to ‘uplift’ the slum dwellers “*[o]thers are represented as unworthy, dangerous, and immoral, or as pitiable, victimised and*

damaged” (Fine 1994, p74). The subjects of the research had no voice or power in the research milieu, nor little chance of achieving beneficial change for themselves. However, far from challenging this injustice, the researcher and their readership

... often produced the sympathetic illusion that a solution to a social problem had been found...[and] romanticised the subject. They turned the deviant into a sociological version of a screen hero...as they followed individuals through the three stages of the classic morality tale: existence in a state of grace, seduction by evil and the fall, and finally redemption through suffering. (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p8)

These revelations led to a deepening ‘crisis of representation’ (Marcus and Fischer 1999), as qualitative researchers attempted firstly to understand if there was any way to ‘make sense’ of reality in spite of the inevitable cultural conditioning they brought into their inquiries, and further, to discover whether an anti-oppressive research was either possible or appropriate.

The power of discourse and language

Seminal insights into the nature of power have more recently been provided by deconstructive theorists who attempt to explain why powerful groups (even those who are well intentioned) will subtly and systematically oppress less powerful groups. Habermas (1971) famously identified mutually reinforcing linkages between knowledge, methodology and human interests, suggesting that the bases of power and domination are principally linguistic: in effect we ‘frame’ a subject so that it can be talked about through shared expressions, meanings and representations. He suggested that there are three modes of science, each with a different interest: the empirical sciences which incorporate a *technical interest* in expanding power over objectified processes; the hermeneutical sciences which have a *practical interest* in making interpretations that orientate action through “...*the understanding of meaning, not observation*” (Habermas 1971, p309); and the *emancipatory interests* which seek an analysis that frees consciousness from dependence on external powers. Human beings possess the communicative competence to bring about such understanding,

From everyday experience we know that ideas serve often enough to furnish our actions with justifying motives in place of the real ones. What is called rationalization at this level is called ideology at the level of collective action (Habermas, 1971 p311)

Foucault also confirms that power relations are multiple, diverse, subtle and embedded in cultural and social practices; therefore, a study of any discourse must include the ideology and motives of the ‘experts’ who conduct it. Foucault suggests a ‘carceral continuum’ runs through society, based on Bentham’s ideas of the ‘Panopticon’, but extending into such ‘normal’ institutions as the factory, the hospital and our everyday domestic lives, where surveillance is first achieved by officials like police, social workers and teachers, but ultimately by ourselves through norms of acceptable behaviour,

Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with all its regular chronologies, forced labour, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penalty? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons? (Foucault 1979, p342-42)

Laurel Richardson (1997) has focussed her efforts on deconstructing how the practices of power are negotiated through the writing process itself, through devices such as the writer's voice, authority and privilege. She suggests that, given the inevitability and inescapability of power being inscribed through the writing act, the only option is for writers to make an ethically-informed decision about whose case they want to advance. Amongst the several devices she suggests to disrupt the dominant discourses are play, reflexivity, experimental writing and using our voices to claim to know something rather than suppressing this in the '*all knowing voice of the academy*' (Richardson 1997, p2). She suggests that, when we tell the experiences of a group of people within the context of larger social and historical forces, we write in the context of an implicit guiding metaphor. In the case of much of the anthropological authoring mentioned above, the guiding metaphor is of a glorious past, a disorganised present and the expectation of an assimilated future. She suggests that a 'liberation narrative' could replace this with a guiding metaphor of the past as *exploitation*, the present as *resistance* and the future as *resurgence of diversity* (Richardson 1997, p15).

Critical Participatory Epistemology

I was surprised to discover the breadth of available material on anti-oppressive research, including a range of relevant and exciting topics like feminist inquiry (Fonow & Cook 1991; Laslett 1997), critical theory (Dant 2003), queer theory (Jagose 1996; Seidman 1996), participatory research (McTaggart 1997; Reason & Bradbury 2001; Whyte 1991), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman 1996), emancipatory research (Truman, Mertens and Humphries 2000), collaborative inquiry (Heron 1996; Wadsworth 1997b), and green ecology (Brown 2004; Lipietz 1995). It strikes me as curious that these discourses, given the breadth and depth they have meanwhile acquired, are not more commonly used in the 'field'.

There is a direct overlap between community development and Participatory Action Research (PAR), as they both share the same goals, social analyses and history – leaving the boundaries between 'study' and 'action' deliberately blurred. I have found the PAR literature to be more comprehensive in dealing with questions of micro-practice and social analysis, and potentially more useful than much of the community development literature – including the PAR writing on philosophy, epistemology, strategy, method and the approaches to dealing with power imbalances in interpersonal relationships. The common element of all PAR approaches is a core belief that they are deeply political

...the PAR tradition starts with concerns for power and powerlessness, and aims to confront the way in which the established and power-holding elements of societies worldwide are favoured because they hold a monopoly on the definition and employment of knowledge. Concerns for epistemology and methodology appear secondary to this primary concern.” (Reason 1994, p328)

Critical participatory approaches eschew any pretence of being value-free, objective or neutral, instead privileging trustworthiness, clarity of voice, and credibility of the inquirer to primary users of the findings, to the extent that “[t]hese approaches to inquiry need to be seen as living process of coming to know rather than as formal academic method...one of the key questions about research is the political one: Who owns the knowledge, and thus who can define the reality?” (Reason 1994, p325).

I found this to be a very helpful perspective in clarifying epistemology because it privileges change and power relationships over ‘objective truth’. However these prescriptions are themselves ideals that I found difficult to achieve in practice. Throughout the research, I have worked to better understand the political nature of what I am doing, but many unanswered questions remain: *Who are the ‘power holding elements’? Can they be dichotomised into the powerful and the powerless? What is the process of ‘confronting’ for liberation and social change?* These are questions I turn to in more detail in Chapter Three.

The research literature also contains a great deal of conjecture about how to operationalise these social change intentions “[i]n reading the literature on PAR, it is easier to discover the ideology of the approach than a detailed description of what actually takes place” (Reason 1994, p329; Whitmore 1998). How are we then to have confidence in our work? A recent review of “fully participatory and genuinely collaborative inquiry” suggests a series of principles that are highly reflective of the community development tradition:

- *The inquiry process involves participants in learning inquiry logic and skills...*
- *Participants...own the inquiry...[the] major focus and design decisions... Participation is real, not token.*
- *Participants work together as a group...[in] cohesion and collective inquiry.*
- *All aspects of inquiry...are understandable and meaningful to participants.*
- *The researcher works as a facilitator, collaborator and learning resource: participants are co-equal.*
- *The inquiry facilitator ...values participants’ perspectives...and works to help participants...value their own....*
- *Status and power differences between the inquiry facilitator and participants are minimized, as much as possible.... (Patton 2002, p185)*

In traditional research, I would decide questions, methods, timeframe, conclusions, recommendations, reporting and actions. In participatory approaches, the intention is to ‘prefigure’ a more democratic society through *inclusion, dialogue and deliberation* (Fetterman, Kaftarian & Wandersman 1996), thus the researcher and the researched are working together in successive cycles of action and reflection, progressively trying to both understand the world and change it (Stringer 1999; Wadsworth 1991).

While the research I conducted has gone some way to meeting these ideals, in many instances compromises have been made, largely because of constraints presented by the context. As the community project got under way, my positioning as an ‘outsider’ and inserted from ‘the top’ became more apparent. As my research had little to do with local people’s immediate interests, it was inappropriate for me to either impose myself and my agendas on them, or to expect their collaboration in designing research questions and methods. As will be presented in the case study, mostly in chapter six, early on I tried many times to collaborate with the Interim Committee in designing options for evaluation (the brief which I had been given), but it quickly became clear that action was the order of the day and no one had time or inclination to explore issues not critical for the solving of problems identified in the early stages of the project. Until the end of the project, I still held some hope that there would be opportunities for collaborative writing; the best I achieved, however, was to get two of the project officers to review specific parts of the case study. At the time, the only way I could imagine how to do ‘true participatory research’ was to abandon the thesis, leave my job, and work where I would be directly accountable to the people - obviously, this was a step I was neither willing or able to take.

In questions of ‘voice’ and ‘values’, I am also heavily compromised – it proved impossible to take ‘sides’, if indeed they exist. I was not invited into the community to assist them with research, nor was my role to work directly with the local people in order to achieve social change. Indeed, as will be reported and discussed in the case study, I was working with the *committee* (and, gradually, project officers) to conduct/evaluate a project and, therefore, had almost no direct contact with the ‘primary subjects’ of the findings, either those who were its intended subjects (the ‘local people’) nor the State Government who had initiated and funded the ‘community building’ projects as ‘demonstration projects’ and, hence, would be interested in the results of the ‘demonstrations’ for the purpose of policy-making and accountability.

The audiences of this thesis are, therefore, firstly, “external” judges who are examiners – my motivation for writing is to gain a PhD - while the local people, who are the focus of the project under study and the most powerless stakeholders in the overall project configuration, are unlikely to ever read this work. On the other hand, I hope others interested in social change, particularly workers in community development, may read this thesis or whatever other work will eventually derive from it and would thus be able to engage in more theoretically and empirically informed anti-oppressive work. At the completion of this thesis, I am seeking to directly feed-back certain outcomes to the community in ways that are both culturally appropriate and politically and practically feasible in the power-saturated context, suffused with personal and institutional interests not necessarily commensurate with local people’s interests. One of the major discoveries of the research has been that such contradictions are worth naming and examining.

I believe that, although my work may not have met the ‘pure’ ideals of a critical, participatory epistemology, it has indirectly led to improvement and - hopefully - did no harm. I did play a part in a process that engaged the people, determined their wishes and took steps to see these realised. The State Government did express the intention of learning from the project and informing future policy changes. I took some of the workload and tried to act honestly, critically and with transparent intentions. My research may lead to increasing consciousness about injustices, representing the perspectives of the less powerful, making visible the exercise of power and building our capacity to develop more effective praxis (Patton 2002, p544). This work tells one version of the story to some receptive audiences. I believe it is a story worth telling. Personally, I have also learned a lot and feel - at least – a little more liberated through insights I probably never would otherwise have had the opportunity to generate. As mentioned above, the more important outcomes may be learning to ask better questions, to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing us, and reiteratively adapt our lifestyles / praxis in the context of the challenges and opportunities that await us. Indeed, much literature on ‘social change’ argues that a primary need is to develop better forms of dialogue (Bohm 1991), to pose better problems (Freire 1973), and to more accurately and comprehensively define the predicaments facing us (Theobald 1997, Goodman 2003). For example

...there is one simple question to be asked. Since we cannot go on as we are, and since any alternative is unthinkable, what are we going to do? This ought to be the subject, the central question of contemporary politics, as well as the focus of all our social concerns. Caught up in the answer we give is our children’s future, the purposes of our labour, the shape of our common life, the way we answer our deepest needs, the very meaning we give to our existence.

We are reluctant to frame this question, let alone to seek an answer. What we fear most is not that our relationship with the planet might be revealed – most of us know that already – but that the nature of our relationship with the system would be laid bare; and that would be intolerable. Such genuinely political discussions remain tentative, arcane, specialised, awkward. (Blackwell and Seabrook 1993, p99-100)

Interpretivist Epistemology: critical, constructivist, post-modern, hermeneutic.

An interpretivist epistemology embraces people as central to knowledge construction, where meanings are constructed by and between actors in a social context

...all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (Crotty 1998, p42)

For this research, the implication is that the people in the project neighbourhoods will have their own interpretations of their areas and life-worlds, their strengths and weaknesses and their conceptions of what “community development” or “community building” might mean. By contrast, other actors

within and outside that community will have differently constructed meanings and understandings, equally based on their initial and changing expectations associated with this and similar projects. According to an interpretivist view, meanings are not stable, they are constantly evolving and being re-defined through interaction between people - there is no one truth, but many different truths (Hayden 1995; Miles & Huberman 2002). The interpretations constructed by the people living in the project area are – if not created, then certainly – conditioned by their environment, but the former also create the latter in a dialectical process. I too have become part of this process, contributing to the interpretation of meanings, but I also am changed through them.

I have tried to work towards an inquiry that will not just *reveal* meanings, but also re-iteratively critique, transform and re-construct them, as well as the structures that are associated with them. I have attempted in this research to make links between personal problems and public issues, as C.W. Mills (1959) suggested long ago, and the Community Building Project itself also espouses the stance of not accepting “things” as they are, believing that people should be better off, looking for causes of problems, and taking action to address them. One way in which this is achieved is through consciously incorporating *structural critique* into the research process; another is to try to gain *historical insight* by not only looking at things as they are, but also as the most recent step in a longer evolution of processes and relationships. I do not act, therefore, as a disinterested outsider in this formative process, but try to negotiate an appropriate balance between critical distance and engagement, between imposing – or, at least proposing - my values and accepting – if possibly also questioning - others’ values. Measures of ‘goodness’ or ‘quality’ of such research and the truthfulness of evidence could be revelation and ensuing action for change (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p112).

In a play on Gramsci (Gramsci, Hoare & Smith 1971), the research literature suggests that I play the role of the ‘transformative intellectual’ (Patton 2000) – to which I would add the idea of ‘practitioner’, an idea that raised many issues for me in the project. Transformation seems to imply that I have some goal that I am heading towards; however, while I hope for less oppression, I tried to check my inclination to decide where others are to go, or how they should get there. In addition, people may *like* their oppressions, or at least aspects of them which they are not willing to let go of or have grown accustomed to. I struggle at the margins between my own interests, wanting change, and allowing others to self-determine.

The idea of the ‘*intellectual*’ is also very challenging. To me, based on the stereotype of the traditional academic researcher, it implies aloofness and having access to knowledge that others do not. This proved partly the case in practice: I have read more widely than many people involved in the project and was often frustrated at the inability to share this directly with project officers, managers or the people in the community themselves (who also had some reservations about this idea of an ‘intellectual’). However, it was often difficult to link the academic literature directly to the immediate

concerns confronting the project – specifically, action and management. Thus my ‘knowledge’ was often impractical. The more fundamental question is, of course, what does *intellectual* mean (Freire 1973; Giroux 1988)? Everybody on the program had access to forms of knowledge and to insights that created part of the picture and it is tricky – even preposterous - to rate myself as an ‘intellectual’ and others not. I have sought ways to contribute academic / intellectual / theoretical insights without privileging these views, almost hypothetically as possible aids to better understanding and intervening in the situations confronted by the project and its stakeholders.

Much of the reality of ‘social’ research seems to be reducible to the apparently ‘simple’ ‘everyday’ act of relationships between human beings. Despite my culture and all my personal baggage, I have sought to learn how to be respectfully interested and treat myself and others as equals. I have tried to be aware of and express who I am, while also being aware that others are trying to find and express who they are. I am no longer so sure that I ‘should’ relate to people differently depending on whether I am in the role of professional, academic, researcher, teacher, citizen, father, neighbour, patient, subordinate, or subject; I have a sense that engagement in the relationship is the most transformative part of the project, as it is of my own self development (Gaita 1999; Boyatzis 2005).

A hermeneutic epistemology also takes the approach that, as researchers, we should appreciate the actuality that we *interpret* our lives and make *meaning* of what we experience through language and symbols, rather than through any artificial separation of subject and object (Cohen, Kahn & Steeves 2000; Abram 1996). A hermeneutic research approach therefore provides strategies for dealing with ‘parts’ and wholes when we are attempting to understand complex, interrelated ‘systems’. Such an interpretive paradigm means that what counts as factual is not determined by the features of the situation, but by the ‘*hermeneutic circle*’ in which parts can be understood in relation to the whole, and the whole in relation to the parts (Hoy 2005, p32). In other words, as stated by Skolimowski, as our current cosmology leads to action that “*continually misfires*” (1992, p9), we need to creatively redefine “...*the perception of the universe; our reading and description of it; the appropriate modes of acting in it; and last but not least, appropriate ways of treating each other*” (1992, p29).

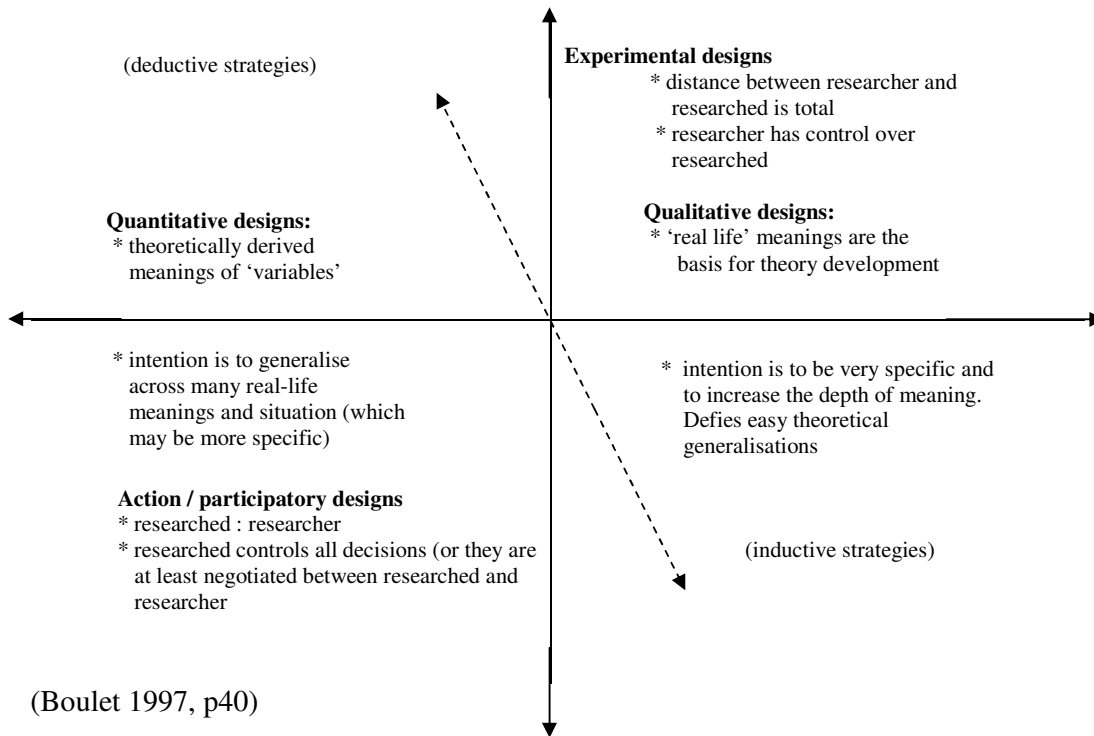
METHODOLOGY

Designing a research approach that is qualitative, reflexive, heuristic

I will now attempt to elucidate the design that has evolved – rather than being chosen in advance – as being appropriate for the project context, its purpose and the epistemological basis I have just enunciated. I interpret methods as being the techniques available to enter into relationship with people through conversation and other more sensory forms of participation - I address them in the next section.

The methodological choices I made as the project evolved can be plotted in the following figure, allowing me to avoid undue dichotomies between quantitative and qualitative approaches or between those which opt for full participatory immersion and those which suggest distance from the studied “object”. Methodologies, in this table, are organised into four ‘clusters’ which are *not* thought of as dichotomies or on *opposite sides* of mutually exclusive ‘choices’:

Figure 1: Four methodological clusters



The horizontal axis identifies approaches that become less “*quantitative*” (or using statistical manipulation to interpret data) and more “*qualitative*” as research interpretations become increasingly grounded in ‘real life’ meanings that are specific and deeply embedded in people’s understanding of themselves as “*situated in their living context*” (ibid), biographically embodied as this understanding is. The vertical axis points to the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the researched – becoming more participatory / action orientated as the researched have more power in determining purpose, design and execution, interpreting data and in determining the meaning of the situation - as this occurs, the ‘distance’ between the researcher and researched decreases. The diagonal axis indicates that, from the top left quadrant, deductive-interpretive strategies are more associated with experimental-quantitative designs, whilst the bottom right quadrant ‘tilts’ towards more inductive, qualitative and participatory designs.

My espoused methodology in this work ‘tilts’ more towards a participatory / qualitative design. For a range of reasons stated above, ‘the researched’ should ideally have control over the research process

and should aim to achieve closeness and the highest possible level of equality in decision making (in matters pertaining to the research / action both are involved in) between the researcher and researched. However, as I outline above, in practice there was quite a distance between me and the ‘critical reference group’ (Wadsworth 1997a, 1997b). Much of the basis for theory formation in this research arises from trying to understand and act in dynamic, real-life situations. The methodology is therefore more *inductive*, being based on understandings that arise from the situation: rather than deductive questions, there are many ‘hunches’ informing the research. Let me now explore the elements of this eclectic amalgam of methodological choices more systematically.

A Qualitative orientation

Qualitative methodology aims to get ‘inside’ the meanings of participants by expressing their interpretations as they see them. A saturated, polyphonic view is aimed for, within an ethic of care and responsibility that respects the goals of the project and the intentions of the participants, or those stakeholders who are least powerful. This is an ethic that Latour (2004) defines as one “... *whose import then will no longer be to debunk but to protect and to take care*”.

One of the principal goals of qualitative inquiry is to represent the research participants in their own terms rather than in terms predetermined by the outsider’s perspectives and values. To achieve this, one aims to faithfully depict a living sense of day-to-day talk, activities and concerns that are fundamental to the people and/or their life-world. (Lofland 1971, p4). Qualitative data provide *thick description* and depth about what takes place, what people actually say, their activities, interactions and settings. This is sometimes termed *empathic neutrality*, or understanding and respect without judgement, which, in turn, requires a ‘*naturalistic*’ approach – investigating real world situations in non-manipulative ways, through personal experience, engagement and closeness. The researcher attempts to “...*enter the field with relatively little advance conceptualisation...*” (Patton 2002, p194) and flexibly develop the inquiry as understandings deepen, questions unfold and one pursues what makes sense.

This is an approach I have taken in this research, as I have developed the inquiry through successive iterations. I have attempted to own what I propound, honour multiple perspectives and to have a credible voice that balances objectivity and subjectivity (Patton 2002) and to achieve these principles by being close to the ‘action’, working in a collaborative way with the participants /stakeholders, allowing sufficient time to gain a detailed understanding of the nuances of the project and negotiating roles with participants (Hay 2005; Laine 2000). I have attempted to strike a balance between parts and wholes, breadth and depth, linearity and interconnectedness (Guba 1989) – or, as Patton proposed, principles of uniqueness, respect, fairness, negotiation, person-centeredness, emotion, non-judgement, attention to process and holism (2002, p177), while recognising that “[a]ny given design inevitably

reflects some imperfect interplay of resources, capability, purposes, possibilities, creativity, and personal judgements by the people involved" (Patton 2002, p12).

A reflexive, auto-ethnographic and heuristic orientation

A reflexive approach acknowledges that the researcher's interests, biography, culture and context affect the entire construction of the research project, including what is studied, how data are analysed and disseminated. Vidich and Lyman argue that "[s]ocial and cultural understanding can be found by ethnographers only if they are aware of the sources of the ideas that motivate them and are willing to confront them - with all that such a confrontation entails" (1994, p43). Reflexivity challenges me to consciously and critically reflect on the ways my social, political and ideological values affect the research (Schwandt 2000), including my "...privileges, interests, biographies, fetishes and investments ...[which] typically remain subtext, buried, protected." (Fine 1994, p75). By making these an explicit part of the research process and by "locating the intersections of author, other, text and world... [we are] penetrating the representational exercise itself" (MacBeth 2001, p35).

I have found this aspect of the research extremely challenging in practice. In attempting to make myself part of the research and not portraying myself as separate from the field (Bentz and Shapiro 1998), I have increasingly realised that my own interests are deeply embedded in the research and that my actions and lifestyle are as much a part of community development as any other aspects of the 'study'. Efforts to learn and express, in a reiterative fashion, my interests and place in the field have been both terrifying and liberating. I have struggled to find a balance between confession, autobiography, responding to the topic and acting the distant expert (Finlay 2002; Pillow 2003) – thus finding support in an approach closely associated with the idea of reflexivity: *a heuristic approach*. According to Moustakas (1995), this is a form of researcher self-inquiry into the personal experience of a phenomenon (Douglas and Moustakas 1985). The researcher's own experience and journey of discovery is, therefore, deliberately made a part of the research process itself. The central question being asked is "[w]hat is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?" (Patton, 2002 p132) The researcher aims to be "in, for and with" (ibid) the phenomenon and those who experience it.

Field Research Methodology

The "object" of the research is a 'single case study' (Yin 1989) of a Community Building Demonstration Project. Commentators, such as Yin (1989), propose that a case study is the most appropriate method to investigate relationships within real-life contexts when one wants to answer 'how or why' questions - rather than 'what' questions – as is the case with this "Demonstration"

Project, where I aim to explore the phenomena as well as to develop an emerging “theory of practice” for community development / building. Consequently, however, findings from this case may not be automatically applicable or transferable to other cases and certainly not generalisable as “*the*” way to ‘do’ community development.

The field research literature suggests that one aims to become involved, experience real-life processes in all their rich diversity, gradually gaining deeper levels of insight and empathetically accessing the experiences of collaborators and other actors in the field. In doing so, however, there are a number of strategic decisions to be made about the degree to which the researcher is inside or ‘with’ the phenomenon. These decisions and dilemmas – which Patton (2000, p277) has organised along a series of continua - intimately affect the dynamics and processes in the field, as well as the research data. I will now briefly summarise these dilemmas and my response to them.

The first two decisions to be made concern the *full participant versus onlooker* and *insider (emic) perspective versus outsider (etic)* perspectives (Patton 2000, p 277); I was both a participant and an onlooker (Headland, Pike & Harris 1990). For example, I participated as a member of the Committee, contributing to discussions and debates, offering my opinions on a range of activities, and participating in many tasks, ranging from attending Committee meetings and local forums or events, to cleaning up after a barbecue and summarising government documents. I was given the job of overseeing the evaluation of the project, including literature searches, some project design, interviewing and reporting. In general, though, my involvement occurred at the level of those stakeholders who operated as project workers within the organisational / bureaucratic dimensions and areas of the project - only at selected points and moments did I interact directly with community members themselves. Even at the level of the committee, I was also not completely ‘in’ the project because, as an *ex-officio* member – without voting rights – and with limited availability (and importance), I was not involved in many of the major discussions and machinations.

Another participatory dilemma I actively had to manage was *dominating, versus giving opinions, versus inviting others into conversations* (Patton 2000, p277). While I often judged it inappropriate for me to become involved in many of the interpersonal and organisational power struggles I witnessed in the project, at times I felt obliged to engage in ‘important’ issues. My research epistemology has attempted to offer me a basis from which I could negotiate between a range of perspectives while maintaining a positive discrimination towards the least powerful group and placing a priority on the voices and perspectives of the intended beneficiaries of the Project (Guba and Lincoln 1989). This has been one of my primary challenges, and indeed for the community development project itself. Simultaneously, I also aimed to honour the role of ‘*onlooker*’, trying to be aware of the overall patterns in the project processes and its significant turning points. I took notes during meetings of the positions being taken by people and the words they were using. I kept a library of project

documentation, but there were times when intense activities occurred in which I became absorbed and ‘forgot’ conscious note-taking and the cognitive distance from the subject-matter being discussed this requires.

The emic-etic continuum also reminds me that I am simultaneously inside and outside the ‘critical reference group’ (Wadsworth 1997a). While my social ‘positioning’ is very different to most people in the project location – through class, education, income, power, gender, ethnicity, life experiences, employment and place of residence - I also share many of their predicaments, including concerns for the natural environment, family, community, personal identity and authenticity, health and welfare.

Patton (2000) also prompts field researchers to consider the question of *who conducts the inquiry: professional researchers or the people in the setting being studied?* As with the above topics, there is no simple way to answer this question. Parts of the research were conducted by myself as a solo researcher – for example the writing of my thesis and the conduct of several interviews with stakeholders. The questions, however, are not mine alone; for example, the program collaborators equally had an interest in knowing what community development / building is and how it could “*demonstratively*” be practiced and evaluated. We shared, therefore, much of the inquiry and the “*formative*” or “*developmental*” use of the emerging evaluative findings.

Patton (2000, p209) prompts two final considerations, *full disclosure versus covert* and *short, single, narrow observation versus long term, multiple, holistic observations*. My role strongly leaned towards *full disclosure*, as I was very explicit about being a state employee who was involved as an ‘*evaluation participant*’ who planned to write a thesis - but that I was also intrinsically interested in the issues at stake and, hence, in the success of the project and associated research.

I commenced participation as a member of the Community Building Demonstration Project Interim Committee in February 2002 and continued involvement on the several emerging committees and in operational processes until the project ceased in mid-2005. Because community development / building is a complex, system-wide intervention (Whitmore 1998), it was necessary to employ longitudinal, holistic and multiple observations. I managed this complexity by adopting organising themes that arose after engagement – such as *imposition, resistance and the dialectics of change*. (criteria adapted from Patton 2000, p277)

THE DAREBIN COMMUNITY ‘TARGET NEIGHBOURHOODS’

Methodological / epistemological issues

In Chapter Five I provide a general introduction and overview of the community that was the ‘target’ of the Community Building Demonstration Project. This raises a number of methodological issues that have been debated in the community studies and community development literature for many years. I will now point out some of these dilemmas as well as my strategies to manage them.

From an interpretive perspective, my opinion is just one of many views about what the community of Darebin is (or rather more accurately, what the several communities constituting the population of the Municipality of Darebin are). Different participants construct different interpretations of their physical and social environment, depending on what those things mean to them. Thus, there will be multiple interpretations of the same ‘thing’, as locality is the point at which roles are negotiated and identities are formed. For instance, a long-term resident might regard the area as a place of collective memory and a place of meaning and belonging (Bellah 1985, p286; Giddens 1994); teenage residents may see it as a place of deprivation to escape from; and a newly arrived refugee may see it as a place of safety, opportunity and wealth. Government authorities, on the other hand, could conceive of the location according to their dominant discourses – many of which I will discuss in future chapters - such as deficits in ‘mutual responsibility’, socio-economic status, social capital (Putnam 2000), trust (Fukuyama 1995), resilience (McMahon, Peters & Leadbeater 2004), protective factors (Fiske 2000), connectedness (Booth & Crouter 2001), and so on.

There may be as many interpretations of the Municipality of Darebin neighbourhoods as there are stakeholders, but these interpretations are not all ‘equal’; we are reminded that those groups with power tend to create the dominant discourses (Foucault & Sheridan 1979; Dant 2003). The aim for the project, my research, and community development in general, is to enable the people to develop and express their own self-definitions, rather than assimilate those imposed – or assumed – by an outsider like me. Wherever possible, I have included the voice of the people, but this has been limited by my rather peripheral role in direct interaction with those who live in the neighbourhoods in Darebin where the project has been operating.

At this point I need to consider the literature on research into communities, as in chapter five of this thesis I provide a descriptive analysis of the Darebin community. Further, community research also critically influenced the process and outcomes of the Community Building Demonstration Project, as outlined in chapter six.

The community studies literature and community development

A body of 'community studies' literature has developed since the 1960s in response to demands from governments, professionals, organisers, researchers and citizens to describe and determine the 'needs' of local, territorial communities.

The community inventory technique:

The early work on community studies was based on quantitative data collection, such as unemployment, social indicators and so on. Margaret Byington, in her 1912 book '*What Social Workers Should Know About Their Communities*', announced:

Specific facts are more valuable than general impressions, and information is useful in proportion as it is concrete and quickly available. Whatever information is secured, therefore, should be (1) definite... It should also be (2) accurate. (in Warren 1955, p4)

Reflecting this view forty years later in a book that was hailed as ground-breaking, '*Studying Your Community*' (1955), Warren argued that community organisers and planners needed to be far more scientific in their approach by using empirical data gathered from surveys to inform their decision making. His book provides instruction capturing the potentially thousands of researchable facets that each play a part in influencing and contributing to the structures, functions and outcomes of community. His rather overwhelming list includes aspects such as geography, transportation, local history, traditions, economic structure, industrial future, government, political organisation, voluntary citizens organisations, crime, law enforcement, zoning of land, improvement plans, housing, education facilities, recreation, religious activities, welfare services, health indicators, special groups, communications media, inter-group relations, associations, community organisation, and so on. By the 1960s and 70s it was being claimed that this approach was providing vast amounts of data, but relatively little support for strategic decision making, thus

...in spite of the proliferation of community analysis technologies, there is a somewhat ominous feeling detected both in the current literature and at professional meetings that existing methods are inefficient, unworkable or unreliable. (Blakely 1979, p105)

Process methods

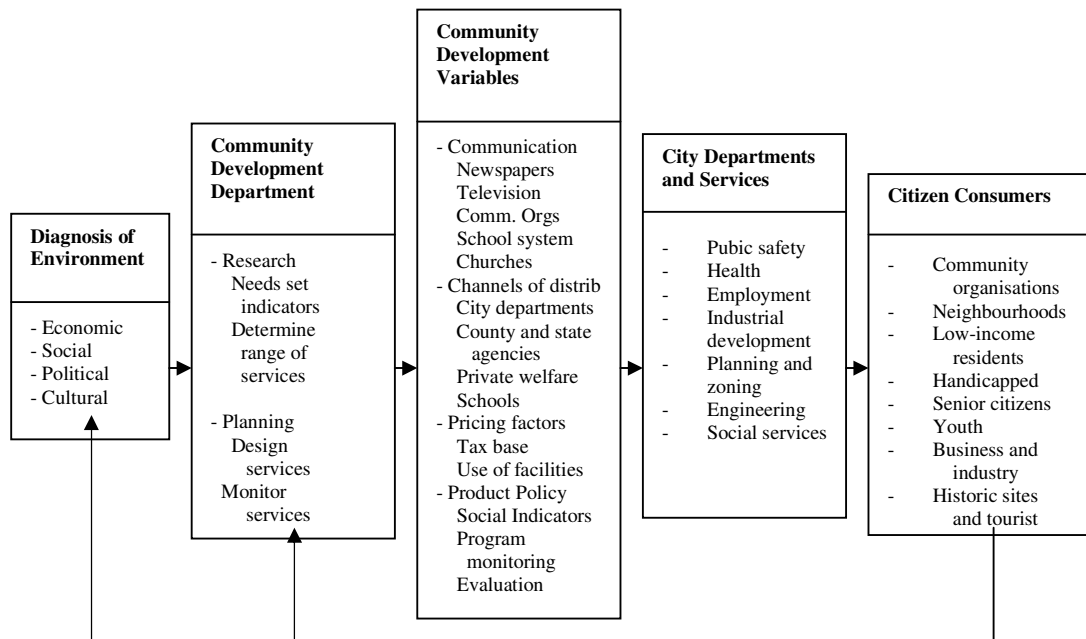
Community research then turned to look more intensively at the decision making *processes* that go on in communities, as exemplified in Hunter's Community Power Structure Models (Hunter 1963), which studied who the decision makers were, their backgrounds and interests and the ways in which they were voting on important issues. Research using this method often achieved the important sociological insight that most decision makers were middle-class, white business men, who favoured their own

interests through a process of lobbying, networking and relationship building *outside* of the formal decision making system. Later research turned its attention to examining those influential decisions that were *not* making it onto the public agenda – or in effect were silenced (Bell & Newby 1971).

Community research later set out to study the nature and processes of stratification in small towns, as exemplified by “*Smalltown, A study of social inequality, cohesion and belonging*” (Dempsey 1990) and “*Bradstow, a study of status, class and power in a small Australian town*” (Wild 1978). While their findings were multifaceted, one significant insight was that these local communities reproduced high levels of stratification based on sex, class and race.

Social systems models were another attempt to capture community through looking at the relationship between individuals, small groups and formal organisation, as shown in the following figure:

Figure 2: Blakely’s systems model for community development marketing



(Blakely 1979 p118)

Integrated, holistic models:

Many other professions have also made attempts to research and interpret community by considering more holistic relationships between the ‘levels’ impacting on people. Urban planners, for example, look at the relationship between built environment and phenomena of social interaction, crime, health and energy usage (Health and Environment: Partners for Life, September 2005). Since the emergence of the Ottawa Charter of 1986 in the context of the work of the World Health Organisation, many

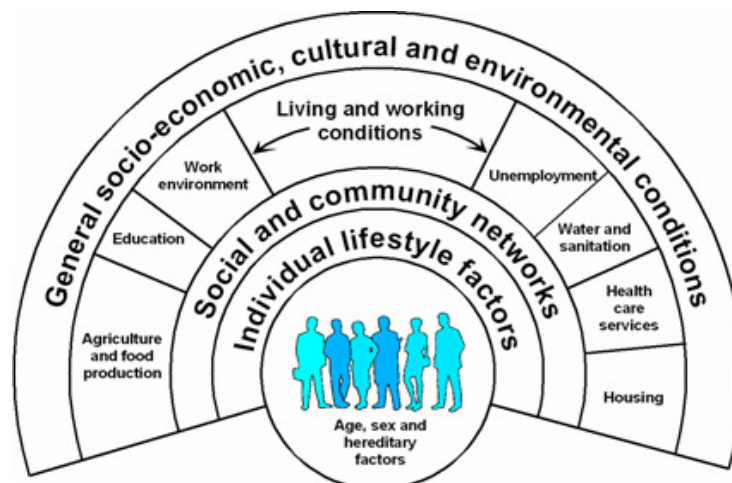
programs with a health emphasis have become interested in the total environment of the community as it affects health outcomes (WHO 1998). Their research reported a strong association between poor socio economic conditions – which are themselves often related to location - and health throughout life (also Ernst 2001; Hope and Hough 1998; Wilkinson 1998). Jesuit Social Services recently undertook research of this nature in Victoria and New South Wales, adding to various measures of disadvantage the concept of “*resilience*”, for which they use easily available data on participation in sport, as well as survey answers to the questions:

- *Can you get help from friends when you need it?*
- *Do you help out a local group as a volunteer?*
- *Was any of this [sport you participated in] organised by a club, association or other type of organisation?* (Vinson 2004, p44)

A recent model – derivative of the previously mentioned WHO approach, referred to as the “social model of health” - influenced public health planners in many local governments in Victoria and Australia, by suggesting that they simultaneously consider four integrated aspects of community health: the *social / cultural* environment, the *built* environment, the *economic* environment and the *natural* environment (PDF Management Services 2002).

Another approach by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991) suggested a somewhat different conceptual model that attempts to capture how the interaction between a range of levels – from individual lifestyle to general socio-economic conditions - affect health inequalities:

Figure 3: Dahlgren and Whitehead’s social ‘determinants’ of health



(World Health Organisation May 2005, p12)

In 2004, the Department for Victorian Communities produced a document, titled “*Getting to Know Your Community: A guide to using local data*” (DVC 2004), claiming that its

...primary motivation has been to assist local communities and community groups to access and review local level data that will support community building activities (p3).

The document further claimed to transfer skills and knowledge by

...equipping local communities and community groups with the tools to identify and apply the objective data required to engage in effective dialogue with government and other sectors (p3).

It focuses on the extensive range of government-departmental and public domain data that is increasingly available through new technologies such as the World Wide Web, digital databases and satellite imagery. The more-than sixty data sets in the guide are selected under categories that include:

- *Active and confident communities*
- *Economically thriving communities*
- *Environmentally sustainable and liveable communities*
- *Skilled, learning and creative communities*
- *Healthy, safe and caring communities*
- *Accessible and connected communities.* (DVC 2004, p65-82)

Economic development professionals have also recently adapted the use of community research to increase economic activity; for example, in “StreetLife” projects which became part of the Darebin project, where business owners work with government sponsors and other stakeholders to research the environments that potential ‘customers’ might want in shopping precincts in order to stimulate neighbourhood business growth (Business Victoria, April 2004). Resulting initiatives have included designing “places” for recreation, social interaction and leisure.

Yet another example of community studies method and application is in community safety and crime prevention, where advocates use research data in an attempt to reduce crime (Guess 2001; White & Habibis 2004). For example White and Coventry claim that some methods

...provide in-depth investigation of processes, impacts and outcomes in a way which captures the complexities of life in specific locations or within specific groups...[t]hey are intended to illuminate specific processes of understanding and reaction to community safety issues. (p33)

The ‘Growing Up in Cities’ project is yet another example of the contemporary use of more holistic research that attempts to understand and influence local urban environments. Funded by UNESCO, the project now operates in more than fifteen countries throughout the world, with the aim of involving children and adolescents in various participatory action research processes to express their perspectives about their community environment, and to support their proposals for change (Driskell 2002; UNESCO–MOST year unstated).

Finally, I should also briefly mention the comparatively recent efforts to link the concept of ‘social capital’ (a contested term which I further analyse in later chapters) with empirical research being undertaken in communities. As reported by Winter (2002) there has been a surge of interest in social

capital, and thus associated attempts to measure ‘it’. For example, after surveying five communities in New South Wales, Onyx and Bullen arrived at eight factors they claimed related to social capital:

- *Participation in local community;*
- *Proactivity in a social context;*
- *Feelings of trust and safety;*
- *Neighbourhood connections;*
- *Family and friends connections;*
- *Tolerance of diversity;*
- *Value of life;*
- *Work connections* (in Winter 2002, p35-36)

By contrast, Putnam (1993) attempted to measure social capital through assessing people’s voluntary involvement in local associations, a theme which has been followed by others, including Vinson (2004) and Baum et. al (1999). Others have focussed instead on various forms of interpersonal, social, and civic trust (Stewart-Weeks & Richardson 1998; Hughes, Bellamy & Black 1998).

Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and, closely associated, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) are the titles given to a current group of approaches that have been very influential in shaping ‘development’ in the ‘Third World’ – and have since made an impact on the theory and practice of ‘First World’ community research (Chambers, 1983, 1992, 1993, 2002; Guijt & Gaventa 1998). PRA was developed in response to the failings of instrumental, positivist research that claimed to identify the needs of communities. This research was criticized for a range of practical and strategic reasons such as being slow, expensive, inflexible and overly-formal; having methodological blinkers; externally imposed; expert-orientated; using ‘extractive’ questionnaires; biasing towards easier to reach locations and citizens (particularly men); lacking understanding of the social and physical environment in which they were conducted; and its practitioners reinforcing ‘poverty tourism’ rather than solidarity and shared interests (Francis 2001, p76).

As an alternative, PRA is framed by its creator Robert Chambers as a “*radical personal and institutional change*” (1993, p95). He claims it creates

...reversals and shifts of emphasis, from etic to emic; from individual to group; from verbal to visual; from measuring to comparing; from reserve to rapport; from frustration to fun; from extracting to empowering; from top-down to bottom-up; from centralized-standardized to local diversity; from blueprint to learning. (Chamber 1994, p1253)

It is supposed to create sustainability, local commitment, relevance and empowerment. The main approach of PRA is to consult a range of key informants in a village who then collaborate in a process of mutually shared research. They use *visual* methods to represent their knowledge - such as maps, drawings, or natural objects – thus attempting to access information that cannot easily be codified in

language, and in practice often remains implicit amongst local people. PRA is being widely adopted by both Majority World governments and the World Bank who are rapidly ‘*scaling up*’ their capacity to undertake PRA to solve their development problems (Blackburn & Holland 1998; Chambers 2002).

However, despite its apparently revolutionary credentials, the PRA methodology has also faced a concerted critique from commentators who argue that it is actually more likely to be colonising and undermining of local cultural resistances rather than helping self-determination. Kothari and Cooke (2001) claim that

“[p]articipatory development’s tyrannical potential is systemic, and not merely a matter of how the practitioner operates or of the specificity of the techniques and tools employed...the discourse itself, and not just the practice, embodies the potential for an unjustified exercise of power” (p4).

One major concern is that PRA fails to study ‘up’ – therefore effectively masking both structural forces and the interests of the development agents themselves. This focus on micro-practice reinforces the dual myths that development is merely a matter of micro-level practice that is facilitated by neutral agents. The apparently benevolent and inclusive processes also act as a ‘Trojan horse’ by enabling outside interests to penetrate, and thus colonise, the nuanced processes community action. For example, the methodology of collective appraisal is said to pay insufficient attention to social stratification, and thus orchestrates an appearance of public consensus that “...*frequently conceals rather than resolves alternative orders of opposition*” (Francis 2001, p79). Further, the practice of using visual / non-verbal data also fails to adequately acknowledge or address the epistemological differences between the professional development establishment and indigenous people, thereby subtly distorting the emic perception of reality so that it conforms with the dominant ways of knowing (Sachs 1992; Shiva 1997). According to Kothari,

This confirms Foucault’s argument that even when individuals think that they are most free, they are in fact in the grip of more insidious forms of power, which operate not solely through direct forms of repression but often through less visible strategies of normalization (2001, p144).

There are many examples of how indigenous forms of knowledge are often incomprehensible to, or ignored by Western researchers (Bennholdt-Thomsen, Werlhof & Faraclas 2001, p80). An example of such ignorance of indigenous knowledge systems by ‘outside’ researchers in Australia is the Aboriginal concept of the ‘songlines’ which are relatively incomprehensible within a Eurocentric frame. Songlines function to pass down the respective communities’ rules, technology, memory and spiritual traditions from generation to generation. They have been likened to ancient, invisible pathways that tell of the creation of the land, but also ‘*create the world afresh*’ by members of the tribe who perform their ritual duty by travelling the land as they sing their ancestors’ songs (Abram 1997). Chatwin expresses their ontology / epistemology / methodology as follows:

I have a vision of the Songlines stretching across the continents and ages; that wherever men have trodden they have left a trail of song; and that these trails must reach back, in time and space, to an isolated pocket in the African savannah, where the First Man shouted the opening stanza to the World Song, "I am!" (Chatwin 1988, p14)

Various methods are therefore available to conceptualise and study community, some of which serve to reinforce the dominant empirical, positivist paradigm – and its relationships of power – while other methods claim to challenge or reverse these. However this challenge is not resolved, and raises still further questions about imposition and the nature of structure and agency in the development process – questions that I turn to throughout this thesis. Thus I now turn to ‘methods’ of collecting the information that I have used throughout this report.

METHODS

Introduction

The investigative methods I employed included *interviews, document analysis and keeping a personal learning journal*. Co-evaluation was undertaken in collaboration with the Borderlands Cooperative, who were appointed through a contract with the Interim Committee several months into the Community Building Project. The Borderlands team maintained a close and ongoing involvement with both myself and the committee throughout the project, producing a range of related data and reports – many of which are referred to in more detail in Chapter Six of this thesis, for example the Stage One and Stage Two Evaluation Reports (DCBDP September 2003; DCBDP October 2004) and the Sustainability Plan (DCBD November 2004). This evaluative work contributed to my own understanding of the project in particular, and community building in general, as it gathered and reported in-depth data from diverse community ‘stakeholders’ who attended a wide range of project activities and events. The level of resourcing and access for the Borderlands Cooperative, as well as their comprehensive skills and commitment, enabled critical data to be gathered throughout the project. I commented on draft Borderlands reports, attended evaluation activities, suggested methodologies, and discussed strategic implications with Borderlands staff and the Project Committee; as well, we had many long conversations with the intention of informing our understandings of community development. My thesis has been influenced by this work – as is apparent in Chapter Six - but also is primarily independent from it. My thesis critically researches the context and meanings of community development, methodological and philosophical implications, and the role of the State Government in a broader historical, world-systems frame – of which the Community Building Demonstration Project is one manifestation.

Community study

I attempt to balance the complexity of community, the aims of the research and the real-world constraints (Burgess 1991; Smith & Kornblum 1996) by providing a 'thick', polyphonic view representing the various voices claiming my attention. Firstly, I provide a range of spatial and quantitative data about the location or area in which the 'community' resides. This includes official statistics that have been used by the government as a rationale to select the proposed project in the Municipality of Darebin as a demonstration site. I then follow with a selection of more qualitative data re-presenting the community, including photos, historical accounts, DVDs, maps, and descriptions from the perspectives of different stakeholders.

Interviews

Interviews were held with a range of participants (see list on page vi), as one component of the research process. Some of these were conducted as a part of the Committee's normal evaluation process; they were therefore held in consultation with the project Interim Committee and its successor committees, members of which were involved in deciding the questions, timing, respondents, data analysis and resulting actions. As a formal part of the research specifically for this thesis, a number of interviews were undertaken outside the activities of the project, in particular with government officials and project staff. The interviews were informal and conversational, with guiding questions or themes, in a setting chosen by the respondents. The aim was to enable them to respond in their own terms and to steer the conversation in a direction that remained important to them, while still covering some of the main areas of my inquiry. While this approach led to different responses and reduced comparability, it also allowed respondents to express their experiences and feelings in their own way, without constraining their natural inclinations or requiring them to fit into tightly preconceived thematic categories (Patton 1980; Spradley 1979).

Document analysis

A range of project and government documents were analysed, including minutes, plans, project submissions, working papers, evaluation data, funding guidelines and reports. These were all documents in the public domain, arising from both the local project and the State / Federal governments. Some discursive analysis of these texts was undertaken, whereby discourse is defined as "*...an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being*" (Phillips & Hardy 2002, p3). Analysing discourses involved looking at texts to identify how certain groups of people are being positioned in them and to understand the specific way in which their reality is being presented, therewith also revealing how ideology and

power are at work in the construction of the identity of the “*recipients*” of government resources, of public attention and of expectations of how the “*recipients*” would act upon receipt of the resources.

Personal learning journal

In accordance with the methodical approaches associated with participatory observation, (Wadsworth 1997a, 1997b; Whitmore 1998; Whyte 1991) I kept a journal, both to record factual occurrences and my impressions of them and as a means to preserve and document my ongoing reflections about what I was able to participate in, and the range of emotional, cognitive, analytical, normative reactions they evoked (Moon 2004). I thus include my regular explorations of the many ethical, practical and methodological issues and dilemmas outlined above in the set of methods I have used and which will return as a matter of substance in the chapters to follow.

The journal was used to record and explore the reflexive and heuristic aspects of the inquiry as well as a formal note-taking device supporting the other recording work I did and which I have already mentioned in the narrative detailing my broad involvement in the ongoing activities of the project.

Analysis: strategies and associated dilemmas

One challenge I faced when operating according to the above discussed epistemologies, methodologies and methods was determining *the degree to which findings reflect the “real” existing situation, or arise mostly from my ‘subjective’ interpretations.* Kinchloe and McLaren explain this tension:

How do you determine the validity of information if you reject the notion of methodological correctness and your purpose is to free men and women from sources of oppression and domination? Where traditional verifiability rests on a rational proof built upon literal intended meaning, a critical qualitative perspective always involves a less certain approach characterized by participant reaction and emotional involvement. Some analysts argue that validity may be an inappropriate term in a critical research context... (1994, p151)

I participated in a community project that was neither pure action, nor pure research, and have attempted to discover patterns and themes through a shared exploratory process. Data analysis relied on a process of ‘*critical subjectivity*’ which “...rests on the high-quality, critical, self aware, discriminating, and informed judgements of the co-researchers...” (Reason & Rowan 1981, p327). Self-deception was less likely in such a collective process, as we attempted to establish norms of authentic participation and had the ability to challenge each other. Emerging interpretations were

tested and challenged by a range of participants, through repeated cycles of action and interpretation (McTaggart 1997; Reason 1994; Reason & Bradbury 2001).

The writing of the thesis was, obviously, mostly my own effort: it was not undertaken collaboratively with a critical reference group. However, as I am also conducting “*self-research*” and investigating matters of importance to me, there is an element of critical trustworthiness, as “[*c*]ritical researchers award credibility only when the constructions [of reality] are plausible to those who constructed them, and even then there may be disagreement...” (Kinchloe & McLaren 1994, p151). Another criterion I have used to check the authenticity of my analysis is ‘*catalytic validity*’, or “... *the degree to which the research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it.*” (ibid. p152)

Yin (1989) argues for several other main tactics to increase the likelihood that case study conclusions are accurate; I have attempted to achieve ‘*construct validity*’ by using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence and by having key informants review aspects of draft reports. ‘*Internal validity*’ was enhanced by allowing matching patterns to emerge and by building explanations from the data rather than imposing pre-formed frames.

Ethics

Traditional ethics refers to issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and not inflicting harm to participants. As I have discussed above, much of the community development research extends this idea of ethics to include issues like ‘othering’, stigmatising, studying down, data raids, commitment to change, openness about the purpose of research / the uses of research / the role of the researcher, and so on. The type of research I have engaged in

...requires a new understanding of...ethics regarding such things as confidentiality and protection of research subjects, to ask questions about who participates in and benefits from research processes, how information is used and by whom, and how the process transforms or supports power relations.” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p78)

There is no simple answer to addressing these penetrating questions. Fine argues that the research effort is about struggling at the ‘*hyphens*’: “[*q*]ualitative researchers are chronically and uncomfortably engaged in ethical decisions about how deeply to work with / for / despite those classed as *Others*...Our work will never “arrive” but must always struggle “between” (Fine 1994, p75).

Many of these struggles have been consciously addressed throughout the project itself. Firstly, the project and its evaluation were deliberately identified as being about *social change*; it sought to improve a situation that existed (and continues to exist), so that people could find ways to live in better

relationships with them[our]selves, each other and their environment. The stated objectives of the project indeed included ‘*social, environmental and economic change*’ (DCBDP March 15, 2002). Those of us who identified as ‘facilitators’ were more or less consciously *engaged in ethical decisions about how deeply to work with or for*.

Secondly, *power* was a central issue throughout the project and beyond: the stated aims of the project included ‘*empowerment*’. However, this intended transformation occurred in a context rife with power imbalances between project sponsors (and the researcher) and its presumed and intended ‘*beneficiaries*’. Power was therefore inherent in contests over values, legitimacy and knowledge, as well as over the research process itself.

A third factor critical to the research was that the project operated on *community development principles*, explicitly stating its intended processes of *democratic participation, inclusion and shared ownership* (DCBDP March 15, 2002). Community development is closely associated with the idea of ‘*praxis*’, meaning that one can only really understand something by trying to change it (Freire 1972; Ife 2002; Fetterman, Kaftarian & Wandersman 1996). Indeed, the very attempt to understand *is* a process of change if done ‘properly’ and within the ambit of the here espoused ontological, epistemological and political premises.

Formal ethics approval was gained following a submission to the Human Research Ethics Subcommittee of RMIT’s then Faculty of Education, Languages and Community Services.

Boundaries and constraints

There were many boundaries set on the project and the research. Many of these shall be further elaborated in the body of the case study, but it is important to mention here population size and my own time availability. The project was based in neighbourhoods with a population of over ten thousand people: deliberately involving large numbers, from diverse backgrounds, across many different program activities. While it is impossible to report on this magnitude and multiplicity, the best this research can do is to illuminate some - hopefully - representative aspects. Participatory and representational intentions can also only be approximated in such a diverse context.

Constraints also existed regarding my access to the project. I was not one of the primary project workers or otherwise more directly involved in the project from an organisational or institutional point of view, and my participation in many of the activities would have been an unwelcome interruption. I also faced the constraint of limited time availability. Because I work full-time and have family responsibilities, I could only create about half a day per week to work on the project – this meant that a huge range of activities in the project occurred that I only had an intermediate awareness of. My

involvement was only able to be of low intensity, but over a long period of time and across a variety of settings, horizontally as well as vertically, that is, across various processes and events within on-the-ground project activities and across the several layers of decision making upon which the stakeholders were operating.

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: HISTORIES, DEBATES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Having described the evolving methodological basis for this study, I now move on to offer an account of my attempts at gaining a better understanding of discourses of ‘community’ and ‘development’, and their combination in the term *community development*. I will briefly explain my approach leading to the final form this chapter has taken before exploring the substantive content of the two major concepts standing at the centre of its attention.

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter to this thesis, whilst undertaking my undergraduate studies in Youth Work, a unit on community development had been included in the curriculum, in which the concepts of community and of development had been presented as a relatively uncontested, instrumental notion – such as the “ABC model” of “diagnosing, organising and departing” (Henderson 1980). This is – as far as I have been able to ascertain - quite typical of the education that most of those working in the context identified as *community development* work in this country, would have experienced in the past, and of the models which are still presented and discussed today. Of course, in the practice ‘field’, community development was and continues to be much more problematic than in text books – and in my experience, while it provided a useful alternative to traditional, one-to-one methods of practice, it also proved to be problematic and ill-defined – despite being widely and uncritically regarded as a universal fix-all (Adams & Hess 2001). As a trained youth worker I espoused and experimented with community development very widely, including integrating ‘it’ as a core approach in agency policies and staff role descriptions. The political and economic milieu of the time supported and encouraged such an uncritical and taken-for-granted approach, while employers and the participating public were content to leave any imagined doubts to the ‘professional experts’. As I will explain later, community development was to be comprehensively rejected as a form of government-sponsored programming and policy-making in the 1990s and almost disappeared from view, at least in Victoria but equally in many other parts of Australia. These circumstances and a positive desire to learn about ‘development’ were largely the motivators for this study.

I assumed that reviewing the literature for this thesis would be a straightforward affair – expecting that a more thorough scan of the contemporary human and community services ‘how to’ text books on community development would provide a rational, ‘modern’ definition, which would, in turn, aid my efforts to study and improve my involvement in the Community Building Demonstration Project in Melbourne’s North. This proved to be far from the truth - although perhaps not a surprise to readers -

as questions about ‘community’ and ‘development’ led me inexorably to contested ‘territory’ about overlapping issues, such as the theory of the state, human nature, power, inequality, social movements, culturally framed interpretations, philosophy, and global world systems and, indeed, the very meaning of the notion of ‘community’ (to name a few!) – these are issues that I attempt to acknowledge and sometimes address within the opportunities and constraints of this thesis. These questions, I have come to discover, continue to be at the centre of much contemporary debate about how to deal with our most important needs - illustrated by contemporary practices associated with global conventions such as World Trade Agreements; contested by global movements, like the World Social Forums; and discussed amongst theorists in the academic literature, ranging from environmentalism, to poverty, philosophy, science, ethics and economics (amongst others!).

This is a very sweeping canvas, and one that could easily overwhelm the short space I have in this thesis. My intention is, therefore, to provide some of the main outlines of the several ‘stories’ of *community-and-its-development* or of *development-and-its-communities*, while occasionally and where necessary and opportune, focusing on detail so as to gain a deeper ‘hermeneutical’ understanding. The role this rather voluminous chapter plays in this work is – hence – quite central; first, there is the need to establish ‘where we’ve come from’ in terms of community development; second, out of the historical-empirical material derived from several relevant geo-political contexts and historical epochs, I hope to derive some of the theoretical and conceptual building blocks to adequately reflect on and analyse the processes within the case selected for this study; third, my hope is that useful lessons can be learned from the case and add to our understanding of the historical and contemporary potential of community development as a liberating avenue towards the ‘good society’.

The chapter is divided into three parts; Part One deals with the *history of community*, leading to the contemporary ‘intervention’ we sometimes call *community development*, focusing on three countries, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and on the geo-political area usually identified as the ‘developing world’ or, more politically astute, the ‘majority world’. I have chosen the first three countries for a variety of reasons: the need to set the context for the case-study in Australia; the fact that virtually all community literature available in Australia derives from these three countries; that events in these three countries are intimately related; and the US and, to a decreasing extent, Britain and the political-economic and ideological forces behind them, have come to define and control what ‘development’ will be pursued by most humans on earth.

In this historical review, I focus on the past two hundred years to explore some of the main processes of deliberate and intended *development*. I commence with a review of the Australian context, from the time of the British invasion, subjugating the first inhabitants, through to the European settlement and the present epoch. Throughout, the focus is on government attempts to solve social ‘problems’ and ‘create’ or ‘evoke’ community, more particularly pausing at the Whitlam government’s *Australian*

Assistance Plan during the 1970s, to the present economic-rationalist malaise. This is followed by a shorter review of similar events and processes in the United Kingdom, reaching back to the Enclosure Laws in the 16th Century, and finishing with Prime Minister Blair's 'Third Way'. I then examine several key events in the United States, from the way First Nation Peoples have been dealt with to the War on Poverty and current community development programs. My attention is on the relationship between wealth and poverty and the formation of structures to ameliorate this inequality, in particular processes associated with the welfare state.

I then briefly widen the historical and geographical frame by examining the process of the 'globalisation' of *'development'* in the Majority World and, in doing so, arrive at an argument that 'community' and 'development' are dialectically interposed – specifically, that a self-justifying Western impetus primarily motivated by competition, wealth accumulation, conquest and exploitation is dependent on the systematic destruction of *community*, whenever and wherever those interests behind that impetus 'decide' to graft themselves into the life-worlds of local people, routinely evoking the latter's – more often than not powerless - resistance. This position forms a counter-point to the dominant hegemonies that "there is no alternative" to our current geo-political-economic arrangements, that human nature is intrinsically competitive, that efficient markets are the path to the good life, and that 'disadvantaged' localities simply need an injection of capital in order to 'catch up' to the rest.

In Part Two, I review debates about the more conventional community development methods and philosophies that have arisen in the literature from the period of the post-WWII consensus to the present. This finishes with an examination of the current critiques - and resultant atomisation - of community (development) theory and practice.

In Part Three, I conclude the overview with the integration of the earlier community development debates and dichotomies, grafting them in an attempt at developing a meaningful conceptual framework which – hopefully – will allow me to ground a more useful *theory of practice*, based on an elaboration of the dialectic of structure and agency. Having established this critical-interpretive conceptual frame, I am then offering in later chapters an analysis of one instance of contemporary attempts at community development / building in the form of a case study – the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project, as initiated and funded by the Victorian Government during the early years of the new millennium.

PART ONE:
THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY (DEVELOPMENT) IN AUSTRALIA,
THE UK, THE US AND IN THE MAJORITY WORLD

Australia

White impact on Aboriginal communities

As Australians, we generally see ourselves as having achieved our material wealth through and as a result of our hard work, pioneering spirit, technical know-how and political competence; that is at least what the founding myth and those interested in maintaining it seem to believe and insist on making others believe. According to that story, we are a democratic country situated in the South East Asian/Pacific region, where, in barely two hundred years, we have achieved an economic standard of living that was once unimaginable and is the envy of friend and foe alike. Despite disparate threats, like ‘terrorism’ and various global economic crises, we have managed to create ‘economic growth’ for two centuries and – for those more interested in the immediate – for fifteen successive years in the midst of an otherwise rather volatile economic environment. In what we call ‘*the land of the “Fair Go”*’, we tell ourselves that we have welcomed people from all over the world to come and be enterprising and to enjoy a range of freedoms, benefits and rights that are aspired to by all and sundry. According to a recent speech by the Prime Minister,

Our diverse and tolerant nation has extended the gift of welcome to new citizens who have made our workforce more able. Many of them constitute a priceless link with the Asia Pacific region.

Our resilient and optimistic people, founded on a commitment to enterprise, rose to the challenges of post war reconstruction and manufacturing development to build a secure and united Australian nation. Those same qualities equip us well as we face the limitless challenges of the information age. (Howard December 8 1997)

How did we come to be in this position? And is it an accurate depiction, or will other stories help to provide a more comprehensive perspective? (Horne 1987; Jamrozik 1991; Raskall & Saunders 1991)

In the following few sections, I want to briefly explore this story to find if and how it helps to illuminate my central inquiry into ‘community’ and ‘development’.

Terra Nullius and Aboriginal Peoples

For up to sixty millennia prior to white settlement, Aboriginal peoples inhabited all corners of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. They lived as - approximately - five hundred distinct nations,

each within their own discrete geographical boundaries as shown on the map below:

Figure 4: Map of Aboriginal Nations in Australia



(Department of Education NSW)

These nations – some as large as two thousand people - had highly evolved forms of leadership, languages and social organisation which enabled them to survive and thrive in a generally precarious ecology. Food supplies were seasonal and the delicate environment could tolerate only very limited impact, allowing Aboriginal people to lead semi-nomadic, subsistence, hunter-gatherer lifestyles. They developed highly sophisticated systems of reciprocal relationships, culture, art and a communal organising format that enabled them to work collectively and survive in balance with nature. The value of the indigenous knowledge underpinning these survival modalities is only now beginning to be understood or appreciated

...those cultures that have acted as a vanguard against modernism, maintaining their worldview and way of life despite the constant pressure of the modern, have performed a vital service to humanity. In acting as the repository for the long history of knowledge and experience that modernism has largely displaced, these cultures have been like a gene bank preserving a wide variety of seeds for possible future use...[further]..In preserving the seeds of possible future development, the premodern has given us much in terms of “survival”. (Goodman 2003, p19; see also Abram 1997; Muecke 2004; Muecke & Shoemaker 2004)

Aboriginal ontology and epistemology are quite divergent from what ‘Westerners’ assume is ‘correct’, and therefore often appear unfathomable to us – if we would try at all. Aboriginal people comprehend their existence as told through ‘*Dreaming*’ stories that are passed down from generation to generation. According to the *Dreaming*, supreme spirit ancestors created life as a result of their travels throughout the land in various forms - including animals, humans or geographical features – leaving behind the geographic features that we now see, as well as codes for people who follow about all aspects of

living, from how to hunt, to moral obligations to others, the earth and the animal world. According to Roberts, Carey and Grieves (2002),

Often the terms that are used in English are inadequate to the task of explaining Aboriginal ways of being and doing. For example, the term "trade" is inadequate to explain the complex system of ceremonial and obligatory gift giving that occurs in a society based around the fundamental value of "giving" as the primary motivation. There is no aim for a surplus, or to store more than is immediately required or to receive tribute from others - the impetus is to give, status comes from sharing. Similarly, one does not "own" land but rather is a part of it from creation and bound to ceremonial obligation and custodianship from the original "kinship" that flows from once having been at one with the land and all of creation. This is the basis of life.

Enter the colonisers

In 1770, when Cook raised the English flag on a small island just off Northern Australia, he named it "Possession Island", thus legally claiming the Great Southern Land in the name of the King. According to Humphries "...it metaphorically brought ashore a mentality of possession, of materialism; a mentality that Cook himself famously observed seemed absent here, in this land, until the coming of the European" (2005, p2). Despite much and regular direct contact with Aboriginal people, the invaders chose to declare Australia 'terra nullius' - meaning that the land was unclaimed by a sovereign entity and had no system of law or ownership of property. This gave a *carte blanche* legal "right" for all subjects of the King to inhabit, possess and exploit the continent without giving any recognition, rights or recompense to Aboriginal people. The rich coastal forests provided trees for ship timbers, and the oceans for a time yielded seal fur and whale blubber. As the occupation intensified, vast tracts of land became profitable for wheat, wool and other resources bound for England. Thus a mass extermination of Aborigines proceeded apace through disease, poisoning, shooting, forced displacement and mistreatment (Tatz 2003) – all of which was permitted and justified by the prevailing ideology that Aboriginal people were 'sub human' and, thus, had no soul. One estimate puts the Aboriginal population in 1911 at just 31,000 people, or just sixteen percent of its original number (Tatz 1999). The active hunting and persecution of Aboriginal people continued up until the 1940s, with the famous case of the last remaining Aboriginal in the state of Tasmania being murdered in 1876 (Moses 2004; Reynolds 2001).

By the time of Australian Federation in 1901, Aborigines were considered to be a relatively irrelevant and dying race, with the first Australian Constitution making only two references to them: exclusion from the census, and delegating responsibility for them to the States (Rowse 1998). It was not until the 1960s that Aborigines were allowed to vote or gain almost any civil rights before the law. In terms of 'development', the first phase of government policy in relation to the treatment of Aborigines commenced in 1909 with segregation and 'protection' Acts. These ostensibly 'enlightened' policies

triggered the rounding-up of large numbers of Aboriginal people to be placed into reservations for their 'care' and 'management'. The reserves were generally overcrowded, small, infertile, and far from traditional hunting and gathering grounds. They effectively severed Aboriginal people's ways of understanding or relating to their earth, while – rather deficiently – attempting to train them in the 'superior' values, lifestyles and preferences of the white colonisers. Many Aboriginal people managed to avoid, survive or even resist this so-called benevolence – as they continue today - but for most, it entailed the comprehensive and systematic destruction of their culture (Briskman 2003). For the colonisers this had the convenient benefit of making containment possible, and "humanely" removing competition from sought-after resources.

As the genocidal consequences of these policies became more public, the government eventually bowed to pressure and adopted a policy of '*assimilation*'. This was cast as a benevolent, more informed and scientific undertaking (much in the infamous tradition of the '*white man's burden*' of Kipling) that was assumed to instigate the best possible '*development*' for the Aboriginal people and their forms of community. Assimilation policies were informed by the view that significant action should be undertaken in order to save the last vestiges of the Aboriginal race before it died out completely – consequently there entered a new phase of imposition in the name of 'progress'. Many reservations were dismantled, families yet again broken-up and '*half cast*' Aboriginal children sent for fostering or adoption to white families or placed in missionary-run orphanages (Haebich 2000; Fraser 1998; Healey 2001). Continuing until the 1960s, these policies remain largely denied by white Australia or, at least, justified by the assertion that '*those were the beliefs of the times*', even after a Royal Commission had published its shocking findings in the 'Stolen Generations' report in 1997 (Wilson, Haebich, Mellor and National Library of Australia 2002).

There is an ongoing history of resistance by Aboriginal people against these various policies; "[t]he official records reflect this opposition and contain letters written by Aboriginal people seeking to recover their land, to receive the right to vote, to have their children returned, to receive citizenship rights and so on" (Sydney City Council 2002). There also occurred many collective protests such as an appeal to the United Nations, Freedom Rides, Land Rights marches, and an Aboriginal 'tent embassy' on the lawns of Canberra's Parliament House. More significantly, many Aboriginal people resisted the imposition of white policies by maintaining their traditional beliefs, language and culture (Briskman 2003). Others perhaps refused participation by engaging in alcoholism, drug taking or petrol sniffing – a self-harming form of resistance, but certainly the best explanation for this immense self-destruction. The High Court's 'Mabo' decision in the 1990s challenged the legal fiction of Terra Nullius by recognising that Aboriginal people were the original occupants of the land (however, the significance and possible positive effects were severely limited after a media-, business- and government-led and orchestrated panic. (Bachelard 1998; Butt Eagleson & Lane 2001; Sanders & ANU 1994).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was established by the Labor government with great fanfare in the 1990s. Operating on the 'radical' premise of self-determination in partnership with government, ATSIC was promoted as a new, progressive, informed and comprehensive solution to the Aboriginal 'problem' (Barlow 2001; Tickner 1995). ATSIC was enacted as an independent Commonwealth authority governed by elected Regional Councils with power to decide policy and funding. In 2005, however, after a brief and chequered history, it was branded a failure by the Coalition government, disbanded and replaced by a government appointed Council – a decision partly rationalised by the failure to address worsening Aboriginal health, welfare and poverty data.

Overall, this series of piecemeal, contradictory and destructive approaches has served to systematically undermine many forms of community that did exist amongst Indigenous peoples – despite assurances from successive governments, and expenditure nearly tripling between 1998 and 2005 to over \$3 billion (Australian Government Indigenous Budget 2005). The current social failure remains an unresolved blot on Australia's image, self-understanding, and moral authority – as regularly highlighted by critics in international forums like the United Nations. Given this history, which continues to be largely hidden, ignored or denied by a majority of white Australians (Pilger 1985), it is not surprising that many contemporary Aboriginal communities struggle with intractable problems - despite the survival of many local communities, extended family networks, traditions, languages and cultural elements. For example, the death rate for some age cohorts is five times higher than the general population, the suicide rate is nearly three times higher, the child protection rate is more than double the national average, and the unemployment rate six times the average (Healy 2002, 2004).

Current Aboriginal community development debates and initiatives

The undercurrent of racism and naivety in the country can perhaps best be exemplified by two recent political events. In one case, the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing claimed that health outcomes for Aboriginal people could be improved if they would just "*eat better and exercise more*" (The Age, May 15 2005, p1). The second event was the almost meteoric rise of Pauline Hanson's "*One Nation*" party, running on a ticket of xenophobia and anti-Aboriginal sentiment (Grant 1997; Sokes, Leach & Ward 2000). In this context, and following the sacking of ATSIC and the apparent exasperation amongst members of the Coalition Government about the intractable "*Aboriginal Problem*", current government discourses are attempting to – tenuously - combine notions of community and progress with individual responsibility. In order to exemplify this approach, it is necessary to provide a lengthy quote from 2004 speech by the abovementioned Minister,

For the past five years, at great cost to his standing with the politically correct, [the prominent Aboriginal leader Noel] Pearson has hammered the theme: "our right to take responsibility". Along with others in Cape York, he's devised practical ways to restore community tranquility (by limiting tavern hours), to empower individuals and families (by encouraging family budgeting) and to create a business mind-set (by promoting micro-credit for would-be business people).

It takes rare courage to tell disadvantaged people that their own efforts will determine their future---especially when the chattering classes insist that only government can really help. The jealousies of potential rivals and the disappointments of working with demoralised communities make leadership of this quality very hard to sustain---so government needs to respond decisively to the opportunities it provides.

Since 1996, the Howard Government has taken the view that big symbolic gestures matter less than empowering individuals, families and communities. The Government thinks that meaningful reconciliation is much more likely to be achieved when people have jobs, a good education and decent places to live than through formal apologies or institutionalised processes. Reconciliation can't be ordained by government. It can only take place when people feel respect for themselves and for each other. Better indigenous outcomes depend on trust and friendship as much as money and programmes, the kind of personal engagement now being fostered through Indigenous Community Volunteers. (Abbott September 2004)

New proposals to achieve these goals include 'mutual obligation' style regimes and 'Shared Responsibility Agreements' which aim to restrict 'passive welfare', put in place inducements for people to work for their benefit payments, and provide Aboriginal community decision-makers with 'incentives' to improve their local communities (Australian Government SRAs and RPAs website). The Prime Minister himself has used the mini-slogan of 'practical reconciliation', which he defines as

...no longer just about focusing on health, education, employment and housing. It is about 'devolving down to communities' personal responsibility, promoting partnerships and recognising the importance of individual property ownership. (Gordon, M. 2005, p1, emphasis added)

According to one of the government's most senior bureaucrats "[t]he days of the glossy 'community plan', prepared by an outside consultant, are numbered. Partnership requires ownership." (ibid.). thus it appears that we are now turning further to an economic rationalist model of indigenous community development in the vague hope of solving the problems between the cultures, whilst mostly if implicitly engaging in a putative 'blame the victim' discourse if the meted out 'support' has not 'worked' (Ryan 1976).

Summarising: for more than two hundred years since the invasion, in addition to the aforementioned instances of extermination or genocide, the nation has engaged and tried many models of 'development on' the Aboriginal communities that have led to the decimation of what was - largely - a community-based and -orientated, sustainable culture. Much of that 'development' has been revealed as imbued with racism and economic self-interest by the white invaders and their successors, posing as benevolence and scientific rationality that is re-inscribed to suit the context - while the powerless

'beneficiaries' have been excluded from constructing the discourse. What this first section of the historical review shows, however, is that the (intended or purported) development of communities – even if using different terminologies and nomenclature - remains an ongoing question that is worthy of sustained critical analysis. The stark fate of the Aboriginal peoples in Australia underlines the need to investigate more thoroughly and from 'within' why such more or less systematic 'interventions' arise and how they can be understood so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated (Neill 2002).

The next section of this historical overview will briefly explore the history of 'white' development in Australia and the concomitant fate of the 'communities' built – and lost - by the successive waves of migrants and their offspring.

Convicts and settlers

In contrast to the Aboriginal story, the history of white settlement is part of mainstream Australian consciousness. This history shows that, within a few decades of the arrival of the First Fleet, the English government was experiencing several simultaneous colonial and domestic problems. In Australia there was a shortage of cheap, willing labour – while in England the political-economic context in the aftermath of the *industrial revolution* was resulting in massive social dislocation, urbanisation, extreme poverty and high rates of crime. Harsh laws had led to overflowing prisons, yet the wealthy still feared for their safety and – worse still - the possibility of a working class revolution that was being discussed all over Western Europe. An expedient solution to both the Australian and domestic problem was the sentencing of convicts to long periods of hard labour in Australia – even petty crime like stealing bread could attract a life sentence (Evans & Nichols 1984; Hughes 1996).

An influential English social reformer of the time, Jeremy Bentham, designed and justified the brutal Australian penal system as a scientifically-based process to help improve the lives of deviants and malformed people. Rather than inflicting suffering or revenge, penal life was conceived as a 'panopticon' – a rationally calculated, total system of surveillance, hard labour, prayer and reflection (Foucault & Sheridan 1979; Letwin 1965). Those who were reformed would rejoin their rightful place beside God as contributing members of the good society; however they were not to return to England, and thus were forced to remain as 'free' settlers in the new colony. Thus, up to 160,000 of the earliest white Australians were victims of a brutal regime of punishment, which was itself designed as England's expedient response to social disruption, greed and inequality, as Hechter's (1975) quote of Cecil Rhodes illustrates,

My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new

markets for the goods produced by them in factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid a civil war you must become imperialists. (Cecil Rhodes in Hechter 1975)

These early exploits established the economic base and the associated infrastructure of a modern Western society in Australia. If Foucault's thesis is correct, this exploitative system "*represents a continuation and intensification of what goes on in more ordinary places*" (Sibley 1995, p15).

The need to use convicts to populate Australia was eclipsed by the great gold rushes which began in the early 1850s when, for example, in just two years the population of the State of Victoria leapt from 77,000 to 540,000 (Australian Government year unstated). According to one local newspaper at the time "[a] complete mental madness appears to have seized almost every member of the community. There has been a universal rush to the diggings." (Bathurst Free Press). This was not a population seeking to build a *commonwealth*, or to develop a form of utopian society, but masses of individuals seeking to make their fortune and establish their individual security. For example, in the early 1880s, Twopenny wrote

"...it cannot be too thoroughly understood that Australia is before everything a money-making place, and that anything like unremunerative expenditure with no possible chance of profit is considered foolish in all but a man who has made his fortune." (Humphries 2005, p4)

I cannot go into any detail regarding the course of Australian history and the 'fate' of local communities of settlers and migrants; suffice it to say that the experience of uprooting from their (mostly) European communities and their arrival in often harsh and unwelcoming living circumstances – often spurred by the motivation to '*make it*' as an individual in competition with other individuals under quite exploitative working conditions – prevented the building of new '*communities*' in a more than accidental manner. Suffice it to also say that migration policy till the aftermath of World War Two remained firmly based on the '*White Australia Policy*', part of ideology and legislation since Federation (Walker, Gothard and Jayasuriya 2003).

The next major stage in the development of the Australian community occurred in the 1950s with the political imperative to 'populate or perish' in the face of a feared Asian invasion, or the "*Yellow Peril*". Simultaneously, the burgeoning manufacturing sector needed mass factory labour - with up to 250,000 migrants arriving each year, initially still from North Western, but increasingly from Southern European and Middle-Eastern countries (Jupp 2002). Many of these migrants chose to start a new life on the other side of the world in order to escape oppressive conditions experienced or perceived to exist in their own country and for the opportunity to establish a better life at the new *frontier*. By 2005, only 220 years since *Terra Nullius*, Australia had grown to its current population of more than 20 million people, over forty percent of whom were either born overseas or have at least one parent not

born in Australia (DIMIA 2005).

Social-economic policy innovations

In the earlier parts of its history, Australia was considered a progressive and innovative world leader in social policy. The government invested in capital and social infrastructure including free school education, kindergartens, public health, and a system of targeted safety net pensions and entitlements for many groups (Bessant et al. 2006). A union supported Labor party was formed, and in 1907 the historic 'Harvester decision' created a revolutionary social protection system based on a legally enforceable living wage – known as the 'wage earner's welfare state'. Keynesian economics gained predominance from the 1940s to replace the laissez faire economics that had led to the depression - consequently full employment policies were adopted for the male workforce, along with regulation for investment, wages and prices - and not coincidentally massively expanding taxation to all workers (Kewley 1980; Graycar & UNSW 1983; Jones 1996).

These policies were pursued into the 1970s, which are now considered by many community development advocates as a period representing the zenith of collective action towards the good society. This episode reveals a great deal about imposition, agency, resistance, social movements and the processes of social change – and sets the scene for an interpretation of events in our present economic-political context.

Australia in the 1970s – a vision of a new society?

The 1970s was first time in the modern Western project when enough people appeared to unite to fundamentally challenge the taken-for-granted values of capitalism and its associated ideology of 'development'. This coincided with a period of great expansion of the welfare state and related attempts by state economists and planners to eradicate - once and for all - poverty, inequality and disadvantage, involving new 'community development initiatives' in these attempts. This period in Australia – and other Western countries – had seen massive economic growth and technological innovation which resulted in large productivity gains, increased wealth for most people and a large '*middle class*'. Advances in mass education and mass communications led to an 'unfreezing' of the conservative church/state consensus and enabled a concerted challenge in the emerging fields of environmentalism, feminism, peace, human rights, civic participation, worker cooperatives, responsible consumption, and intentional communities. In part, the '*baby boomer*' youth sub-culture established the foundation for a critique of hitherto unchallengeable '*establishment*' values. This mass citizen engagement in political questioning at all levels of society acted as a fundamental threat to the

post war model of the modern state as, for a time, many people – including those in power - believed that there was to be a radical departure from the past (Burgmann 1993; Gusfield 1970, Bouchier 1978; Castells 1983). This upheaval occurred with a number of ‘*conjunctions*’ (Marks 2002) including the ‘re-discovery’ of poverty, the Cold War militarization in ‘Third World’ countries like Vietnam, the growing awareness of the environmental costs of new technology, and the burgeoning awareness of the planet as a ‘*global village*’ (McLuhan 1962). Many groups also began organising to compete for what they saw as their share of the industrial era economy (Shutkin 2000).

The academy and the new professions soon began to occupy a space that was simultaneously a legitimate arm of government **and** resisting its imperatives – although they may have not constructed it as such. In the social sciences, many new disciplines were created or old ones reinvented to be aligned with the project of social reform, and thus began publishing a great deal of material in areas as diverse as urban planning (Victoria 1977, Broady 1968), psychology (Brown 1973), sociology, education (Illich 1973), public management, feminism (Greer 1970), racial studies, ecology (Carson 1965) and social theory – much of which – fundamentally - informed and generated ideas of community and development.

Those employed at the interface between the mainstream system and those excluded by it were unionists, clergy and the ‘helping professions’ of social work and the newly forming ‘discipline’ of community development. The human services were increasingly staffed by eager young activists who wanted to redress social injustices and, in some cases, acknowledge the complicity of their professions in supporting previous systems of oppression against the poor, women and other minority groups. This was coupled with rapid growth of the welfare state and its associated programs such as neighbourhood houses, child care centres, housing cooperatives and community health centres. Community development became regarded as a principal strategy in this attempt to radically reformulate practice (Clinard 1970; Cox 1974; Jakubowicz & ASWC 1974; Norden & FFYS 1983; Raysmith & Einfeld 1975, Tenants Union of Victoria 1975; Victoria Community Development in Health Project 1988; Wilson 1981).

One celebrated example of resistance occurred in Sydney’s inner-city suburbs, when the newly formed State Government Housing Commission decided to redevelop ‘slums’ for modern housing stock.

Thus emerged the resident action groups (RAGs) bringing together the residents who were threatened, the planners who were disenchanted, the students who were reaching for expression of social concern outside the institution, the ‘welfarists’...searching for more effective interventions, and the unions who saw that workers’ quality of life depended on more than wages and conditions... (Barry, Clohesy & Smith in Thorpe et al 1985, p83)

The resultant ‘*Green Bans*’ were instituted and, after a long campaign, proved largely successful at preserving parts of Sydney that are today regarded as heritage centrepieces.

It was into this milieu that an Australian Federal Labor government was elected with a strong mandate for social reforms. The Whitlam government set about adopting a strong role in economic affairs, industrial relations, health, education, welfare and public infrastructure. Coupled with a 1975 inquiry that 'discovered' a high proportion of Australians who were (still) living in poverty (Henderson 1976), the reformists were given licence to demonstrate how a modern government could finally overcome poverty. Whitlam announced, with great fanfare, a raft of new programs, such as the Australian Assistance Plan, Area Improvement Programs and the Regional Councils for Social Development, which aimed to get funding directly to poor communities, decentralise services and involve local people in decision-making (Australian Social Welfare Commission 1973, 1974; Goodyear, Davis & Dixon 1974).

Projects associated with these programs provide some of the first records of government initiated and sponsored 'place-based' poverty reduction programs in Australia. They claimed to "...*plan and coordinate the development of local social services, and to stimulate the participation of local people in both the planning process and the development of self-help, community-based services*" (Thorpe 1985, p20). Considered as avant-garde, they were "[h]eralded as a radical initiative...[where] workers believed they were moving beyond the bandaid, patching-up solutions of their previous, largely casework employment" (ibid). The documented reports on these projects suggest that they achieved much success at involving local people in discussion, mutual support, needs identification, service planning and in voluntary self-help efforts. They established many community-managed services in a wide range of programs, such as kindergartens, neighbourhood houses, play groups, after-school activities and activity groups. These were in turn used by many local people, who then built relationships, discovered shared concerns, gained skills and, in some cases, moved into public roles, such as Councillors in Local Government. At other times, local action groups were formed to tackle concerns like parks, playgrounds or other absent or deteriorating infrastructure. In the end, however, the latter remained run down and social indicators like unemployment and income remained largely the same, leading one community development worker to claim,

I could point to many positive changes that had occurred in the local area since 1974, but I kept asking myself the question – 'so what?' What had this really done, for instance, to increase the political power of these people, or to ensure...enough money and increased life chances.... I was no longer convinced that the sort of community work which I had undertaken could lead to policy and planning changes that would result in a more equitable distribution of power and resources to disadvantaged groups of people or would ever achieve lasting social changes in their favour. (Lane 1985, p80)

When the Whitlam government was sacked by the Governor General after a series of mostly assumed 'financial scandals', the community-based reforms lost their priority and the projects were de-funded. The nature of discourses once again began to shift as the 'euphoria' and apparent 'naïve collectivist ideals' of the 70s ended with oil shocks, rising unemployment and government debt. In Australia, as in

other Anglo-Saxon countries, capital once again reasserted its control, and taxpayer neo-conservatism paved the way for a less redistributive role for the state,

Once people recognized that there was a real threat to the industrial era, this openness began to close down. The extraordinary idea of progress and social justice to which we were struggling...progressively decayed. Old dogmas were dusted off and proclaimed as truths. (Theobald 1997, p32)

The metamorphosis of community development as a form of professional practice in the 1980s

Following the Whitlam Labor experiments of the early-1970s, *community development* never again existed as a high-profile program for Federal or State Governments to deal with poverty. In fact, governments became much more cautious about either acknowledging poverty or claiming they had a role in addressing it (Saunders 2005; Tsumori, Saunders & Hughes 2002). Poverty became more widely accepted as inevitable, attributable to the poor themselves, and beyond the capacity of government intervention –leading to what Mishra (1984) has labelled *the crisis of confidence in government and the welfare state*.

Despite these changes, parts of community development practice, language and philosophy have continued to find an important – if increasingly undetermined and rather ‘nominal’ - place in local projects and social movements, as well as in academia, the human and ‘*community*’ services and related professions. A somewhat instrumental form of community development was taught as a component of training courses in most professions and disciplines that had a claim on addressing social and environmental problems, including urban renewal, education, social planning, agriculture, justice, health, sociology, conservation, social work, housing, community arts, applied anthropology, welfare, youth work and public policy (Fullinwider 1999; Howe & Cleary 2001; Kenny 1999; Ife 2002, Raysmith 2001). This continues to the present day, despite being progressively dismantled by our most recent reassertion of the economic paradigm.

1990s community development as economic policy

The 1990s saw massive political shifts globally and in Australia, leading to a realignment of previously taken-for-granted assumptions about the role of the state and the sort of society we could/should become. The Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the arrival of *Perestroika*. Capitalism, we were led to believe, had proved itself the only system capable of structuring a modern society – even if this meant that the ‘*good life*’ was not to be available for all. As globalisation of trade sent many unskilled jobs offshore, the Australian workforce became less secure

and governments - of both putatively left and right persuasion - 'restructured' the economy towards 'value adding', the 'knowledge economy', espousing what has been already referred to in this thesis as 'economic rationalism' or 'neo-liberalism'. (Painter & Considine 1997; Pollitt 1993; Pusey 1991) One US commentator reporting on similar conditions in his country concludes

...economic thinking was increasingly dominant, arguing that the way to raise potential for growth was to increase the reach of free markets and free trade and to limit the role of government in all areas, including social justice. Challenges to market forces were increasingly met with the bland response that there were "no other options." Markets were presented as the only way to accommodate to change: the responsibilities of politicians and citizens were downgraded. (Theobald 1997, p34)

Public choice theory (Dunleavy 1991) and the works of authors like Osborne and Gaebler (1992) became quasi-bibles for economic rationalists in successive federal governments in Canberra – guided by their new construction of human merely self-seeking, economic actors. Thus, a self-confirming cycle was initiated, where rising inequality paradoxically led to calls for more competitive relations to increase wealth. Australian governments were particularly enthusiastic in applying this agenda through far-reaching privatisation of banks, floating the dollar, dropping tariffs, introducing a Goods and Services Tax, developing a 'National Competition Policy', introducing 'mutual obligation' regimes in welfare, and privatising general infrastructural, social security and welfare services like rail transport, Centrelink and Australia Post (Fairbrother, Paddon & Teicher 2002). Legislation allowed and encouraged employers to dramatically weaken age-old industrial protections and reduce the ability of workers to unionise and collectively organise; thus commencing a major shift to labour casualisation, insecurity and increased workforce participation rates without the guarantee of sufficient earnings from one job to cover the costs of maintaining a family - a long way away from the Harvester Judgment, indeed! (Pusey, Wilson, Turnbull et. al. 2003)

Dismantling the welfare state and community development in Victoria

The Victorian government attempted some of the most radical experiments in economic rationalism seen in the Western world (Costar & Economou 1999). In this political-economic context, community development as a government sponsored / funded form of activity virtually disappeared. Despite being in power for only seven years, the Kennett coalition government sacked 50,000 public servants, sold off major public utilities like water, electricity, transport and gas, contracted out health and human services, built private prisons, and closed and amalgamated hundreds of public schools (Costar & Economou 1999). In local government – the level of democracy supposedly closest to the people - Local Councils were disbanded and elected Councillors temporarily replaced by Commissioners. Once amalgamated into 'super Councils', they were forced to slash their budgets by twenty percent, and competitively tender their services. Activities most vulnerable to downsizing were – of course - the

'soft' functions such as community development and social services. Local democracy and grass roots politics was severely diminished as Councils were relegated to becoming an arm of the state, with a 'CEO' becoming the most powerful position, and Councils increasingly being run like businesses (Kiss in Costar & Economou 1999; Ernst, Glanville and Murfitt 1997).

Premier Kennett explicitly attacked and dismantled anything labelled community development as it was an anathema to his extreme economic rationalist ideology. Many community-based human service organisations were forced to amalgamate into large, often church-based conglomerates. Funding guidelines were changed to force services to focus on crisis responses rather than on prevention or broad community change and, in many cases, community development was required to be removed from job descriptions. Neighbourhood houses, for example, were re-shaped to focus on training for welfare-to-work programs, adult education and a 'competency based' mode of curriculum (Humpage & ANHLC 2005; Sanguinetti 1995; Smith & ANTA 1997). In summary, thousands of community-based organisations disappeared and the 'intelligence' of community development that had taken thirty years to establish was wiped out.

State Governments of both persuasions also became highly dependent on gambling taxes as a form of revenue, allowing about 25,000 Electronic Gaming Machines to be installed across the state. The consequent draining of money away from individuals and families had devastating effects on communities, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Paradoxically, after losing the 1998 election, the Premier and a former CEO of the Casino publicly admitted that the 'pokies' had eroded the 'fabric' of local communities (Boulet & Borrell July 2001), and confirmed by the Federal Minister for Family and Community Services who stated in parliament in 2002,

Problem gambling is a disaster for anyone, but a serious disaster for low-income Australians. Low income houses pay a much larger share of their own income in gambling taxes...Gambling continues to increase dramatically...Victoria has extremely high per capita collections from gambling....The problem Mr President is the states are glued to family tax revenue, absolutely glued to it and none of the major states have done anything else about it. Too afraid to take on the Hotels Association that's what they are. (Amanda Vanstone, Senate September 25, 2002)

After a little over two hundred years of development we now find ourselves in an awkward position: Is there a need for a change of direction, or should we better continue with the current policies? If there is a problem, what is its nature, and what is to be done about it? These questions have, of course, been asked throughout history with, as we have seen, answers being shaped by ideology and interest as much as rationality. From the indication of three previous federal election results, we can conclude that the voters have been prepared to put their faith in the coalition government. However I will finish this section by briefly weighing-up some of these beliefs, before finally touching on the current examples of community discourse and practice.

Are there ‘predicaments’ facing Australia in the twenty-first century?

By many standards, Australia is a wealthy and successful country. It is a democratic, peaceful, relatively successful experiment in multiculturalism that has established its place in the world. As is often repeated to most citizens, it has managed to avoid – apparently fortuitously - many of the economic, social and political disasters besetting near neighbours and established countries alike – particularly those in South East Asia and the South Pacific. According to the Prime Minister in his 1997 economic blueprint,

Australia occupies a unique intersection of history, geography, culture and economic circumstances. There is no other country in the world which has such an asset. It is an immense strength and never a weakness. It can be used to our advantage in maximising the economic returns and potential of our nation... (Howard, J. December 1997)

After dire warnings of a ‘banana republic’, and many years of warnings about the need for ‘restructuring’ to avoid economic doom, Australia now finds itself amidst one of the longest economic booms in its history. Successive Federal budgets have achieved unprecedented surpluses (Gordon, Dec 05) that have led to a series of tax cuts, record company profits, and huge growth in the stock market – resulting in many more millionaires than at any other time in history (Bessant & Watts 2002). In 2005, unemployment was at its lowest point for 29 years, leading to talk of a labour *shortage* in many industries (Costello March 2005). Average Australians are now claimed to have real incomes that are three times higher than fifty years ago (Hamilton 2005, p4) and per capita Gross Domestic Product has increased five fold over the century (ibid, p1).

This growth has led some commentators to announce a ‘*luxury fever*’ or ‘*affluenza*’ which they define as “... *a condition in which we are confused about what it means to live a worthwhile life. Part of this confusion is a failure to distinguish between what we want and what we need.*” (Hamilton 2003, p7). Authors like Hamilton and Denniss (2005) and Eckersley (1998) are now raising concerns that over-consumption, commodity capitalism and individualistic competition are leading to a distortion of values in which people are increasingly accepting inequality,

This belief [that money equals happiness] has powerful personal and social ramifications, not the least being that the affluent become more preoccupied with themselves. That is why Australians are richer than ever but less inclined to sympathise with the dispossessed.... Consumerism and growth fetishism have become the enemies of a fairer Australia. (Hamilton 2005, p18)

Others have suggested that the Australian tableau of European migrants who found themselves thrust into an unfamiliar, frontier, racist landscape has led to “...*an acquisitiveness that has been reconfirmed rather than challenged through successive waves of emigration and the triumph of ‘Australia Incorporated’ in the twentieth century*” (Humphries July 2005, p6).

Whatever the cause, Australia's economic success has not come without significant costs and implications. Private household debt is now at record highs, with the ratio of household debt to disposable income rising from 40% in the 1980s to 150% in 2005 (RBA September 2005). Overwork is now more commonly talked about, with many more families' incomes being based on two working parents, dramatic increases in the amount of overtime people undertake, and some research claiming that Australians now work the longest hours in the Western world (Hamilton 2005, p86). With two-thirds of women in their peak childbearing years in full-time work (Ellingson 2003, p8) it is not surprising that issues like the fertility rate, the provision of child care places and 'work-life balance' have rocketed to national prominence (Beder 2000; Pockock 2003; Pusey et. al. 2003).

As already mentioned, other features of the current political-economy are casualisation, flexible working hours and decreased security of the workforce – which became prominent with mass retrenchments in the 1990s and continuing with a series of legislative reforms that greatly increased the number of part-time, temporary and casual jobs while decreasing full-time permanent jobs (ABS 2000, p115). In 2004, a prominent academic claimed that “[a]cross Australia about 1.3 million people are unemployed or underemployed, because the deregulated labour market has generated large numbers of casualised, precarious jobs that, even though they count as ‘employment’, do not provide a living wage” (Smyth 2004).

A 2004 Federal Government inquiry into poverty - the first since the Henderson Inquiry in the 1970s – noted the “...the dispersion of earning and incomes have become more unequal in Australia, especially since the 1980s.” (Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee 2004, p93). This trend also shows, however, that inequality is becoming highly geographically and demographically specific, with concentrations in rural areas, certain suburbs and amongst social groups like single parents and people with disabilities and the aged (Vinson 2004). Between 1976 and 1991, the bottom 70% of neighbourhoods saw their incomes fall, with this trend continuing (Ellingson, September 27, 2003). There is a widespread perception amongst Australians that things are getting worse (Eckersley 1998, p9), with recent research reporting that eight in ten people preferred a “...more stable society where the emphasis is on cooperation, community and family, more equal distribution of wealth and greater economic self sufficiency.” (Ellingson *ibid*; see also Argy 1998; Emy 1993; Self 2000; Stilwell 2000).

All these processes have serious consequences for “community well-being”. Hamilton claims that we even lose our perception of what the common good is - as more people work longer hours, have less time for local involvements, compete with each other and experience psychological stress “...overwork seems to shape people's mindsets in such a way that they feel their community is something they must protect themselves from rather than a resource from which they can draw and contribute to” (Hamilton 2005, p95).

The environment

Environmental issues are also of major and growing concern. Unsustainable economic activity over the past two hundred years has had a devastating effect on a country that is one of the driest on earth. Poor farming practices, pests, irrigation and pollution have comprehensively undermined the health of soil, water and climate (Gordon & Suzuki 1990). For example, Victorian research recently reported that seventy percent of land has now been cleared for intensive agriculture and thirty-five percent of the state's major rivers are in poor or very poor condition (Fyfe 2005, p4). Continued droughts have put the environment and rural communities under further pressure, with many Australian cities now instituting permanent water restrictions and the CSIRO warning of further dramatic changes due to global warming (McInnes & Whetton 2004). In 2005, at the time of writing this thesis, the Prime Minister announced the latest in a series of multi-million dollar drought packages, while all previous climate records continued to be broken for both heat and dryness - this has left even the hardest 'economic growth' supporters acknowledging that climate change caused by human activity is a *fact* rather than the imagination of so-called 'greenies'.

Yet, amazingly, government policy and public discourse seem strangely ambivalent or dismissive of these trends, and the environment has virtually disappeared from political discourse. Australians continue to have the fourth largest ecological 'footprint' of any nation in the world, or 3.5 times the global average (Environment Protection Authority 2005). Yet the 2004 Federal election was fought primarily on the basis of people's fears about interest rate increases, and the two major policy initiatives of the 2005 budget were an unprecedented \$22 billion in tax cuts – mostly benefiting the already-wealthy – and stricter eligibility criteria for benefits of single mothers and the disabled. As I write this thesis, the government has passed radical industrial reform that will lower youth wages and decrease collective bargaining which, many claim, will severely affect family life and “...*take worker's rights back to the 1890s*” (Robinson and Zwartz 2005, p1). In the latest episode in a pattern of increasingly conservative moves, the government's much-criticised “anti-terror” legislation has been rushed through parliament, despite widespread concerns that it will severely curtail civil liberties and freedom of speech.

Australian community development in the twenty first century – old wine in new bottles?

The imposition of economic-rationalist, individualist imperatives has had the apparently contradictory effect of increasing the prevalence of discourses about “community”. For example, in reviewing programs at the national level, two commentators announced “...*an explosion of activity reflective of*

policy makers' desire to give community instrumental functionality" (Adams & Hess 2001, p20). A number of federal government welfare programs are also now re-claiming community-based practices as innovative approaches that purportedly address deeply entrenched social problems – such as the “Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-2009” which provides \$490 million for early childhood services (see <http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/>). Many of Australia’s largest non-Government Organisations also took-up the community rhetoric, at least temporarily in 2005, with Anglicare, for example, adopting the logo “*Supporting Families, Building Communities*”, and Melbourne City Mission using the badge “*Building Inclusive Communities*”.

Other community advocates are claiming that this resurgence is being reflected as a world wide trend:

Increasingly around the world, participatory monitoring and evaluation is being used for differing purposes and in differing sectors. Farmers in India, Brazil, Vietnam and Mexico are becoming more effective planners and decision makers, choosing and learning from alternative production strategies. Women in India are becoming involved in health planning and in establishing and managing their own savings and credit programmes. Community leaders in the United States are developing their own vision of change and actively seeking to influence and reform government policy. Funding and supporting institutions in Bangladesh and in the UK are experimenting with participatory approaches to strengthen and improve their own performance in providing development assistance. (Estrella & Gaventa 1997, p5)

For example, senior politicians of both major parties are now, somewhat cynically, referring to ‘*social capital*’ as a key government goal (Grattan 2003) – a contested concept whose definition and measurement I have discussed in the previous chapter. The Australian Financial Review – a conservative paper – explained the context as follows,

The process of economic reform started by Hawke and Keating is now almost complete in Australia and the neo-liberal economic agenda has triumphed....While there is the need for some fiddling around the edges (for example, on the liberalisation of the labour market), other than on tax, the principles of economic management for the foreseeable future have been established. Now that the economic levers are largely out of politicians' hands, what remains for government to do? The Liberal and Labor parties have come to the same conclusion and their answer is: social capital. (Roskam, 2004)

On cue, Federal politicians soon began making pronouncements about relationships of trust, and the values of neighbourhood and community – despite an apparent contradiction with all previous policy decrees. The following statement from the Federal Treasurer serves as one example:

The view I am putting is that there are non-monetary things that add to the wealth of a society. Civic engagement and the values which it promotes like trust and tolerance are some of those things. You can call them social capital if that is conceptually easier. It might help with the idea of building them up, running them down, adding to our wealth, or detracting from it. But a society which has these things should be careful not to let them run down. Once they are gone it takes a lot of effort to get them back again. (Costello July 2003)

These themes were echoed by the Labor opposition, which pitched its electoral salvation on regaining the votes of ‘middle Australia’. The recent Federal leader, Mark Latham attempted to popularize his version of ‘social capital’ in several books he wrote such as “*From the suburbs: Building a Nation from our Neighbourhoods*” (Latham 2003; also 1990; 1998). His proposals included facilitating the means for ‘mums and dads’ to invest in lifetime superannuation, and for local businesses / community people to join together to tackle unemployment and poverty through ‘social entrepreneurship’. Both proposals were characterised by the Australian Review of Public as

...part of Latham’s focus on social responsibility. Asset ownership, he insists, is not just about economics; it’s also an act of inclusion. And by teaching (poor) people to save and invest, the government is teaching people responsibility; giving them a hand up, not a hand out. This is the new collectivism, where people own a stake in the economy and where people act as communities to solve their own problems. (Spies-Butcher 2003)

What sense can be made of this chequered history of community (development) in Australia?

I commenced this section of my thesis wanting to know more about ‘community’ and ‘development’ in Australia. The historical analysis I have undertaken is highly selective and contestable; however, it has revealed many historically relevant incidents and patterns. Moving from the experiences of Indigenous peoples, with their highly developed forms of community, collective action and spirituality, somehow still adhering to these, despite successive policies of genocide, ‘protection’, assimilation and displacement, I summarily referred to the first and subsequent waves of white settlers, themselves displaced fortune seekers, having a more than ambivalent relationship to the very notion and experience of ‘community’. The post-war consensus and expansion of the welfare state resulted in a - partly idealistic, partly instrumental - reinvention of ‘community’ as a potential localised/regionalised avenue for democratisation and economic advancement for the ‘disadvantaged’; to, finally, being superseded by more than two decades of increasingly economic-rationalist policies, seeking to enhance economic growth by creating competitive markets in both national and global trade and by subsuming all local and social policies to that goal, including an ‘on again – off again’ utilisation of community development as a potential strategy to support this overarching goal, especially to try and mobilise those left behind in that ‘growth momentum’. This historical review of taken-for-granted discourses has, hopefully for the reader, made “...*visible the ways domination and oppression are normalised by a system that claims to be objective and outside of ideology*” (Goodman 2003, p14).

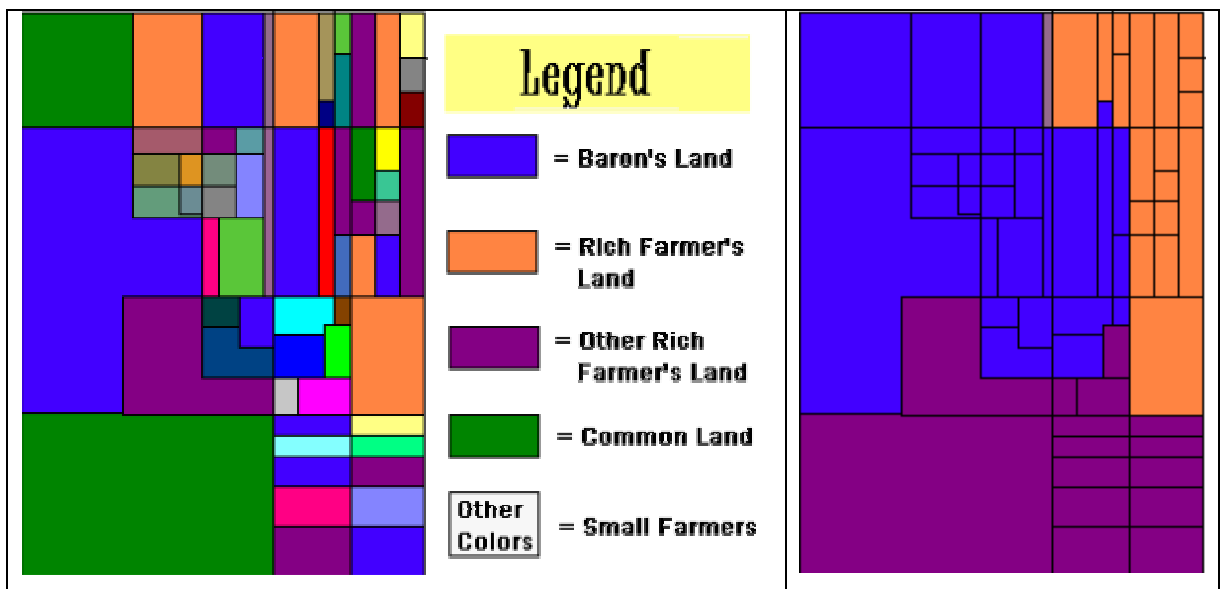
Having evolved this historically-grounded view of the Australian story, I will now move to a brief review of community and development in the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom

Enclosure of the commons and the industrial revolution

An archetypal watershed in the trajectory of community in England and indeed, exemplary of developments elsewhere, is the story of the *Enclosure Acts*, enacted during the 16th and 17th Centuries. These were a series of parliamentary acts to redistribute what had been common land – ‘*the Commons*’, previously available to meet the majority of the population’s subsistence needs. The enclosure acts gradually but inexorably gave ownership of the commons to wealthy landowners, culminating in 1876 when 98.5 percent of England and Wales was owned by 0.6 percent of the population (Bollier 2002, p 46), as shown by the following figure:

Figure 5: Land distribution before and after enclosure



(Grade Nine Social Studies Web 2003)

This transfer of formerly-public goods into private hands precipitated a massive change in the economic base of the society, forcing millions of starving peasants into vagrancy, destitution and beggary and, ultimately, an urban proletariat lifestyle. The enclosure acts coupled with the invention of power-driven machinery precipitated the industrial revolution, the effects of which were experienced much more severely in England than in any other country in Europe, ushering in one of the most infamous historical periods of exploitation and degradation. New machines meant that goods could now be produced by unskilled workers in increasingly vast factories – by a workforce that was not coincidentally provided by the landless farmers, previous artisans, women and children. Thus, the vast majority had no choice other than a life of submission, while enabling a small group of new capitalists

to join the existing aristocratic upper class. This process also saw the increasing attentions of sociologists, philosophers, religious, social workers and activists who wanted to either facilitate or prevent the mass labour uprisings occurring in other parts of Western Europe (Hudson 1992, Sale 1995).

A system of Poor Laws – dating from the 1200s – was updated during the 1500s to cope with the new circumstances of mass-vagrancy and destitution and, whilst still containing original ideological principles of ‘deservedness’ and ‘less eligibility’ - was gradually adapted until the 1900s. Administration of the Poor Laws was not undertaken by the government, but, in a premonition of later community development, was delegated to overseers appointed in local parishes. Taxes were redistributed in the form of pensions and relief payments to the ‘indigent poor’, while those ‘assessed’ as capable of work – such as ‘vagrants’, ‘beggars’ and ‘able-bodied men’, who all needed to maintain their sense of ‘self reliance’ - were notoriously sent to workhouses or outdoor relief. The great sense of stigma attached to recipients of the Poor Laws meant they served to both prevent starvation **and** maintain public order. As I have mentioned, ‘offenders’ were systematically transported to Australia. Finally, towards 1906 the role of the Poor Laws diminished as liberal welfare reforms were introduced, and the ‘welfare state’ developed in the post-war 1940s (Boyer 1990; Eastwood 1994).

One early experimental response to these social mass social inequalities was the *Settlement Movement*, originating in England in the 1890s, but soon spreading across to the United States (Crocker 1992). This prefiguring of community development involved ‘well meaning’ volunteers working directly with the poor, based in a house in the local community. Originally they were staffed by social workers and church leaders, but were soon frequented by intellectuals, unions and university students. Jane Addams emulated this model in the United States, when she acquired a house in the poor tenements of Chicago (Addams 1938). The staff lived and worked amongst the mostly migrant and working poor population, learning about their conditions, building relationships and collaboratively developing various programs including kindergartens, mothers groups, nurseries, education, art and cultural celebrations. One worker wrote about the ideals of the houses,

Its flexibility as an instrument makes it pliant to the essential demands made upon it; uncommitted to a fixed program, it can move with the times.

Out of the enthusiasms and out of the sympathies of those who come to it, though they be sometimes crude and formless, a force is created that makes for progress. For these, as well as for the helpless and ignorant who seek aid and counsel, the settlement performs a function.

The visitors who come from all parts of the world and exchange views and experiences prove how absurd are frontiers between honest thinking men and women of different nationalities or different classes. Human interest and passion for human progress break down barriers centuries old. They form a tie that binds closer than any conventional relationship. (Wald 1915 [1971], p310)

The settlements also gradually became involved in broader political issues such as industrial disputes, civil rights, the women's movement and – through both world wars - the pacifist movement. By some, the Settlement Houses are also held up as an example of the contradictions inherent in a comparatively powerful group entering into a 'helping' relationship with 'others'. They have been widely criticised for trying to assimilate the local tenants into middle-class values and lifestyles, as shown by their stated goals which were to “[h]elp the foreign born conserve and keep whatever value their past life contained and to bring them into contact with a better class [of Americans]” (Jane Addams, date unstated). These ambiguities in community development I shall deal with in more detail in the Second Part of this chapter.

Early government experiments with community development

England coincidentally began its government sponsored community development initiatives in similar conditions of 'ferment' to Australia, but somewhat earlier. In the 1960's the Wilson government 'discovered' poverty, and eagerly acknowledged its role in addressing it. With great fanfare the government announced that twelve anti-poverty neighbourhood projects would be funded; they were to be based in poor areas and staffed by small teams of community workers whose mandate was to support locals in self-determining their own responses to problems. Unlike Australia which has an intermediate state level of government, local governments in England were able to be heavily involved in functions such as education, housing, transport and urban planning (even though this is gradually changing through the contemporary policy of devolution).

However, despite the various similarities and differences to the Australian experiments, the outcomes of the English Community Development Projects were directly parallel. They led to many small, local initiatives that successfully engaged marginalised people in addressing social conditions in their communities, yet they appeared to fail at making any impact on their primary goal of eliminating poverty. As the paid community workers became increasingly frustrated and politicised, they concluded that issues were very much structurally conditioned by powers outside of the locality – and consequently began organising communities to take direct action in protest against the government's policies in employment, housing, health and income insecurity (Midgley 1986, p20; Thorpe 1985 p13). The Labor government, in response to these threats against its electoral interests, credibility, policies, and officials, first discredited the Projects and finally de-funded them. The analysis of these cases resulted in many 'left' advocates re-assessing their assumptions about social change, and seeking more effective ways to achieve 'structural social change'. The high profile demise of these projects has ensured that they continue to be remembered as archetypal case-studies of both the potential and limits of this type of community development (Loney 1983, Benington 1974). Community

development was to continue as a mode of providing social welfare in the UK, but not again as a feature of government policy until its re-invention in the 1990s.

(Community) Development as pro-economic policy

With the imposition of Prime Minister Thatcher's form of economic rationalism, the United Kingdom, like elsewhere, was soon to adopt free market reforms. This vision has been characterised as

... minimal State interference, the nationalized industries restored to the private sector, private education and private medicine in the high-growth sector, immigration only a memory, and law and order imposed with Victorian severity. (Jones, 1984 p150)

In an uncanny mirroring of the much later Latham proposals for 'social capital-ism', a conservative columnist explained the privatisation philosophy as follows:

Giving land to the peasants makes revolutions irreversible. In a different guise, but on precisely the same principle the Thatcher revolution can make itself irreversible here. It has already been very considerably secured by extending home ownership breaking up vast Council estates, and encouraging tenants to become owner-occupiers (Gale, G. Daily Express July 1983 in Jones 1984, p164).

With the ideological goals firmly entrenched, and the aversion of an apparently imminent economic crisis, the social consequences of Thatcher's revolution became clearer: larger, more desperate and more entrenched groups of poor people, a 'squeezing' of the middle classes, and the acquisition of substantial wealth for a select few (Hirst 1989; Pierson 1994). Just eleven years later, in the lead-up to the election of Tony Blair's 'New Labor', social conditions once again headlined the political debate as whole regions of Britain had failed to regain their industrial base, intergenerational unemployment had set in, there was a visible underclass of poverty, and a large 'deviant' if not criminal class had been created in the new '*black economy*' (Brindley, Ryan & Stoker 1989; Jordan & Jordan 2000). Given the various failures of the past, the incumbent government needed to convince the electorate that it had a viable plan.

Community development as the Third Way

Newly elected Labor Prime Minister, Tony Blair labelled his political philosophy as situated in the 'New Centre' or as the 'Third Way', claiming this was a new alternative to both state- and market-based models of government (Giddens 1998, 2001; Newman & De Zoysa 2001). A jointly released statement by Blair and German Chancellor Schroeder explained,

The past two decades of neo-liberal laissez-faire are over. In its place, however, there must not be a renaissance of 1970s-style reliance on deficit spending and heavy-handed state intervention. Such an approach now points in the wrong direction. (Blair & Schroeder June 8 1999)

Thus, the solution was to aim for “*fairness and social justice, liberty and equality of opportunity, solidarity and responsibility to others,*” (ibid.) through a modernised government, a highly trained, adaptive workforce and an economic framework that supports a “*market economy not a market society*” (ibid.). In practice, this was to mean the by-now usual formula of global markets, competition, growth, improving the business climate, limiting public expenditure and turning the welfare system into a “*springboard for personal responsibility*” (ibid).

Third Way politics has been accompanied by new theoretical discourses which attempt to counter the purist economic base of public choice theory with formulations about the importance of relationships. The most famous of these theories derives from Putnam (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti 1993), who claimed to empirically have proven that a healthy society leads to a healthy economy - *not vice versa* - as is usually claimed or assumed. Putnam was the modern re-inventor of the term ‘*social capital*’, following Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986), which he defines as the “*norms of reciprocity*”, trust, cooperation and collective action that are dependent on “*social networks*” (Putnam 2000). He further operationalises these concepts, but most importantly claims to discover a dangerously unhealthy deficit of social capital in modern societies – thus coining the term ‘*bowling alone*’ to represent a society (and a community) replete with individuals primarily looking after their own material interests at the expense of pursuing civic interests. Putnam’s formulations became internationally celebrated because they met a political need to link relationships with economic value (indeed, ‘*capital*’), and a consequent rush by governments to create a public-managerial science of connectedness, networks and solidarity (Falk et. al. 2000; Saegert et. al. 2001; Winter 2000; Performance and Innovation Unit April 2002). Ideas like *Social Entrepreneurship* (Hughes 2003), *Governmentality* (Dean 1999) and the *Enabling State* (Botsman & Latham 2001) reflect the as-yet diffident efforts to – finally and somehow – orchestrate the initiatives of government with those of (local) citizens and their communities, especially to impart on the latter a sense of their own responsibility and to avoid the spectre of ‘*welfare dependency*’ (Jordan & Jordan 2000; Roche 1992)

Armed with these innovations, Blair’s New Labor set a goal that “...*within ten to twenty years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live.*” (UK Cabinet Office 2001, p4). Poverty was soon ‘*re-branded*’ under the rubric of ‘*Social Exclusion*’, which is claimed to be “... *about more than disadvantage: it is about the effect that lack of income and lack of work have on people’s ability to participate in society*” (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2000) and, consequently, a raft of new administrative structures were invented, such as the ‘*Social Exclusion Unit*’ and a ‘*Ministerial Sub-Committee on Social Exclusion and Regeneration*’. National, multi-million pound programs were consequently implemented across a range of social issues - for example, in ‘*Neighbourhood Renewal*’

programs, which combine many elements of grassroots community work alongside funding, made available for capital infrastructure. (see <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/>; Lucas, Ross & Fuller 2003)

The 'Third Way' philosophies also identify that the services of the welfare state are 'delivered' through multiple 'silos' bureaucracies, such as education, health, housing, unemployment, and justice. This leads to potential overlaps, inefficiency, territory-protecting and, ultimately, poor outcomes for recipients. Thus, the Blair government promises to achieve '*joined up solutions to joined up problems*' (Modernising Government March 1999), through various managerial measures like creating incentives for bureaucrats to work together, improving liaison between central and local government, pooling funding by geography - called a '*Single Regeneration Budget*' - and engaging the participation of local people in project management through, for example, '*Local Strategic Partnerships*' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister). I will return to the theme of '*joining up*' later, when discussing the policies and programs initiated by the Victorian government within the context of the Community Building Demonstration projects, which is the empirical subject of this thesis.

Evidence of the Effectiveness of the UK Community Building Initiatives

Early government research into the outcomes of these initiatives claims significant improvements in many goals, such as 'rough sleeping', conception rates for under 16-s and the number of 16 to 18-year olds not in education or employment. A major review by the government's Social Exclusion Unit claims "...*overwhelming support for the continued existence of the Unit, and a widespread belief that it has been a success in terms of operation and its effect on wider Government Policy*" (UK Cabinet Office 2001, p5). However critics claim that the agencies set up to achieve 'modern welfare' have an enforcement ethos that locks public sector staff into narrow, instrumental and inflexible roles of assessing risk, allocating services and exercising surveillance. Consequently government services find themselves increasingly unable to facilitate community self-determination, as explained by Jordan and Jordan "*[t]he direct, face-to face work that was required...to create a space in which needs, norms and rules were negotiated between the state and civil society, was increasingly done by volunteering organisations and community groups...*" (2000, p8).

Research also points to evidence of a trend towards continuing social decline:

Despite decades of urban initiatives, the need for social inclusion remains pressing. Deprived neighbourhoods, grim estates and derelict land still characterise too many urban areas. At the household level, 26 percent of the British population is living in poverty, an increase of 12 percent since 1983 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, December 2000 p5).

Further, repeating the pattern identified above, community workers are once again reporting that piecemeal approaches are unable to contend with macro-political and -economic changes

*... their ability to tackle these problems was severely constrained by **resource limitations**. Gaps in service provision existed, they said, not because providers failed to understand the needs to be met, but because resources were spread so thinly. Even where SRB [Single Regeneration Budget] topped up resources for some services, Council budget cuts were causing the withdrawal of other services from the same areas (Joseph Rowntree Foundation November 2000 p3).*

Concluding remarks

This brief exploration of the history of *community* and *development* in England has, I hope, illustrated how Enclosure Laws and industrial revolution combined to set in train Polanyi's 'great transformation' (Polanyi 1957), whereby society- or nation-wide apparatuses organising human activity – including subsistence activities – came into being on an unprecedented scale, imposing the market mechanism on almost all human activities and their exchange; “[i]nstead of the sovereign community controlling the terms of the economy, the idea of an autonomous, self-regulating market has become the dominant ideas of social governance” (Bollier 2002, p46; also Blyth 2002). This has been met with various forms of externally facilitated, grass-roots resistance – or at least attempts at alleviating its consequences - such as Settlement Houses and CDPs – which themselves showed the internal dialectics of imposition (as many of these efforts were also state-supported if not always funded) and resistance within the processes identified as community development.

I will now turn to a brief outline of community and development in the United States, the nation which has, since the Second World War, assumed the dominant role within global affairs and which, therefore, has played a major role in promulgating forms of social intervention – i.e. community development amongst others – within and beyond its geo-political sphere of influence.

The United States

Development as genocide

A critical-historical review of the United States reveals a similar history of development, exploitation and destruction of community, as imposed by powerful societal groups and interests and legitimised by apparently 'rational / objective' policies and national and global imperatives. Upon the 16th Century arrival of the first European settlers in North America, estimates of the number of native people living across the sub-continent range from between 1.8 million to 12 million (Stannard 1992). Like other Indigenous cultures facing a colonising force, there was an almost complete misunderstanding of their highly sophisticated and sustainable systems of community, reciprocity, art, law and spirituality. Thus over nearly four centuries the number of Natives Americans was systematically reduced to an estimated 237,000 (Stannard 1992; also Churchill 1997; Jaimes 1992). The high level support for this policy was demonstrated as recently as 1851, with the Governor of California urging the extermination of all the surviving natives (Stannard, 1992). Sixteen years later, General William Sherman backed this policy with military might: "*We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux [Lakotas] even to their extermination: men, women and children*" (Churchill 1998 p240).

Paradoxically, many of the early settlers in North America, especially into the 17th Century, arrived to escape prosecution for religious or political reasons in Europe and with the prospect of establishing their own '*utopian communities*' in the '*New World*' (Hobsbawm 1994, 1995). Within the great sweep of conquest, the inexorable move of the 'frontier' ever further out West and the imposition of laws to satisfy the land-hungry interests of graziers, farmers and industrialists alike, the more peaceful attempts at community building and establishing collaborative links with the Indigenous groups were doomed to remain insignificant.

Development through Slavery

The great engine of development in North America was, of course, slavery. For over 150 years, the system of slavery became deeply entrenched in the American economy and psyche – experiencing its unconcealed zenith in the 1860s (at the same time as General Sherman was busy), with nearly four million slaves providing manual labour for the entire South and large parts of the North (Lovejoy 1983, Franklin & Moss 1994). The legal ownership of people was justified by various transcendental and immanent theories, from Christianity to social Darwinism (McItrick 1963).

The process of ending slavery is perhaps instructive in the questions being asked in this thesis: How does an oppressor group come to terms with, and attempt to redress, its deeply complicitous role? In this case the process of social change was unfortunately lengthy, fraught and violent, not least because most white people could not imagine a viable alternative economic future, nor a social future in which they would have to live side-by-side with freed – and black! – former slaves (Dumond 1959). The Abolition only became law after decades of struggle, and a Civil War of brother-versus-brother ultimately costing millions of lives. However the struggle for an integrated society was to prove much harder to achieve, with profound and apparently irresolvable inequalities continues throughout American society to the present time, as was graphically exposed in the recent New Orleans floods (Roediger 1991, Ekins 1968). Amongst the many attempts at legal, political and communitarian solutions, some are instructive of the practice of community development.

Community schools

One of the first documented examples of US-based and inspired community development occurred following the Civil War in the 1850's. The widespread displacement of poor, rural blacks from – often bankrupt - cotton farms of the South, led to growing concerns amongst whites. The only way strikes and labour wars could be averted was rapid economic development, which in turn needed a “...*skilled and disciplined black industrial labour force*” (Mayo 1975 in Dixon & Costello 1989 p83) – but it would take a special initiative to coax African Americans into a system they had learned to despise. Enter an initiative called the ‘*Community School*’ which, unlike formal schools, was staffed by black people, met often illiterate participants on their own terms, and taught skills, farming techniques, and the household management skills of cooking, sewing and hygiene. The model was widely regarded as a shining example of self-help and replicated in many states as well as in the colonies of Africa (Brokensha & Hodge in Dixon & Costello 1989, p83).

The Rural Extension System, in turn, was created by an Act of Congress in the mid-1880s and became an equally celebrated example of innovative government intervention. This system ‘extended’ significant resources from dozens of hitherto city-based universities to solve the problems of poor rural people – who at the time accounted for nearly 50 percent of the population. The non-traditional educational model provided non-formal, non-credit programs in farming techniques, etiquette and correct dress - and continues today as an important part of community service by many rural-based or regional universities (Russell & Ison 2000).

The New Deal as government intervention in the economy

The Great Depression marks a historical period that - for the first time – forced a fundamental challenge to the American free enterprise dream. A famous 1935 speech by President Roosevelt shows the depths of critique that parts of the establishment were able to exercise:

We find our population suffering from the old inequalities, little changed by our past sporadic remedies. In spite of our effort and in spite of our talk, we have not weeded out the over-privileged and we have not effectively lifted up the under-privileged....We have ... a clear mandate from the people, that Americans must forswear the conception of the acquisition of wealth which, through excessive profits, creates undue private power over private affairs and, to our misfortune, over public affairs as well. In building toward this end we do not destroy ambition, nor do we seek to divide our wealth into equal shares on stated occasions. We continue to recognize the greater ability of some to earn more than others. But we do assert that the ambition of the individual to obtain for him and his a proper security, a reasonable leisure, and a decent living throughout life is an ambition to be preferred to the appetite for great wealth and great power (Rauch 1963, p146).

The New Deal programs represent the first real attempt to develop public policy that made a break from pure free market individualism (Davis 1986; Eden 1989). The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provides a major example of a government intervention intended to develop public ownership of a utility for the economic and social wellbeing of the people (Chandler 1984). With millions of starving and destitute people and no apparent economic system able to meet their needs, the TVA was purchased by the government in the 1930s. It was to be set up as an experimental source of collective social and economic development for poor farmers and industrial workers; as well as having an environmental goal of restoring the heavily degraded environment of the Tennessee Valley. The TVA was transformed into a publicly owned electricity company that provided cheap electricity, as well as important public works, housing, education and various small-scale cooperative businesses. The project drew the interest of many commentators: by communitarians it was seen as a beacon of hope, whereas conservatives saw it as thinly disguised communism that would only serve to fuel dependence and laziness. Once again, social workers were at the interface between rich and poor and, as in earlier mentioned cases, were both praised for their commitment and innovation, and criticised for their paternalistic, authoritarian practices. For example, one journalist reported back to the government,

[I saw a] flock of social workers, who would like to see Tennessee have a good, strong public welfare department and are, they said, working toward that end, but whose approach to the relief problem is so typical of the old line social worker, supported by private philanthropy and looking down his--only usually it was HER--nose at God's patient poor, that it made me gag a little. (Letters from the Field, June 1934)

Despite being later condemned by post-war President Eisenhower as ‘creeping socialism’, the TVA was successful in many of its objectives and continues today as one of America’s cheapest suppliers of power. However, like its predecessors, it did not achieve the impact on poverty that was hoped – coincidentally, the TVA was also later to prove critical in the development of the nuclear bomb (Lilienthal 1944).

The 1960s “War on Poverty”

A key contemporary milestone occurred in the 1960s when US citizens were shocked to discover that - following years of neglect and systematic exclusion - extreme poverty in the form of inner-city ghettos and degraded neighbourhoods still existed in their ‘lucky’ country. The victims of these policies were generally African Americans and migrant groups, ‘causing’ the dominant community to become fearful (once again) of a popular uprising. Thus the context was set for the Johnson government’s decision to officially declare a ‘*War on Poverty*’ (Cramer 1969, Moynihan 1969). Johnson was personally involved in his new and radical approach, including calling together a presidential task force of not only the usual experts, but various advocates from a wide variety of backgrounds and instructing them, “... *not to be concerned about political and financial constraints, but to innovate*” (Blakely 1979, p 34). Thus the ‘*Model Cities*’ and ‘*Community Action Programs*’ were conceived to provide flexible resources at the local level and engage cross-sections of stakeholders in a ‘*bottom-up*’ process of defining problems and generating strategies. This policy was pitched as a core government initiative, as exemplified by high-level federal support, multi-million dollar funding, and the creation of new government departments such as the ‘Federal Office of Economic Opportunity’,

The proposed program was so comprehensive, expensive and ambitious, that when President Johnson finally released it “seasoned congressional observers ...smiled, shook their heads and concluded that the master legislative strategist of the 20th century had bought a dud” and that, in the words of an Administration official, “we had lost our minds” (New York Times, in Blakely 1979, p34)

The programs were allowed to run for only few years and, during that time, experienced many difficulties. For example: realigning the public bureaucracy proved managerially and conceptually fraught; conflicting interests led to various inter-government ‘battles’ over power, resources and ideology; it proved politically difficult to ‘sell’ to sceptical electors, with revelations of high costs, criticisms of lack of any progress towards its core commitments; and, as concern about poverty swung back to vilification, claims that it was rewarding indolence and creating dependence. Of significance to those interested in the micro-practice of community development were evaluations showing limited grass-roots participation, power being monopolised by vested interest groups, and entrenched difficulties achieving efficient local management (Levine 1970).

Once again, while the programs were successful at enabling engagement of people, they had limited impact on local concerns, thus were eventually doomed to derision and dismantling (Quandango 1994). Over the next twenty or so years, the African-American Freedom Movement redefined itself as a more limited ‘Civil Rights’ movement, shifting its battle into the legalistic, and legislative domain. This continued until the next major policy backlash in 1980s, when the Reagan administration followed the same well-worn path as its contemporaries in Australia, the UK and much of Europe.

Reagan shifted his policy rationale to the assumption that growth creation leads to poverty reduction as resources eventually 'trickle down' to advantage the poor in employment opportunities and other benefits. This was largely achieved by shifting the distribution of public resources towards the wealthy (for example, by cutting their taxes), leading one commentator to recently conclude:

...most Americans are still trying to figure out just what the new role of government is or ought to be, and where the private realm ends and the public begins. Privatisation became the buzzword of the 1990s, as federal, state, and local governments looked to individuals and the private sector for solutions to social problems once exclusively reserved for government, from crime and welfare to education and the environment. Some are left to wonder whether there is any public life at all left in America. (2000, p2)

Meanwhile, the economic situation for the US poor has deteriorated, with the number of people estimated to be living below the official poverty line almost doubling to forty million between 1972 and 1994 (Hartmann 2002, p191), and 20 percent of the 'working poor' now earning below the poverty rate of income (ibid. p209). According to a congressman in 2001

...the average American is working longer hours for lower wages than was the case 28 years ago – before the explosion of 'free trade.' The wage crisis is especially acute for entry-level workers without a college education. For men with less than six years in the work force and no college education, average real wages fell about 28 percent between 1979 and 1997. (Congressman Bernie Sanders in Hartmann 2000, p240)

Not surprisingly, wealth distribution is becoming more unequal, with figures suggesting the richest 10 percent of people increased their share of wealth from 50 percent in 1976 to 73 percent in 1997 (Hartmann 2000, p205). At the other end of the scale, 90 percent of the poorest people own 27 percent of the wealth. One 'natural' consequence of this gross inequality, coupled with 'zero tolerance' policies, is a burgeoning 'criminal' population, which reached 5.9 million adults in 1998 – or nearly 1 in every 34 adults are either in jail, on parole or on probation (ibid. p192) – leaving the US with one of the highest imprisonment rates in the world.

In the US, there is now in place a comparatively austere welfare system, with no universal health care, poor protection for workers, a racial-cultural divide and a large underclass of working poor (Conley 2003).

Contemporary US community development

There are currently many initiatives that attempt to deal with poverty, but these are relatively small, funded by philanthropic organisations, locally-based and often very much adverse to accepting government funds lest they become compromised by the strings attached to these (Mayo 1994). The label '*Comprehensive Community Initiatives*' is commonly adopted for programs that operate at the local level and which aim to deal holistically with community problems; "[w]hile varied, they all have

the goal of promoting positive change in individual, family, and community circumstances in disadvantaged neighbourhoods by improving physical, economic and social conditions” (Connell 1995, pvii).

There are also many other experiments such as Empowerment Zones, Community Development Corporations, Consumer Cooperatives, and Community Ownership of Land, all of which involve people in various combinations of cooperative economic endeavour, local level democracy and community participation (Williamson 2002). There continues to be a strong groundswell of resistance in the US, with many philanthropic and member-based organisations working to achieve environmental sustainability, peace and global cultural diversity, many also devoted to the battle against their country’s involvement in the ‘industrial-military complex’, to use a phrase coined by President Eisenhower during the fifties, as a warning about the danger for democracy and freedom if left unchecked. There are also many intentional communities that have formed in order to explore more cooperative and less resource intensive lifestyles (Christian 2003; Schehr 1997). While many of these programs have been criticised for not achieving structural change on a macro-level, they have provided creative local experimentation or they have attempted to improve chances and life conditions for certain categories of disadvantaged or discriminated-against groups (see <http://www.aspeninstitute.org>).

Preliminary conclusions about Community Development in the Western (mostly English-speaking) world

The review I have undertaken above of the last several hundreds of years across three English-speaking countries from the Western or so-called ‘developed’ world enables me to now offer some observations about *community* and *development* and the various attempts at intervening in (or dealing with) the former using varying interpretations of the latter as a legitimising discourse or rationale. According to Theobald, “*The task at this point is to get a better understanding of the fundamental realities of our time. Each of us needs to understand as fully as possible what is actually happening in the rapids of change*” (2000, p69). This epoch of technological, industrial and political development has seen the transformation of all aspects of society. The choices we have made have created unimagined wealth, at the cost of the very existence and ways of life of Indigenous societies, the environment and people’s ability to subsist with each other in cooperative, reciprocal, local relationships.

Successive government attempts at addressing poverty and other predicaments resulting from displacement and other associated changes have adopted various languages of community

development – while they have often had positive local effects, they have progressively been subsumed by a narrative of economics. Attempts by agents of the state, or the benevolent middle classes, to organise disadvantaged communities have led to - both – some positive outcomes and, simultaneously, the imposition of structural and cultural imperatives and living conditions on local communities often leading to even more distress, displacement and associated adverse breakdowns of local and Indigenous values and forms of mutual support and cohesion.

I will now attempt to respond to Bollier's invitation in the next and final section of the First Part of this chapter, where I explore applications and associated events and processes pertaining to *community* and *development* in the Majority World, before endeavouring to summarise the debates permeating *community development discourses* across the examined societies and, finally, attempt to articulate a conceptual framework supporting a theory of practice.

Globalisation and Community Development in the Majority World

Introduction

In this section I will briefly review community development as it has been applied in ‘third world’ or ‘majority world’ contexts. While this seems a great distance from a development project in suburban Melbourne, it will be shown to be directly relevant to understanding both the local socio-economic scene and the practices of community development. My aim is to examine the *internationalisation* of community development as an attempt to bring so-called newly-developing societies into the mainstream of economic (i.e. capitalist) development, initially under the aegis of colonial regimes and at present under that of the United Nations, the WTO, major aid agencies and other instruments of global capitalism.

This global perspective is not a usual part of mainstream community development education or discussions in Australia – but rather is seen as a *specialist* aspect of development best left to the international experts. In my own case, I had little knowledge of this global perspective before commencing this thesis, despite long-term involvement in community development and previous post-graduate training. Yet, having now developed a very basic understanding, I find it a critical addition to my epistemological framing of myself and the world and of possible future attempts at intervening in the latter. In some ways, what has happened and continues to happen in the Majority World gives us a ‘live’ glimpse at what must have happened in our own past and will, therefore, aid us at understanding the forces at work in both *community* and *development*.

The race to colonise the world: 1600s to 1900s Europe

By the 1500s and 1600s, many existing and emerging European societies and nation states were reaching the conclusion to generations of domestic wars, thus enabling them to direct their resources towards broader opportunities for conquest. By conjuncture, the then-superpowers of France, Holland, Spain and England had made technological advances in shipping and navigation which enabled them to safely travel around the globe, and thus ‘discover’ the New World. With the potential for achieving riches and glory combined with military power, the international setting became the stage for conquest, plunder and subjugation (Hobsbawn 1994, 1995) in a little acknowledged but seminal phase of modern world history. The Spanish were the first to claim vast lands in South America, with a catastrophic toll for their inhabitants,

All told, it is likely that between 60 million and 80 million people from the West Indies to the Amazon had perished as a result of the European invasion even before the dawning of the seventeenth century. Although much of that ghastly population collapse was caused

by the spread of European diseases to which the native peoples had no immunity, an enormous amount of it was the result of mass murder. A good deal, as well, derived from simply working the enslaved native laborers to death. (Stannard 1992, p151)

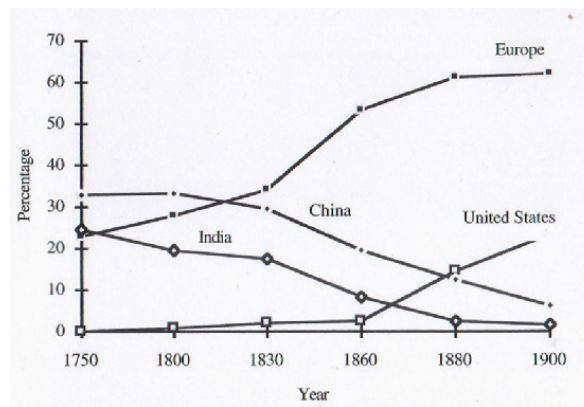
For example, in Bolivia's Potosi mine, the Spanish extracted thousands of tons of silver, at an estimated 'cost' of eight million Indian lives (Marks 2002, p75). In the case of Mexico, the indigenous population was reduced to just three percent of its original number (ibid. p77). In the next phase, priests and missionaries began accompanying the Spanish military in a self-sacrificing quest to 'develop' the savages, in this case by spreading Roman Catholicism and saving their heathen souls from damnation in purgatory. This benevolent mission had the effect of legitimising the invasion, while securing the foundation for the cultural domination of the New World (Diamond 1997). A further stage of development was imposed by private sector entrepreneurs and opportunists like the East India Company which, soon after entering the international scene, grew to dominate entire local economies – resulting in ever escalating scales of disasters at both the social and environmental levels. This process of exploitation was consolidated when, between 1500 and 1800, Portuguese, Dutch and British slave traders procured the 'business' of taking tens of millions of slaves out of Africa for transport to an unfamiliar world and a life of bondage. Similar stories can be told of the exploits of many other European powers in Africa, South East and South Asia, Latin America, India and the Pacific (Hochschild 2002; Marks 2002).

But what, we may ask, has this got to do with community development today? Are these transgressions not so distant, and perpetrated by another culture with a vastly different ethic, as to render them irrelevant? Firstly, it is important to realise that these antecedents have directly enabled the West to establish our current high material standards – and consequently the material poverty of the 'under-developed' nations, after having been set on a path of degradation and relative poverty. Thus, by 1914 a handful of countries in Europe controlled 85 percent of all international lending (Hoogvelt 1997, p 19), with this 'success' leading to a peculiarly Eurocentric view of the world – that is, regarding Europe as righteous 'fountainhead' of world history and world development:

By 1900, Europeans and their North American descendents controlled, directly or indirectly, most of the world. That fact did not escape their notice...some Europeans now thought that they had a scientific explanation for the rise of the West and the "backwardness" of Asians, African, and Latin Americans: social Darwinism and eugenics, or scientific racism. (Marks 2002, p140-50)

The following figure graphically shows the changes in global fortunes:

Figure 6: Share of world manufacturing output 1750-1900 (Europe, China, US and India)



(Marks 2002, p125)

These historical facts point to a Western ontology that is deeply based on values of greed, domination and exploitation which are masked as ‘helping’, as reflected in the following statement by one passionate interventionist,

The task of governing from a distance the inferior races of mankind will be one of great difficulty. One that will tax every resource of intellect and character. But it is one that must be faced and overcome if the civilized world is not to abandon all hope of its continuing economic conquest of the natural resources of the globe. (Benjamin Kidd in Hoogvelt 1997, p20)

1950s: Community development is invented as a ‘national development’ program for ‘underdeveloped’ and emerging nations

The colonial phase of globalisation, up until the 1940s, needed to be more subtle. The oppressors needed to learn how to control vast empires with only a handful of military, missionaries and merchants by gaining active acquiescence of the oppressed. The subversive processes of colonisation met this need by encouraging the people to adopt the world-view of the oppressor as their own (Memmi 1965, Fanon 1967) – a process the academic Leela Gandhi referred to as “...*the subtle infection of colonial imperatives [where one]...submits to the secret logic of spiritual and political indoctrination* (Ghandi 1998 p145). Once the colonised peoples had learned to see themselves as inferior, the white/Western project could be constructed as an act of benevolent uplifting from a primitive level to becoming more ‘evolved’. An array of suitable scientific-moral-religious rationalisations for the colonial enterprise argued that the barbaric states were being raised to ‘modernity’ – as provided by social philosophers like Hobbes (1651) and Adam Smith (1776) - anticipating Social Darwinism by several centuries. This process has been described by Hoogvelt as a

convenient 'fit' between *material conditions, institutions and ideology* (1997, p13), or, as explained by Edward Said,

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations which include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with that domination (1994, p61).

With some exceptions, it was not until the 1950s that the legitimacy of colonisation was starting to break down on a wide scale, in part due to pressure from the international community and activism by intellectuals at home. Indigenous people in many colonised countries began to strengthen their nationalist movements and more systematically organise resistance. Once again, the colonisers found an effective means to '*civilise and control*', while continuing the exploitation through programs under the broad rubric of 'community development'. These programs had multiple benefits: they taught skills for work; served to install the necessary *infrastructure* for further economic development; brought increasing numbers of people into economic production; divided the population by highly rewarding a 'lucky' few; and left the deflections of responsibility for any failures firmly in the hands of the Indigenous people. The core modus operandi of successful community development programs was to make minimal accommodations to the people's desires (including for autonomy), thus creating a feeling of 'progress' while in actuality further extending and entrenching the reach of power (Goldthorpe & Goldthorpe 1996; Nandy in Rahnema & Bawtree 1997).

The British Colonial Office in 1948 referred to community development as 'mass education', defining it as

...[a] movement designed, to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation, and, if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement. (Brokensha and Hodge in Dixon 1989 p84).

At the level of practice many of these community development projects were managed by missionaries, benevolent Westerners and trained local people who provided a much-needed level of independence from the colonising authorities. They often mobilised local involvement in small improvement projects such as water, education, health, roads and agriculture, where the promise of self-directed involvement and working to help one's neighbours greatly increased the number of 'natives' who were voluntarily involved (Batten & Batten 1965, 1967; Du Sautoy 1958; Goodenough 1963; Memmi, Facey and Braudel 1984).

Post World War Two community development

After a brief period of peace, Europe once again was flung into conflict. Advances in wealth and technology and organisation facilitated the First World War mobilisation of a staggering sixty-five million soldiers, with the consequent death of up to nine million. Just twenty years later, the galloping industrialisation and ambitions of Germany and Japan precipitated the Second World War mobilisation of ninety-two million combatants, and a consequent fifty million deaths; “[i]n all, treatment as a different species, cloaked in just causes and patriotic fervour, wiped out 150 million people during the first half of the twentieth century” (De Rivero 2001, p137).

By the conclusion of the Second World War, the struggle for world domination had been reduced to two gigantic superpowers – the USSR and the US with an assortment of respectively associated or ‘client’ nations. At the same time as this ‘Cold War’ was being fought, many Majority World countries began gaining their independence (from the late fifties till the early seventies), partly as a by-product of the main rivalry, partly as an unintended consequence of certain aspects of the colonisation process itself and partly because of the political emancipation of new nations within the framework of the United Nations. One of the main sites in which the conflict between the new superpowers was fought ‘by proxy’ were poor countries that were ‘ripe for revolution’ (and had desirable resources) and were critical to the superpowers for military influence - including Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, countries in Latin America and in the Middle East as well as in North Africa. It is not surprising that the majority of US expenditure on community development in the 1960s occurred in these countries (Brokensha and Hodge 1969),

There is also some suspicion that US development agencies working in India in the 1970s encouraged the use of formal participative technologies in their efforts to break the stranglehold of Marxists over the community development process. (Hailey in Kothari and Cooke 2001, p100)

The next tragic yet rarely acknowledged episode in a seemingly endless and arcane series of dominations was the Bretton Woods agreement. The success of the post WWII Marshall Plan at creating a spectacular economic recovery in Europe (and blocking further USSR domination) (Brohman 1996, p10), led to great optimism amongst experts that economic-managerialist interventions could help the ‘underdeveloped’ countries of the ‘Third World’. The Bretton Woods conference in 1944 brought together politicians from the world’s leading countries – predominantly the ‘West’ – to decide how to manage the world’s economy in order to prevent another Depression and, as a sub-script, how to insert the ‘rest of the world’ into that program. Two main proposals were put to the conference: a Keynesian system of sharing resources between countries by balancing surpluses and deficits, or a ‘free’ flow of capital with the US dollar benchmarked as the international currency – a plan which would result in a massive economic advantage for the US. The second

proposal won the day and an international monetary system was born that permitted ‘friendly’ countries to be included in trade if they agreed to surrender significant sovereignty to the international system – in effect, governments would have less ability to respond to the wishes of their electors. This global economic system set the foundation for what we see today in international apparatuses such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the other Divisions of the United Nations (Best 2005; Peet 2003; Cavanagh, Wysham & Arruda 1994).

These structures have caused major changes to Majority World economies. Up until this time, their social and economic systems had managed to stay reflective of Europe’s prior the industrial revolution: predominantly agrarian, decentralised, village-towns, with subsistence production managed at a local level through trade and barter. This was despite decades and sometimes centuries of colonisation which, as mentioned, had ‘developed’ certain desirable sectors of the local economy to produce goods and resources for consumption or further manufacturing in the ‘home lands’. While the people of the South were materially poor by Northern standards, they had managed to retain some control of various forms of subsistence living, as well as their collective ‘commons’ of social, economic, cultural and environmental ‘capital’. Western economic theories however, “*take scant notice of these neglected species of wealth*” (Bollier 2002 p21), as they are part of a polity that is invisible and incalculable by scientific means: idiosyncratic, inter-subjective values. The development economists in the World Bank rather preferred to (re)consider ‘Third World’ people to be trapped in primitive systems of cultural and material deprivation (Ghandi 1998).

According to the Darwinist, Eurocentric and positivist paradigm, all countries would be given modern guidance by the North’s best experts to help them ‘develop’ through a predictable series of stages. Thus, for example a stage 1 traditional society would progress through ‘take off’ stage (with the aid of a rapid injection of investment capital), where it would eventually grow towards the enlightened pinnacle of modern capitalism (Broham 1996, p15). This led President Truman in his 1949 inaugural address to state for the first time that a national goal of the US was ‘development’,

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery, their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. (in Hartmann 2002, p273)

To this Truman added that “[t]he old imperialism-exploitation for foreign profit-has no place in our plans” (ibid. p274). ‘Poor’ countries were to gain modernisation, industrialisation and all the associated trappings of capitalism – stimulated through various amounts of development aid. As a result,

During the entire second half of the twentieth century we grew accustomed to hearing that development could be achieved, violence would cease and history would be ended, all by changing our economic and social systems or structures. (De Rivero 2001, p135)

Commentators have drawn direct parallels between the capital/labour relations of this period and the earlier European experience of the industrial revolution (Wuyts, Mackintosh & Hewitt, 1992). However, instead of local business owners forcing down wages, this time competition was at the scale of *countries* being forced to compete with each other in a ‘race to the bottom’. This powerful ‘invisible hand’ was aided and abetted by many North-installed dictatorships, and a new class of wealthy local elites, forcing national governments to accede to the international market (Buckman 2004; Ghandi 1998; Hoogvelt 1997). As well-organised multinational companies took advantage of cheap labour, weak industrial conditions and non-existent environmental protections, massive natural resources were stripped out at bargain basement prices. Unprecedented ‘enclosures’ of land once again occurred, as many forms of subsistence rural living were forced to make way for agribusinesses who grew cash-crops for the international market. Western science played a strong role in offering apparently infallible technologies like chemicals for fertiliser and machines for labour saving. These ‘advances’ caused unprecedented mass urbanisation, and rural areas progressively receded into a forgotten ‘periphery’ (Clark 2003; Harris 2004).

This also provides an important illumination of the dynamics of imposition and resistance as two cultures meet when mediated by powerful interests. It is not all a one way street as complex and unpredictable discursive processes are unleashed: power is not always successful at dominating, but may be subverted, co-opted, accommodated, or otherwise transformed. ‘Development’ is not intrinsically harmful, often providing needed benefits like clean water, medicines, or food storage that enables communities to survive unseasonal conditions. Likewise, the ‘colonised’ are not always resisters, but may often be enthusiastic adoptees, or even opportunistically selective collaborators. The colonisers too are transformed in complex, iterative ways (Ghandi, 1998).

I also do not mean to portray indigenous communities as ideal utopias. It is important to recognise that, for some, life was brutal and short as they were forced to deal with the unpredictabilities of the natural world. Village life was often interlaced with jealousies, conflict and domination by some groups over others. But, as I have tried to point out, people had forms of mutual interdependence and an ontological perception of their role in nature that enabled various forms of flourishing and meaning (or the good life) – while managing to generally live within nature’s limits.

To return to the chronological story: the overall results of these several early iterations of ‘development’ were economic and social disaster. A few countries achieved spectacular economic growth, and others modest growth, but overall *billions* of people found their quality of life becoming worse (Broham 1996). Absolute *poverty* increased, as did the levels of *inequality* between people

within countries (Seligson & Passae-Smith 2003; Yates 2003). For the vast majority, basic needs remained unmet and there was significant underemployment. The most vulnerable bore a disproportionate proportion of this burden, in particular women who increasingly absorbed both income earning responsibilities and family care (Guijt & Shah 1998; Turpin & Lorentzen 1996). At the level of the natural environment, unprecedented environmental degradation took place as burgeoning metropolises became some of the largest and most polluted in the world, beyond anything that had been imagined previously (Roddick 2001). In terms of community – the focus of this thesis – the effects were equally devastating. Local systems of barter, trade, language, celebration and gifting began to collapse, as did village lifestyle, traditions, and extended family. This spectacular imposition was largely attributable to the zealous and at-times selfless participation of a new class of the helping professions: social scientists and development experts who provided tools to help ‘progress’ infiltrate into nuanced community processes,

...to introduce an agricultural tractor into a community that has communal rights to land and knows no property rights, or that kinship obligations stood in the way of appointing people by merit and so on – the sociologists set about the task of developing a comprehensive all encompassing theory of all the processes and structural changes required to transform non-industrial society into industrial societies. (Hoogvelt 1997, p36)

Contrary to popular belief, the principal beneficiaries of all this activity were the minority countries of the North. While financiers made massive profits as a result of ‘loans’ (often expended on projects built by Western companies), the Majority World became increasingly dependent on aid and Western technology. The poor countries increasingly found themselves to be powerless ‘bargainers’ in an international economy in which they were becoming inextricably integrated.

As the dismal failures of the first development plans became apparent, critique amongst some international experts were increasingly expressed, and, although this reflexivity rarely extend to the Northern media or, by default, popular consciousness, the development ‘establishments’ were forced to either challenge their ideas and practices (or, more cynically, to develop new discourses in order to sanction their previous practices). The Cocoyoc Declaration of 1974 was a landmark attempt to articulate a language for development that was not purely economic, such as by acknowledging the ‘*inner limits of humans*’ to survive in exploitative circumstances, and the ‘*outer limits of nature*’ to support such exploitation (in Friedmann 1992). This was accompanied by an articulation of the qualitative elements of a functioning society such as “...*creativity, conviviality... deciding his own destiny*” (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 1975:7). There was also a growing acknowledgement of the democratic and self-determining institutions and processes inherent in a civilised society, such as representation, participation and empowerment, rights of citizens to bureaucratic protection and, “...*freedom of expression and self realization in work*” (Broham 1996, 207). The Cocoyoc era declared a new ‘*people-centred development*’ that would shift power relations by guaranteeing the participation and empowerment of ordinary citizens as a core component of all activities; with the

resultant epistemological shift that, “[t]he baton of development studies generally passed from the economics of development to the politics of development” (Hoogvelt 1997, p54). Various supposedly comprehensive policies and mechanisms were put in place throughout the highest levels of the international community and national governments to ensure these goals were achieved, as reflected in documents like “*Participation in Development 1971*”, “*Popular Participation in Decision Making for Development 1975*”, “*Community Participation in Development Projects*” (Midgley 1986, p18) and others too numerous to mention here.

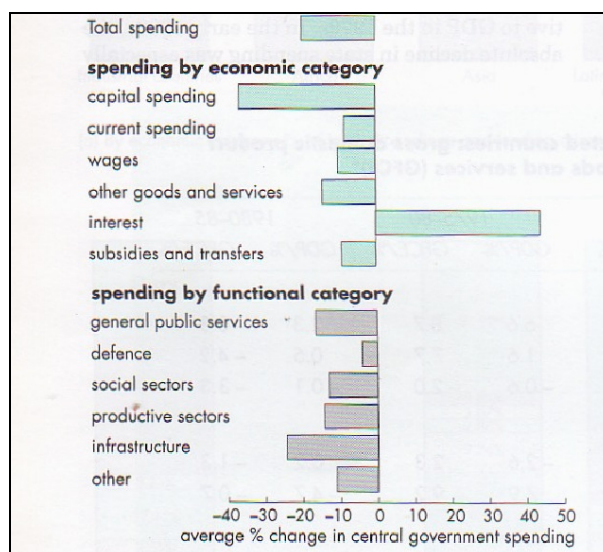
In the re-invigorated commitment and attention to the *micro-practice of participation in small scale, locally based projects*, the critical question for aid organisations and governments was how this newly prioritised ‘participation’ of the poor could be codified and institutionalised in order to guarantee appropriate implementation across a wide range of development projects (Chambers 1983; 1992; 1994, Jan 2002; World Bank 1996). No longer would the gap be accepted between the good intentions arising from ‘*the top*’ and the poor outcomes achieved at ‘*the bottom*’. The development experts thus set out to give detailed analysis and practical application to questions of power and empowerment such as who should participate, how, and in what activities of the ‘*project cycle*’, and how the most excluded locations and groups could be reached. Of course, as this was progressing, there continued apace a great many large scale engineering-based infrastructure initiatives throughout the developing world.

The net result of this effort, it was decided when progress was reviewed a decade later, was that the poor still had little real say, and that development was still fundamentally problematic in meeting its stated objectives. Thus there was mounting evidence that decades worth of interventions using the most advanced ‘*community development approaches and principles*’ of the time had been a resounding failure. The standard of living of billions of people continued to decline, with many now living in increasingly precarious situations. Many of the qualities of life that indigenous people had enjoyed prior to ‘development’ were still being undermined or destroyed, and their collective environmental resources were brutally and unsustainably plundered, thus, to some “[i]t comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests” (Escobar 1997, p91). This predicament became, for a short time, part of the discourse of Southern governments when they united for a brief act of resistance in the 1970s, by demanding that the ‘UN Program of Action’ create the ‘Establishment of a New International Economic Order’ (NIEO) (Hudson 2005). However this was cut short as the final, putatively well-intended act of development was about to unfold.

The 1990's and the contemporary context

The economic rationalist paradigm that swept the Western world, as discussed in earlier sections of this thesis, was about to become the 'new' development paradigm for the Majority World – a period described as, "... *the final instalment to the Darwinian saga*" (De Rivero 2001, p89). According to the ideology of the globalised 'free' market, those countries conforming to the newly created category of 'Highly Indebted Poor Countries' (HIPCs) would need strict discipline and restraint if they were to have any hope of addressing their by-now desperate circumstances. This time, previous failures were attributed to profligacy, corruption and government economic mismanagement. In order to become eligible for ongoing aid from the West – which they could do without – they must agree to strict fiscal discipline in the form of 'Structural Adjustment Programs' (SAPs). This in turn could only be achieved by National Governments through the dual strategies of making drastic reductions in public spending while simultaneously removing any protections offered by tariff and trade 'barriers'. In effect the population was further exposed to the global market, while the few vital public services in health, education, government and law disappeared (George 1988; Nanda et. al. 1993; Potter & IMF 2000), as shown by the following table:

Figure 7: Falling real government spending by economic category in indebted countries, early 1980s



(Wuyts, et. al. 1992, p78)

The empirical evidence as to the scale of the *current predicament* is sobering. Given the more than fifty years of Northern, economically-inspired efforts to 'develop' the Majority world, UN figures show that 70 countries were on average poorer in 1997 than they were in 1980 (Theobald 1997, p12), resulting in two-thirds of the world's population, or 4 billion people, living on less than \$2 per day (Hartmann 2002, p148). Estimates are that, between 1982 and 1990, debtor countries of the South remitted to their creditors US\$6.5 billion dollars per month in interest payments alone, which

accounted for total resource flows to the North of over \$927 billion (George 1997, p209). This escalating crisis meant that, by 1980, total debt stood at \$1 trillion – or approximately one-third of GDP in developing countries – thus requiring them in 1998 to repay \$13 for every \$1 that they received in grants (Hartmann 2002, p149).

By contrast, it is sobering to get a perspective on the economic outcomes for the North. Over the two hundred year period since the time of the industrial revolution, there has been a steady change in the fortunes of the ratio of wealth between the richest and poorest nations worldwide: from 1 to 3 in 1820, 1 to 35 in 1950, and 1 to 72 in 1992 (Hartmann 2002, p205). The richest 20 percent of countries have recently increased their share of global wealth from 75 percent to 80 percent – while the poorest 20 percent of countries have decreased their share from 2.3 percent to 1.4 percent (Theobald 1997, p12). From the perspective of environmental inequality and destruction, the ‘core countries’ use 70% of the world’s energy, 75% of metals, 85% of wood, and 60% of its food (Hoogvelt 1997, p87 quoting UNDP Human Development Report 1992). Further, a child born in the United States now produces 280 times the burden on the environment than a child born in Nepal (De Rivero 2001, p97) – leading many like Susan George to conclude,

If the goals of official debt managers were to squeeze the debtors dry, to transfer enormous resources from South to North, and to wage undeclared war on the poor continents and their people, then their policies have been an unqualified success. (George in Rahnama & Bawtree 1997, p207)

Popular movements

One form of resistance not discussed so far, yet critical to this analysis, is the rise of ‘popular movements’. These are not part of the development complex as precipitated from outside, but arise as a response to the pressing needs and interests of people who have become most marginalised through the failure of mainstream development. There are many thousands of these operating outside the realm of government or NGOs, in many countries around the world, involving millions of people. They are pluralistic, highly diverse and difficult to categorise - often distancing themselves from mainstream institutions and traditional political frameworks of either the left or right - operating on issues ranging across women's, ecology, peasant, rural, working-class, urban marginalised, informal sector, squatter, church, student, youth, popular culture, ethnic, peace and indigenous issues (Broham 1996, p259). Their modus operandi is to subvert and reinterpret the meanings attributed to them in the development discourse in order to discover and express *their own* subjective identities. They are commonly based on decentralized, fluid coalitions, “*the aim of such movements is not power per se, and especially not state power, but the establishment of conditions ...which would allow people to gain greater control over decisions affecting their lives*” (ibid. p261). Many commentators advocate these types of movements as the only hope for a genuinely participatory people’s development (Ekins 1992; Naples & Desai 2002).

Repercussions and the Northern predicament

Following this global analysis, the hermeneutic circle now returns to where we commenced: the predicament of people and communities in the 'North', such as Australia. The 'newly' integrating global-economic system not only delivers flows of resources from the South to the North. It also helps to frame the current quandary as an inevitable consequence of the structures and institutions of a trans-national world system that is based on a deep logic of a capitalist mode of production (Wallerstein 1991). According to Hoogvelt "[t]he world economic crisis which began in the 1970s has led, not just to a restructuring of the world economy, but to a major transformation of the way in which production and distribution is organised. There is a new political economy in the making" (1997, pXii). One aspect of this new political economy is 'time space compression', which means that trans-national-corporations – which now account for two-thirds of world trade (Hartmann 2002, p204) - are increasingly free to move capital anywhere in search of profits, regardless of location and distance. This corporate enterprise is supported by vast, deregulated, speculative 'world financial markets' that have the capacity to cripple an economy in an instant "...the vastness of the transnational financial superbowl in which the national economies of the world are drowning....[is] not related to economic fundamentals" (Hoogvelt p74).

This free flowing capital acts internationally as much as it does within nations, thus Third World workers are pitched against First World workers, and, within wealthy countries, the 'middle' against the 'bottom'. In this context, national governments are increasingly required to regulate *for* globalisation, or for "...transmitting the global market to the domestic economy" (Hoogvelt 134), through policies of low inflation, sound finance, reduced public sector spending, deregulation, and ensuring a supportive business climate. At an international level this is represented by agreements like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the North American Free Trade Agreement whose tribunals regularly use the capacity to overthrow national laws in favour of 'free' trade (Anderson et. al. 2005; Barnet & Cavanagh 1994).

Many commentators describe how this system inevitably leads to the relatively new phenomenon we are observing in the North of poverty becoming geographically specific – a situation that is mirrored in the South with the creation of small pockets of elites. According to De Rivero we are in the process of creating

...a string of planetary ghettos...The inhabitants of Beverly Hills and the rich neighbourhoods of Mexico City, Lima, Johannesburg or Bombay, despite the continental distances between them, live in very similar conditions...[while f]rom Los Angeles to Vladivostok and from Rio to Manila, the poor, unemployed majorities with no prospect of increasing their income, live next door to small elites in their walled-in properties,

patrolled by private police forces, consuming all sorts of exquisite global goods. (De Rivero 2001, p88)

This overwhelming power of the market leads Bollier and other critics to conclude that industrialisation was not an event, but is rather an ongoing process that continues to gain in intensity “*t]he truth is, we are living in the midst of a massive business-led enclosure movement that hides itself in plain sight*” (Bollier 2002, p66). Others comment on how this intrusion into every aspect of our lives has the effect of gradually distorting our tastes, values, relationships, epistemology, ontology, and – to return to the focus of this thesis – community. It is worth quoting at length Blackwell and Seabrook’s articulation of this dilemma,

Perhaps we can already discern the outline of the next phase of the industrial reworking or our humanity. Here, the single individual, that icon of all our strivings, finally stands alone, denuded, robbed of all permanent bonds and connectedness to others, isolated in the mighty presence of a single global system. Freed from all constraints of kinship, liberated from even a memory of rootedness, the individual must now buy in all he or she requires. Is this the ultimate one-to-one relationship that we are all looking for? Is the consummation of our humanity to be found in a marriage to a system that alone can provide us with affection, food, sex, consolation, entertainment, distraction, company, culture, friendship, escape, a sense of worth and self-esteem? What we may be sure of is that the market, sensitive, responsive and resourceful, will find its own answer once more to the losses it has created, to the mutilations it has inflicted upon us. (1993, p29-30)

Concluding thoughts

All the above fragments of facts and figures have been only used in this chapter to illustrate the overall fate – since several centuries – of ‘*community*’ within the broad sweep of ‘*development*’ varyingly referred to as ‘progress’, ‘modernisation’, ‘industrialisation’, or any other chosen focus of attention deemed to be a central facet of what ‘backward’ countries would have to do in order to ‘catch up’ with ‘us’.

The historical trajectories I have – very selectively - drawn now provide a more comprehensive – quasi empirical - understanding of the narratives of *community* and *development*. This journey has now taken me far from where I began: constructing *community development* as a principally linear, technical/methodical and largely benevolent intervention that generates economic improvements for a ‘*left behind*’ community (as it is, indeed, portrayed in much of the practice and policy literature). Instead, I have started to detect historically recurring and overarching political-economic structures and processes in which ‘*community*’ can be seen to be virtually counter-posed to ‘*development*’. These challenges have shown to have been equally relevant for the ‘First World’ as they were and are for the ‘Third World’.

If each of the problems merely evoked in this chapter are considered to be separate and unconnected, addressing – let alone solving - all of them can easily appear like an impossible task. When they are viewed systemically, however, the potential for more adequate interventions expands enormously whilst not necessarily becoming easier. A systemic analysis reveals that the many disparate symptoms of breakdown stem from the same root cause: a massive and semi-centralised, controlled and corporatised system of production and distribution and *“[a]s more and more areas of life are colonized, it is becoming increasingly clear that this process really benefits no one, not even the populations of the North”* (Norberg-Hodge in Bennholdt-Thomsen 2001,` p178).

In the Second Part of this chapter, I will now - again in a necessarily summarised form – distil some of the major tenets of the various debates and controversies which have been ‘raging’ with various degrees of fervour and at various times in the diverse histories of community development.

PART TWO: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: METHODOLOGICAL DEBATES AND THEMES

Introduction

One of the challenges of dealing with the concepts and issues raised thus far in this thesis is how to deal systematically with potentially many and varied threads of literature that inform the theory and practice of community development. I categorise the literature on three overlapping levels. First is the more abstract political-philosophical material that explores the role of the state, the rights of citizens and democratic participation. This includes political-economy works and the social sciences, sociology, anthropology and social psychology – as well as literature covering organisational-administrative process and power structure. Secondly, there are contributions which are rather pitched at a policy level, more or less embedded in theoretical assessments of the welfare state as it relates to any of the above mentioned clusters of literature. Finally, there is the literature addressing the professional-operational aspects of community development itself, more or less ‘methodical’, more or less theoretically saturated and grounded and covering an astonishing array of work, especially if one includes international contributions.

In this thesis, I am – obviously - only able to cover a small proportion of these. Because I focus on a case study of practice, my approach is to centre attention principally on the professional-operational literature on community development which, by definition, borrows from and intersects with many areas mentioned above. In particular, I am interested in investigating and explicating how community development has been conceived of in various reductionist and *dichotomous* ways. My approach is thus to engage with a selection of the many and varied debates and themes raised across the literatures, and attempt an integration of the various arguments by interpreting them into a somewhat holistic, dynamic conceptual framework, based on a tentative theory of action that draws from a dialectical understanding of the structure – agency relationship.

The Professional-Operational Literature

A body of literature on community development has arisen in response to demands from a growing list of professions, governments and organisations concerned about community practice, policy, theory and philosophy is extensive. Throughout the fifty-or-so year history of this discourse in Australia – informed as it also was by international contributions principally from the UK and the US - various stakeholders have defined, challenged, advocated, applied and defended aspects of community development, leading to unresolved contradictions, *and* a richer insight into its principles, tensions and

contradictions. As with any cultural movement, the influences are complex - my intention is not to undertake a comprehensive review but to engage with some of the main themes and debates in order to better comprehend and analyse the detail from the case study which is a central subject of this thesis.

The revolutionary claims of community development

Much of the early and current practice literature claims that community development, unlike other forms of social intervention that merely address superficial symptoms, has a unique and revolutionary potential: it seeks and finds the 'root causes' of problems, in order to achieve *fundamental social change*. The belief of advocates and writers is that the approach is capable of achieving significant and permanent change in society, leading towards equality and social justice (Hope, Timmell & Hidzi 1984). According to Kramer and Specht,

Community organization refers to various methods of intervention whereby a professional change agent helps a community...to engage in planned collective action in order to deal with social problems...It is concerned with programs aimed at social change...(1969 p8)

The New Zealand practitioner and author Wendy Craig attempts to operationalise this concept

... my community work is directed at working towards equality in society. My aims are to bring about a change in society, so that these people without, the 'have-nots', are given equal access to social, political and economic resources. The 'haves' are not likely to be willing to give up resources, and to achieve any redistribution will ultimately require structural changes in society. (1983 p5)

Expressing similarly utopian sentiments, another widely read Australian writer compared the goals of community development to the revolutionary change that was achieved by icons such as Christ, Buddha and Ghandi: "[t]he community movement has the same potential to bring about social change through community development – to have an impact of similar magnitude to these figures and social movements from the past." (McArdle 1989, p48). Many of the historical examples I have discussed above, from the TVA to the AAP, reflected – at least - an expectation for such fundamental social change.

Typologies of community development

Henderson's Rational Model

The primary concern for practitioners and policy experts has been to have *practice* and *conceptual* frameworks which serve to guide their interventions. This has led to the description of progressively

more complex typologies. As I discussed in the introductory chapter, *Henderson's Rational Model* was presented during my studies in the 1980s as *the* model of community development, as follows:

1. Get to know the area, make contact.
2. Form groups, identify needs and priorities.
3. Sustain and develop the group.
4. Exit strategy (Henderson 1980).

The presence of this conceptual model reveals itself as a more or less explicit assumption in many of the historical examples discussed above, both in the First World and the Third World, and continues to be widely held and promoted today; for example, a recent Australian textbook advocates the 'steps' of: finding a common cause, gaining cooperation, consciousness raising, providing help, transferring power and evaluation, saying that "[t]he community group worker's role is similar to being a successful coach in a netball, Australian Rules or Rugby team" (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts 1998, p277).

Rothman's models

One of the earliest attempts to create a conceptual order that reflected emergent yet diverse approaches to community development occurred in the late 1960s. Rothman – whose three models have been modified regularly in the recurring editions of "Strategies of Community Organisation" (Cox et. al. 1970, 1974, 1979, 1987) and whose work has been most influential - has helped to point out that there are distinctly different but overlapping strategies for achieving ends which may also be diverse in their specific political contexts, but which share certain features along continua and according to a series of criteria. He noticed that there were three different politically and institutionally loaded definitions of 'community development' with consequent interpretations of the target, the problem, the strategy and the outcome. His seminal model categorised the various uses into three approaches or models:

- The *locality development model*, focusing on popular involvement, democratic procedures, local leadership and transformative education. The target population or 'participants' are people living in a shared geographical area.
- The *social planning model* focusing on the *instruments of social administration* as the locus for change, which it is believed can be improved through some kind of adjustment, innovation or re-balancing. Many of the examples of community development discussed above involve changes of policy or structure in government administration with the intention that this will positively impact on community – Britain's Social Exclusion Unit

and the related policies of 'joined-up' government being high-profile contemporary examples.

- A third mode is *social action* which has as its main focus the organisation of a disadvantaged segment of the population in order to express demands on the larger society. Such a group may be geographically based, but collaborators may have some other common interest that binds them together such as class, gender or ethnicity. This model focuses on organising for 'action', strategically challenging and confronting power. The goal is less likely to aspire for small concessions from those in power to make people feel better, and more likely to favour the attainment of legal rights or economic resources. Various such movements have been seen from marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, women, workers and civil rights activists, and recently spectacularly demonstrated at a global level through the World Social Forum (Fisher & Ponniah 2003; Teivainen 2002).

To some degree, Rothman's three models are incommensurable – involving different professions, skills, knowledge and practices. Contradictorily, the three approaches are also dialectically related; for example, social activists may have to first be nurtured, educated and organised in their local area before they decide they want to challenge authorities – the result of which may be bureaucratic or organisational change. Similarly a change in policy towards the development of a community-managed child care centre, may in turn create a meeting place which coincidentally enables people to learn to organise.

Alinsky and the social action approach

Saul Alinsky was highly influential in conceptions of and approaches to community development (1969, 1971); his books were best sellers around the world for many years and became compulsory reading for many students and practitioners of community development, especially for those who saw community development as a prime instance of 'radical intervention' and especially during the late sixties and seventies. Alinsky was a lawyer who, based on experience of labour activism and social movements, developed campaigns and methods to win concessions out of powerful opponents. His philosophy clearly divided the world into the 'haves' and 'have-nots', the former never willingly giving away their power, making it the task of the community organiser to 'raise consciousness' amongst the oppressed and 'organise them' to fight for their rights – most often through confrontation and direct social action. Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* (1971), are regarded by some as the 'bible' of opposition politics and they have been widely used in protest and social movements ever since – to give an example:

Rule 3. Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the target. Look for ways to increase insecurity, anxiety, and uncertainty.

Rule 5. Ridicule, especially against organizational leaders, is a potent weapon. There's no defense. It's irrational. It's infuriating. It also works as a key pressure point to force concessions.

Rule 8. Keep the pressure on. Never let up. Keep trying new tactics to keep the opposition off balance. As the target masters one approach, hit them with something new.

Rule 12. Pick the target. Target an individual, personalize the attack, polarize and demoralize his/her supporters. Go after people, not institutions. Hurting, harassing, and humiliating individuals, especially leaders, causes more rapid organizational change. (Alinsky 1971, p126-130)

Thorpe's 'Community Work and Ideology'

By the 1980s, in a politicised interpretation of Rothman's model, Australian writers were making more nuanced connections between different approaches to community development and the various social theories that might inform these views – thus making a more explicit link to often-assumed ideologies. The model by Thorpe (see following) links community work to the social theories of structuralism, pluralism /symbolic interaction, and consensus.

Figure 8: Community work and ideology-as-political'sim'

<i>Ideology as political 'ism'</i>	STRUCTURALIST		<i>anarchist / liberationist</i>	PLURALIST	CONSENSUS	
	<i>feminist / socialist</i>	<i>Marxist</i>		<i>social democrat</i>	<i>liberal</i>	<i>conservative</i>
Nature of problems	Sex and class based oppression and inequalities entrenched in society	Class based inequalities entrenched in the economic, political and social structure of society	Oppression entrenched in all societal institutions	Inequalities in power and resources distribution leading to the disadvantage of groups of people	Inadequate, inappropriate, uncoordinated services and lack of cohesion and community spirit	Lack of cohesion and community spirit
Community work approaches	Consciousness raising	Consciousness raising	Consciousness raising	Advocacy social planning	Social planning	Community development
	CD linked with community action and class politics	CD linked with class politics	Liberationist self-help alternatives	Community action	Service development	Self-help
				Pressure groups	Community organisation	
				Participation	Community development	
				Consultation	Community development	
			Negotiation and bargaining	Information and advice		
			Welfare rights and advocacy	Participation Self-help		

(Thorpe 1985, p16)

According to this analysis, within the claimed '*structuralist*' paradigms of Marxism, Feminism and Anarchism, community work seeks to achieve *fundamental, structural change* through consciousness raising of oppressed people, political activity and direct action, ostensibly conforming well to

Alinsky's approach. The '*pluralist*' paradigm, by contrast, is seen to regard societal structure and process as basically fair, while some groups still missing out on their share as they either fail to make their needs known, or as institutions fail to hear / respond to these needs. In this case the goal of community work is to ameliorate this form of disadvantage by adjusting the existing system. Typical strategies include advocacy, welfare rights, participation and consultation. The third paradigm, '*consensus*', is based on conservative / liberal ideology, positing that most of the necessary societal measures are in place to eradicate disadvantage, but that these sometimes unintentionally fall short of their benevolent goals due to uncoordinated or inefficient services, or conversely because of deficits in the client population, who may be occasionally lazy, unmotivated, unskilled, or lacking in community spirit. Associated community work strategies, therefore, include social planning, motivating 'them' towards self help, service development, and participation by these people in activities so they may learn life / employment skills which help them overcome their deficits.

Many of the historical examples of *community-development-in-practice* discussed in Part One of this chapter can be related to these typologies, even if such 'allocation' would need more careful analysis than can be provided here. As well, many projects would probably become home to diverse if not contradictory intentions and tactics when carefully analysing the diverse opinions of their respective protagonists. The following section will start with an attempt to assess some of these paradoxes.

Debates and dichotomies

The intention of much of the writing in the practice literature is to arrive at a unique body of community development knowledge and discrete set of practice skills. This has proved problematic, however, given the various discourses often dissolving into seemingly irresolvable debates running along established philosophical, political or conceptual dichotomies – some of which I will engage with below.

The skill-philosophy dichotomy

This issue at stake in this debate centres on the question of whether community development is (primarily) a set of *values* or a number of *skills* that a practitioner should apply when 'doing' community development. The difficulty encountered by theoreticians when attempting to define skills is that the problems for and the contexts of 'action' are unpredictable, thus rendering the list of skills potentially endless and generic – that is, not unique to community development – and to include, for example, research, education, community studies, group work and use of the media (Henderson 1980; Rubin & Rubin 1992). For example, Burghardt's (1982) guide to community development practice lists as its chapters the following rather generic topics: *planning; knowing yourself; building and*

maintaining an organisation; planning and running meetings; maintaining daily routines; marches and demonstrations; coalition work; and fighting bias inside the organisation.

The skills approach has been criticised by many on the grounds that ‘cook-books’ lead to instrumental forms of practice, where practitioners simply apply pre-formed techniques, instead of approaching problems with an open mind and a values-based philosophical framework based on respect, promoting autonomy, commitment to the poor, cooperation, collective processes, and power sharing (Chamberlain, 1998; McArdle 1993) – values which, incidentally, are common to most if not all areas of human services, from psychology to social work.

The personal – structural change dichotomy

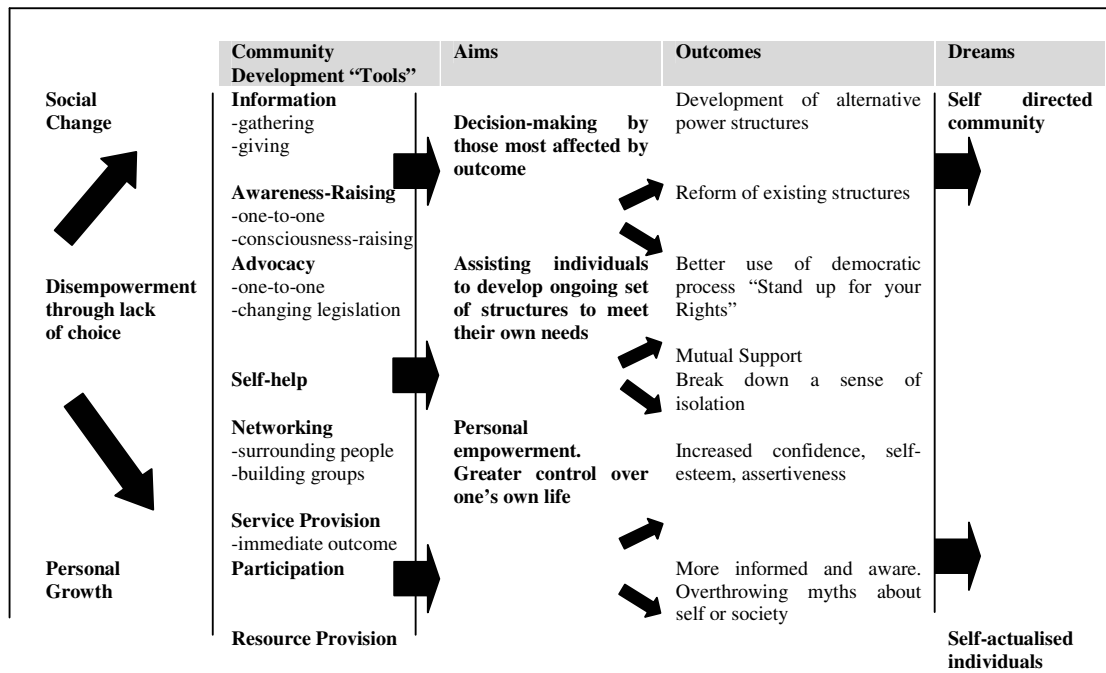
Another difficulty encountered in attempts to define community development is the apparent dichotomy between personal change and political change. Many protagonists who argued for *structural* change as the primary purpose of community development felt that change efforts aimed at the personal level (for example, of the poor and disadvantaged) were mistaken and ill-informed – and ultimately oppressive – because they diverted attention from structural causes;

The effect of such ‘community’ activity is to direct attention away from a specific consideration of the political nature of the society, thus avoiding the risk of recognition that the so-called urban, social or community problems in question are endemic to capitalism itself and that the redistribution of power and resources which feature in the rhetoric of such programs, could only be achieved through the building of a socialist society...[thus CD is] a panacea that supplants the need for revolution or even reform. (Bryson and Mowbray 1981, p257; see also Ryan 1976)

The opposing *personal change* position, however, is that people are only capable of working on political issues *after* their immediate needs are addressed; thus the role of a community worker is to first address the concrete, expressed needs of the people so that longer-term change may eventually happen. Such arguments often rest on psychological or social-psychological reasoning or belief, for example, on one version of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1954).

McArdle attempted to show that this dichotomy is unnecessary and inappropriate (1993), arguing that personal change and mutual support are intertwined, interdependent and legitimate aspects of development. For example some people may find a way in to activism through therapeutic programs; on the other hand, the catch-cry ‘*the personal is political*’ has helped many oppressed groups to stop blaming themselves and seek social explanations for the problems that appear to manifest as localise, day-to-day troubles (Friedan 1963; Oakley 1981). Community development, as argued by McArdle could no longer be dichotomised into personal development *or* social action, but as a more generic working principle, as graphically shown below:

Figure 9: McArdle's Resource Model



(McArdle 1993, p 63)

The assets or deficits dichotomy

Much of the community development discourse has historically centred on its *problem solving* capacity:

In this sense it entails a series of logically interlinked steps, which produce an intended outcome or achieve a desired goal – namely the prevention or amelioration of community problems. (Cox et. al. 1984, p7)

In a radical rebuff of this postulation, Kretzmann's best-selling book, "*Building Communities from the Inside Out*", (1983) virtually condemned the entire previous history of community development. He argued that virtually all processes and programs of community development inevitably start from an assumption of (initial) deficit, thus effectively contradicting the espoused premise in community development that the goal is to discover one's strength, to gain power and take responsibility for envisioning and realising a new future. For example, the decision to select an area for (community) 'development' is usually based on poor social indicators - such as incomes, health, unemployment and crime - and poor physical indicators - such as housing and infrastructure. Well-meaning outsiders then enter the field with the pre-determined idea that the community is lacking / is behind its neighbours, or has weaknesses – and that, consequently, success is dependent on fixing these problems. Kretzmann postulates that this deficit mentality is itself an obstacle to development:

The fact that the deficiency orientation represented by the needs map constitutes our only guide to lower income neighborhoods has devastating consequences for residents. We have already noted one of the most tragic --that is, residents themselves begin to accept that map as the only guide to the reality of their lives. They think of themselves and their neighbors as fundamentally deficient, victims incapable of taking charge of their lives and of their community's future. But other consequences flow as well from the power of the needs map. (Kretzmann, 1993, p1)

The profession that is perceived to be most deeply implicated in this paradigm is social work and, more broadly, the 'welfare industry'. There are many claims that human services work(ers) are an anathema to community development (Warren 1998). The core of many contemporary sociological critiques of social work and community development (Kenny 1999) is that the combination of this deficit mentality – often unconscious - combined with the rhetoric of benevolence makes it virtually impossible for poor communities to resist this benign imposition; consequently, well-meaning programs will inexorably undermine their stated goals of autonomy and self determination. Kretzmann formulates an alternative community development approach that focuses on identifying, 'leveraging' and building on assets of individuals, associations and institutions: "...the historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort" (1993 p5).

This rhetoric of *strengthening* and *assets* is now virtually *de rigueur* in almost any government policies or discussions on community. Unfortunately it is often also used as another justification for a withdrawal of 'help' or, even more punitively, as blaming the victim for renegeing on the tasks inherent in the '*mutual obligation*' between individuals and their society. This discourse on strengths and mutual obligation is closely associated with the current lack of attention to a more comprehensive system critique: that societal resources are mal-distributed (and increasingly so) and that unless the poor and disadvantaged get their fair share, nothing much will change and the real 'victims' of that mal-distribution will continue to be blamed for this / their situation.

The local versus regional / national dichotomy

A battle has 'raged' between theorists who argue that the *local* is necessarily a site for change (or Rothman's '*locality development*' model), and other who argue that this is a distraction from the necessarily structural / regional / national focus of social change. The arguments – conceptual, philosophical and practical – on both sides are multiple, complex and persuasive; and have recently been given renewed emphasis through the catch-cry to 'Think Global, Act Local', alongside the political notion of 'Glocalisation' (Cox 1997; Sayer, Campbell & Campbell 2003).

On the anti-localist side critics argue that, as we face the inevitability of competition for limited resources, material or employment improvements for one 'community' inevitably occur at the expense of a neighbouring city or town: in effect the burden of development simply shifts from one area to another in a 'race to the bottom'. The idea of localism also strikes definitional obstacles as, in a modern urban environment, there are no distinct boundaries around any individual geographic areas (Schuler & Day 2004). In metropolitan 'dormitory suburbs', for example, people are not dependent on their neighbours, on their land for food, or even on local industry for employment. Resources flow into and out of areas through complex, interconnected and *de-territorialised* processes, such as through trans-national corporations. This time-space compression, as discussed above, also forces people to change jobs regularly or to travel large distances to work, and to develop networks of leisure and association that may spread across large distances – or is increasingly disembodied through 'virtual' digital environments that span the globe (Ebo & Ebo 2000). As was shown in the above historical review, the primary factors impinging on communities are increasingly the result of macro-economic policy decisions made at the political, national or international levels – by people whose interests are antithetical to local consequences. The Australian academic Martin Mowbray argued that focussing on local issues distracts people from the necessary task class struggle:

My broad theoretical position is that localist practice, in the form of organised, democratic, participatory processes, commonly services the needs of capital. It contributes to some of the functions in society which...help form the conditions under which capital may be accumulated and inequalities maintained. (Mowbray 1985, p42)

Contrary to this argument, and according to a more *intersubjective* world view, the importance of territory, the local, and land became much more apparent. The local is no longer interpreted as a site of deprivation or 'treatment', but as the only possible embodiment of *human-scale* that is vital to people's ability to interact with each other and thus reassert some control over their world. For example, social and spatial structures combine at the local level thereby enabling people to trade, produce, access land, use labour, and undertake a range of productive activities not usually associated with the economy (such as caring for relatives, housework, raising children). Only in the context of intricate social networks can we construct relations of meaning or an ethic of care, or indeed contest relations of dominance and subordination. The local is where identity and collective consciousness are formed, and where we can experiment with institutions where we might relearn the art of self rule "*[t]erritoriality is one of the most important sources of human bonding: it creates a common wheel, linking their present to the past as a fund of common memories (history) and to the future as common destiny*" (Friedmann in Broham 1996, p262. See also Dewey 1916; Mill & Spitz 1975; Tocqueville, Commager & Reeve 1946).

From the perspective of the local we are also able to gain a much deeper appreciation of the importance of intersubjectivity and culture – thus, for the purposes of this thesis, moving closer to an operational definition of community. Community is thus not a permanent / concrete object; rather it is

constructed and reproduced each day as people negotiate meanings of objects and relationships, not existing as a fact or reality beyond their intersubjective constructions,

Even apparently simple 'economic' resources within the same 'locality' such as an urban park or an abandoned building, are subject to diverse readings by different groups in different material circumstances: a source of recreation and of danger, an opportunity for reinvestment, or effort to neighbouring properties. Each of these examples demonstrates how 'economic' resources are culturally encoded, the significance depending on such subjective appraisals as much as on any intrinsic material value. (Jackson in Broham 1996, p262).

Once a notion of intersubjectivity is valued, all kinds of development alternatives become possible. I can more confidently advocate for enabling people, in context, to explore, express and negotiate their subjectivities. Local people are increasingly seen as those with most insights into their milieu, and therefore in the best position to reinterpret this, and find appropriate solutions to their own development problems. The role of 'outside' organisers in such contexts is to act with humility, respect, restraint, and an interest in learning (Broham 1996, p269). Community organisers are challenged to 'drill down' with participants, into deeper and deeper levels of understanding, and there is less expectation of finding a fixed truth – a process which itself can be potentially enriching. From the perspective of environmental sustainability, the local provides an appreciation of the role that traditional knowledge plays in framing our relationship with our environment and each other.

The Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft dichotomy

Much effort has been expended on the problem of defining 'community' (Cox et al 1977; Dalton & Dalton 1975), including to the present day (Schofield 2002). A seminal analysis developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s was that of Tönnies, who argued that there are two distinctly different ideal-typical ways in which people associate, along a continuum based on several criteria (Tönnies & Loomis 1963). One type was *Gemeinschaft*, or small-scale, face-to-face, relationship-based interaction that involved trust, interdependence, reciprocity, shared values and shared obligations. This was believed to be the interaction that occurred in rural towns and working-class communities – and has remained for many, however implicitly, the goal of community development. Tönnies postulated an 'opposite' type of communication and association, *Gesellschaft*, which materialised in large, modern, industrial metropolises where interaction was anonymous, superficial, role-based, and legal / contractual. *Gesellschaft* led to alienation, loneliness and dis-integration, whereas *Gemeinschaft* led to health, wellbeing, a sense of place and spiritual integration. Thus the objective for those applying this analysis to Community Development was to mitigate against the former conditions by creating trusting, interdependent relationships where people could survive and flourish.

These concerns about the kind of society we wanted and the demise of community – given the tumultuous changes like the mass migrations of the industrial revolution - were central to the foundational questions of sociology and many other social sciences including (social) psychology. The thinking of early sociologists like Weber, Durkheim and Tonnies ‘set the foundation’ for subsequent ‘theory and practice’.

However after decades of assuming the *Gemeinschaft* - *Gesellschaft* dichotomy to be self-evident, empirical studies began to show that interactions between people were more complex than either model suggested (Bulmer 1987). While some urban environments were shown to have high levels of *Gemeinschaft*, other rural communities proved to be conservative, repressive, intolerant and highly stratified along divides of class, gender and ethnicity (Harvey 1989 in Mayo 1994). The factors that ‘structured’ relationships, it seemed, were much more complicated, interconnected and mutually associated than simply “causal” and linear. This unleashed a critique from within of oversimplified and naïve community development programs, including in Australia by Bryson and Mowbray

...[they] seem to ignore the basic processes within capitalist society which make it inevitable that communal aims will not be achieved. To try to graft back on to today’s social organisation, a feature from pre-capitalist times, can be taken as a reflection of a remarkable capacity to allow nostalgia to override systematic analysis...(1981, p260).

Given that the *experience* of ‘community’ has become so diffuse in many parts of the West – if existing at all – its definitions became increasingly ‘*abstract*,’ consequently leading to numerous attempts by sociologists and others to arrive at more analytically accurate understandings. A 1950s review of how the term ‘community’ was being used in the professional literature led to no less than 94 different definitions (Hillery 1955, p120), leading Williams (1976, p65) to conclude that the only possible consensus was that it was a ‘*warmly persuasive*’ word, “...*it is one of those motherhood words which, like democracy, welfare and participation tends to be accepted as indubitably a good thing*” (Bryson & Mowbray 1981, p 256). More recently Mayo concluded

...community has been used ambiguously; it has been contested, fought over, and appropriated for different uses and interests to justify different politics, policies and practices.... There is a case to answer as to whether ‘community’ should continue to be used at all (1994, p48).

On the other hand, for those people(s) – especially in the Majority World – who still *do* have the experience of community as a living entity and who are not so fully consumed by individualist-atomistic lifestyles and lifeworlds as those of us in the West, this may be yet another instance of pure Western intellectualist arrogance and of an epistemology gone un-critical...

The service delivery – social action dichotomy

The primary conduit through which community development is ‘*delivered*’ are human-service workers – to use the current revealing discourse. Therefore, for better or for worse, the outcomes and processes of community development are deeply affected by the cultures, training, ideologies, skills, institutions, politics and positionings of the welfare sector - therefore this context deserves some further consideration. Human services workers are unique in their location at the interface between, on the one hand, those people who are poor, excluded, marginalised, feared, or worried about; and on the other hand the powerful, resourced, legitimated, hierarchical and dominant social systems. Training in these professions has been sometimes more and at other times less successful at acknowledging: “[*t*]hese developments [*in CD training*] have been especially rapid in social work, a profession that bases its mandate on competence to deal with the problems of dependency, deviance, and disenfranchisement” (Ecklen & Laufer 1972, p1). In the ‘First World’, most community development programs are funded through existing welfare organisations that normally provide a range of welfare services, and thus more support-therapeutic-individualised intentions. Those who staff these services are overwhelmingly middle class professionals whose own interests and “*values-in-practice*” (Schön 1983) are often – at least implicitly - in conflict with those of poor people they serve. In the same vein, government-funded welfare programs have a history of acting as an arm of government, pacifying the poor and engendering – or demanding - compliance with unjust and oppressive living conditions (Corrigan & Leonard 1978; Fabricant, Berhnardt & Bornstein 1992; Halmos 1965). These conundrums have led to frequent claims that community development and welfare/social work service delivery are mutually incompatible – forcing a dichotomy between *either* social change *or* social control – for fear the latter will surreptitiously co-opt radical community work into social planning and consensus or submission (Dominelli 2002; Kenny 1999; Thorpe & Petruchenia 1985). Many of the above historical examples illustrate the ambiguous position of social workers, such as in the Settlement Movement, the Rural Extension Program and the TVA, but equally various programs historically implemented in Australia.

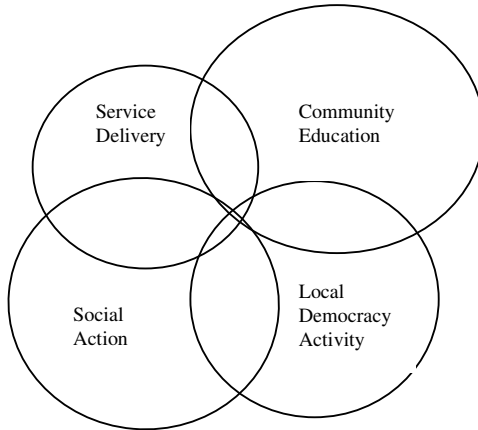
In 1992, Jan Pentland – a financial counsellor and consumer advocate – attempted a reintegration of this dichotomy, arguing that community development must necessarily be re-conceptualised as a dynamic integration of social action, service delivery and community education. According to her analysis, working in community development involved keeping direct contact with the poor, educating the mainstream community about the realities of structural oppression and taking direct action to achieve institutional / structural change. She proposed that welfare services can be reconceptualised as overlapping circles, with each taking a proportionately larger or smaller emphasis – however, in order to be effective at community development *all three* must be present:

...I believe that my own raised awareness of the issues and the underlying structural inequalities, from the primarily service delivery phase of my work, led into community

education, consciousness raising in the broader community, and then into action for change. It seems to me that this is often a logical and natural process for thoughtful workers and projects... (Pentland 1992, p34)

Pentland's model is illustrated as follows – to which was later added the suggestion of a fourth circle of 'local democracy activity' (Ward 1992, p4) as follows:

Figure 10: Pentland's Model from Practice



Bottom up - top down, insider – outsider, participant-consumer, and other dichotomies.

As discussed in some detail above, the wide-scale government sponsored community development of the 1960s and 1970s arose largely because of an increased awareness of the failures of core aspects of social organisation in society – poverty, racism, militarism, pollution, family breakdown, the environment, and health – which were occurring despite a number of interrelated social changes that were expected to point to a modernist utopia, including an exponential increase in the resources and power of the state, advances in the sciences and technology, a rise of the so-called new professions, and a vastly increased ability to produce wealth (Esping-Andersen 1996; Hobsbawm 1995; Rein, Esping-Anderson & Rainwater 1987).

In parallel with the critiques that were unfolding at about the same time in Third World development (but in a different social and economic context) blame for the failed attempts at amelioration were attributed the institutions and micro-practices of state welfare: for example staffing by 'outsiders' from 'the top,' who were self interested, overly intellectual and unable to grasp local perspectives. The bureaucracies where these professionals worked were blamed for being hierarchical behemoths that devised one-size-fits-all interventions which were incapable of responding to local needs in flexible and compassionate ways. Thus these outside, top-down interventions were not only inefficient, but they created worsening social conditions, as well as alienation, dependency and powerlessness (London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980).

As in the South, community development appeared to offer by-now familiar ‘radical practice’: small bureaucracy; participation by those at ‘the bottom’; reversing hierarchies of power; unleashing human capital; active, skilled, autonomous and self-directed ‘subjects’; and solidarity (to name a few!). McArdle defined empowerment as “[t]he process whereby decisions are made by the people who have to wear the consequences of those decisions.” (1989, p47; see also Hope & Timmel 1984), leading Cleaver to conclude that:

Heroic claims are made for participatory approaches to development. Participation of community members is assumed to contribute to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of investment and to promote processes of democratization and empowerment. The conundrum of ensuring the sustainability of development interventions is assumed to be solvable by the proper involvement of beneficiaries in the supply and management of resources, services and facilities. (Cleaver 2001, p36)

Empowering relationships and praxis - Freire as a role model

A more recent counterpoint to the adversarial, divisive, win-lose approach advocated by Alinsky and other ‘radicals’ is a paradigm that looks more holistically at the indivisibility, or *inter-being*, of the ‘inner world’ of the ‘self’ and the so called ‘outer world’ of the predicament we seek to change - as illustrated by the pop-saying ‘There is no road to peace, peace is the road’. With this in mind many change advocates have attempted to facilitate dialogue between groups previously perceived to be antagonistic towards each other (Shields 1991; Bohm & Edwards 1991; Theobald 1997) “*transforming not only the relationships between people, but even more, the very nature of consciousness in which these relationships arise*” (Bohm & Factor 1985, p175).

The core principle of community development, they claim, is to create parallel relationships within problems of systemic power and influence. The work of Paulo Freire was deeply influential from the 1970s to the 1980s, and continues to provide an important guide to how we might manage this process of simultaneously developing more reciprocal relationships, gaining an understanding of our predicament, and forming coalitions that serve to guide change in anti-oppressive directions (1972; 1973; Freire & Shor 1987). Freire provides a rare account of the micro processes of working with people for liberatory change, in which his ‘*pedagogy of the oppressed*’ proposes a ‘*praxis*’ for human relationships that aim to develop a critical awareness of the ‘root causes’ of problems. Freire advocated for social change through education, theorising that learning is a political act. While acknowledging the reality that the classroom is structurally biased towards being formal, expert-led, superficial and thus ‘domesticating’, Freire sought to enable an education through which people could raise their consciousness by “*reading the world, not reading the word*” (Freire & Macedo 1987). The major emphasis of Freire’s pedagogy was on the quality and authenticity of the relationship between

educator and ‘students’: he suggested that they should be recognised as thinking, creative, active and responsible members of society,

Some of the dominant class join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. Theirs is a fundamental role and has been so throughout the history of the struggle. However as they move to the side of the exploited they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin. Their prejudices include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability to think, to want, and to know. So they run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as harmful as that of the oppressors. Though they truly desire to transform the unjust order, they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation.

They talk about the people but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favour, without that trust. (1972, p36) (See also Freire 1985, hooks 1994; Mayo 2004; McLaren 1995; Rosatto 2005)

Freire was at pains to avoid formulas, therefore his mode of working is not easily categorised, however it is worth making a brief attempt to do so here. In a close parallel to Participatory Action Research discussed earlier in this thesis, he advocated a “dialogic praxis” to include the following elements: the ‘animator’ spending time to get to know the co-investigators’ language and concerns; collaboratively identifying a ‘generative theme’ or ‘problem’ they cared deeply about; and facilitating the ‘students’ to actively work as co-participants in an attempt to reach increasingly deeper levels of understanding about the problem. He believed that emancipation could arise through dialogue and struggle with dehumanising conditions, and therefore must occur through a,

...process by which people, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it. (Boulet 1985, p310)

The ‘crises’ of community development

As the above historical overview has partly illustrated, critiques implying or prophesying the ‘crisis’ or ‘demise’ of ‘true’ community development range from ideological, to practical, conceptual and strategic. These crises could be better described as an ongoing state rather than an event, punctuated by periods of effusive and often uncritical attempts at ‘proving the point’. I will briefly reiterate some of these before moving on to a more substantive examination of the nature of community development itself.

One major obstacle to the acceptance of government-sponsored community development has been said to be its inability to achieve its *stated goal of poverty reduction*, leading to two contradictory reactions: the ‘left’ arguing for more systemic political change, and the right going ahead and imposing or advocating for market-like ‘solutions’. I have also demonstrated above other widespread criticisms of community development: that the theoretical underpinnings are weak and inadequate

(Midgley 1986, p2); that it is based on mutually incompatible ideological-conceptualisations; that the level of local geography is divorced from 'real' power concentration which is pitched at the 'global' level of operations; and that the wish for *Gemeinschaft* is a naïve and utopian dream in the modern industrial era.

At the empirical level, investigations of the operation of many community development initiatives, as indeed discussed above, have consistently revealed a legion of difficulties with achieving their *concrete* goals or processes. In many of the case studies there was rarely much quantity or quality of involvement from disadvantaged people – the stated *modus operandi* of the approach - with instead most programs being 'captured' by white, educated, middle class, Anglo Saxon interests (Brager & Specht in Kramer & Spect 1969, p223). Research into the actual power-held and decisions-made by local indigenous people revealed that this was often insignificant at best, or characterised by tokenism and manipulation at worst (Kothari & Cooke 2001). While some programs have reported success with enabling local disadvantaged people to gain significant leadership roles, the poor themselves often used these new-found opportunities to find a pathway out of their neighbourhood and social class. In reality, most government funded, human service managed community development programs were shown to be controlled by the paid worker(s) 'managing' them, in some cases to the extent that they were run as '*personal fiefdoms*' (Williamson, Alperovits & Imbroscio 2002, p217). A further practical problem encountered by many programs has been dealing with the political dynamics and interests of powerful institutions, with the local often becoming a site of struggle between various interest groups vying for control over resources, influence and ideology. In many other cases it has been common for local management committees to find within themselves issues of bigotry or conservative attitudes, in some cases voting *for* racist and exclusionary goals, such as restricting access for minority groups, protecting property values or for NIMBY (*Not In My Back-Yard*) intentions (Mendez 2004).

In one of the most widely referenced articles on community development in Australia, Bryson and Mowbray (1981) warned that community development was being used in name only, as simply a '*spray on solution*' to address an ever-increasing number of social ills, by conservative governments that wanted to create a veneer of popular participation, local democracy and legitimacy (also Adams & Hess 2001). Without regard to the global-Southern context of development I have outlined above, many Northern former-supporters of community development warned that it was only supported by government and conservatives for exactly this purpose: it encouraged voluntarism, self-reliance, thus justifying and compensating for a commensurate withdrawal of government services (MacIntyre 1988). Community development breeds citizens who are cooperative, compliant, obedient and committed to decisions, by allowing – or indeed requiring - participation in minimal public functions (Dearlove, 1974; Mowbray 2004; Repo 1977). This legitimates the political system and thus provides "*..an excellent and continuing example of the extension of state authority legitimated by a participatory façade.*" (Mowbray in Thorpe 1985, p49).

I shall now explore this critical theme in the Third Part below, where I attempt to evolve, out of the critique, a *'theory of practice'* or, as Sullivan and Porter (1997) call it *a framework for the 'methodology' of community development understood as 'praxis'*.

PART THREE: TOWARDS A THEORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS PRAXIS

At the heart of our work is not any particular knowledge or any procedure as such, but an inner attitude to life and those caught up in its struggle, even as we are. (Bruno Bettelheim 1967)

Introduction

My analysis at this stage still lacks a theory of action – an informed understanding of ‘*the system*’ within which community development operates and what ‘*holds such a system together*’ and how it could be changed through personal/collective action and intervention. For example, how could it be that such a system – regularly referred to in the literature as ‘oppressive’, ‘exploitative’, ‘alienating’, ‘unjust’ and ‘unequal’ has been so robust, so able to increase its breadth and depth over centuries, despite the fact that it seems to be counter to the interests of many of us? As shown in the above historical sketches, colonising processes such as those in which we are enmeshed, use and require more than overt power to continue and reproduce their existence and continuity. We are neither slaves nor serfs, but ostensibly free citizens with rights protected by law, including the right to enter into contracts for ‘selling’ our labour. Yet, the above review shows that our systems of exploitation continue with our unwitting support. In this final section I will engage several of the main theoretical views about structure and agency and their relationship in order to theorise these questions. My aim is to arrive at a theory of practice - praxis - that can be used as an evaluative framework for analysing the Australian case study material that is presented in later chapters. My theorising commences with the Marxist notion of dialectical materialism which provides critical insights into systems of domination but, given the course of history, have been shown to be unsatisfactory at predicting change. I then move to Giddens’ notion of ‘*structuration*’ in order to further develop some of the Marxist ideas and finally review several selective contributions that post-modern critical theory could make to supporting a theory of practice. The section concludes with an attempt at a holistic model of community development that attempts to capture these dialectics. Obviously, because of space limitation in a work such as this, I will have to run the risk of brevity.

Marx and Marxism

Marx asked questions about systems of domination and oppression from the perspective of the people and societies of the industrial revolution in the context of the 1830s to the 1870s. He observed the

creation of great wealth which, for the first time in history, in theory at least, should signal the culmination of the enlightenment modernist project, and secure the associated arrival of the 'good society'. Instead (in a process described repeatedly above) he saw the accumulation of great wealth by the few and unbelievable squalor and misery for the masses. He also observed the defeat and demoralisation of various worker-community inspired movements for change – despite the application of tactics that ranged from physical force, to peaceful protest, to economic action. Marx rejected the '*idealist manifestations of consciousness*' - such as the superiority of the ruling class, the lazy and thrifless character of the workers, and the religious paradigm of god-punishment-redemption - that were widely propagated at the time to explain and justify social inequality. In its place Marx developed his *materialist conception of history* which privileged the evolution of economic forces, of technology and class conflict as the underlying explanation for social conditions and social change.

The fundamental Marxist conceptualisation is that - as capitalism evolves to increasingly emphasise private property, class divisions, competition and accumulation – people become structured into concealed *patterns of relationships* that make inequality and exploitation seem natural and inevitable. Thus, Marxism proposes a dialectical relationship between the ideas people have and the sorts of lives they are able to live as it is not consciousness that determines being, but social being that determines consciousness.

The *dialectical* method espoused by Marx posits that *contradiction* – in particular class struggle - plays a central role in change as the interconnected parts of the social, institutional and cultural systems create and recreate each other in a ceaseless process of movement and change. Therefore, efforts to change this system will not succeed unless they simultaneously change ideas *and* structures - because the ideas people hold about themselves, each other and the nature of man (such as selfishness, greed and competition) are systematically built into the structures of relations. In effect, the ideas of people create and sustain structures and the latter sustain the ideas of people in an ongoing dialectical interchange (Howard 1972).

Marxism thus provides an alternative perspective of why people are unwittingly dominated: human beings are born into a cultural and institutional context in which they are conditioned to internalise the beliefs of the ruling class, to the point where they can no longer imagine possibilities beyond their present competitive system. This dominant hegemony creates a '*false consciousness*' in people's minds, through which they are unable to see their true interests – thus, they are duped into cooperating with the ruling class to reproduce the conditions of their own oppression (Morrison 1995). Thus, hope for the working classes lies in the fact that social systems are highly unstable, due to their inherent internal contradictions. The dialectical methodology

... includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable

breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary. (Marx 1858 [1973], p161)

According to this conception, seemingly insignificant *qualitative* changes often lead to radical challenges to social systems, as a result of which they may either transform to new systems or revert ‘backwards’ to old systems – as demonstrated by numerous historical examples. An model of such a qualitative change is when people are necessarily emancipated from their illusory, distorted consciousness – a process which *inevitably* occurs due to the inherent contradictions between people’s daily experiences of how they live and the official versions of their society. Conflicts between the classes throughout history have demonstrated such abrupt changes in social systems. Marx had a rather utopian, deterministic and linear prescription of progress which was consistent with the enlightenment paradigm of the time – he believed that, following the revolution, human beings would rationally progress towards an increasingly good future:

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority. (Marx & Engels 1848, p71)

With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that Marx’ formulations did not lead to the changes he expected, while at the same time capitalism and social conditions have evolved in ways that he could never have predicted: the communist revolution failed to appear in the industrialising countries of Western Europe, but rather occurred in the primarily agrarian countries of Russia and China. While these states did manage – at least temporarily - to find alternatives to free markets and avoid the worst extremes of disadvantage and inequality, it was at the price of totalitarianism and repression; far from a workers’ paradise, very poor conditions were endured by most people, while a party elite formed at the top. By contrast, capitalism - as has been argued throughout this thesis - has proved adaptive and resilient in its ability to increasingly penetrate most corners of the globe. Yet the earlier parts of this chapter have also shown that capitalism has equally had and continues to have its fair share in using and supporting totalitarian regimes, and has to accept responsibility for innumerable instances of repression and even genocide - even if the consequences of this are largely ignored by us, or as we may argue, ‘hidden’ to us.

The post-war consensus for a time demonstrated that democratic, industrialised countries were able to incorporate Keynesian economics and a mixed capitalist economy of welfare. The ‘welfare state’ was successful at providing for people’s critical material needs - as well as opportunities for learning the abovementioned creative forms of resistance, themselves often incorporating elements of Marxist reasoning and argument – it also often acted in ways that were inadequate, dehumanising, stigmatising, regulatory and invasive. The welfare state in reality often had the effect of reinforcing

destructive relations between people, de-forming community, and stultifying possibilities for self-sustainability – aided and abetted by the rhetoric of ‘empowering the poor’ (Esping-Anderson 2002; London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group 1980; George & Wilding 1994; Mullaly 1997),

All states...are inefficient and self seeking bureaucracies, creating more problems than they solve and serving their own interests. Worse, the state prevents people from following their own best interests via the market. Technocrats arrogantly but mistakenly believe that they know what people need, and can provide it better than the poor themselves. (Wuyts et al. 1992, p65)

Attempts by the ‘left’ to claim their share of the industrial era advantages – typically through organising sectoral interest groups, as advocated by Alinsky and proponents of the ‘*social action*’/‘*structural conflict*’ schools – appear to have often produced the unintended effects of further dividing and alienating people from each other and from a collective vision of a shared destiny. Thus we appear to have arrived at an impasse: various forms of social-political-economic organisation have failed, leading to the current, unprecedented political consensus between commentators of both the ‘left’ and ‘right’ persuasions that “*there is no alternative*” to the inevitability of economic rationalism. According to Theobald, however, the urgent and critical need is now to “*...learn how to work together on the truly critical questions. It is essential that we move beyond the current policy debate and come to grips with the real nature of our challenges*” (Theobald 1997, p48).

Giddens’ structuration and the post-modern turn

The prominent sociologist Anthony Giddens’ efforts to rescue ‘agency’ from the apparent determinism of ‘structure’ have been widely influential. His thesis begins from the perspective that Marxist dialectics have tended to be interpreted as providing an all encompassing theoretical standpoint that implies a rigid causal determinism (1979, 1981, 1984): ‘*structure*’ has tended to be conceived of as solid, impermeable and therefore primary in determining social relations, while consequently ‘*human agency*’ is mistakenly conceptualised as soft, secondary and determined *by* structure. Once such a construct becomes adopted as model, attempts to change social *relations* become attempts to change *structures* through often adversarial models. As I outlined in my earlier review of community development, this is consistent with much of community work, often borrowing from a Marxian theoretical distillation. Giddens recognises that these misunderstandings of the dialectical interplay between structure and agency have precipitated the dichotomisation of various social-theoretical questions, including those addressed above, such as insider-outsider, Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft, local-global, assets-deficits, top-down, and so on.

Giddens’ theory of *structuration* tries to rescue agency by using the concept of the *duality of structures*, which he defines as “*...both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems*” (1981, p27). According to structuration theory, these ‘social systems’ – which can be

defined as narrowly or broadly as neighbourhoods, societies and capitalist world systems – have *no existence* apart from the practices that constitute them; they are ‘*virtual*’, existing only as ideas or intentional constructs in people’s minds, which are *instantiated* in action. Giddens further suggests that structures consist of *rules* and *resources*.

The rules of social life should be thought of as including all the varieties of cultural schemas that anthropologists have uncovered in their research: not only the array of binary oppositions that make up a given society’s fundamental tools of thought, but also the various conventions, recipes, scenarios, principles of action and habits of speech and gesture built up with these fundamental tools. (Sewell 1992, p8)

Thus, rules are not (only) explicit public codes to be complied with – such as statutes or contracts - but rather assumptions, metaphors, schemas, etiquette and norms that are actualised in unpredetermined and broad situations.

‘*Resources*’, in turn, are categorised by Giddens into *human and non-human resources*; the former (which he terms ‘*authorization*’) may include things such as strength and knowledge, whereas the latter (termed ‘*allocative*’) include things such as money and material objects. The example of a classroom might help to show how such apparently real resources can be considered virtual; a classroom has the non-human resources of buildings, desks and books but it also has the human resources of the strength and knowledge of the teacher and students. The *activation* of these resources, however, will depend on the cultural schemas that inform their social use, value and social power. These schemas arise in part from

...notions of the bonds of nature, of nurturance, and of obedience that are encoded in multiple routines of family life and in sermons, adages, novels, and works of political theory.” (ibid. p11)

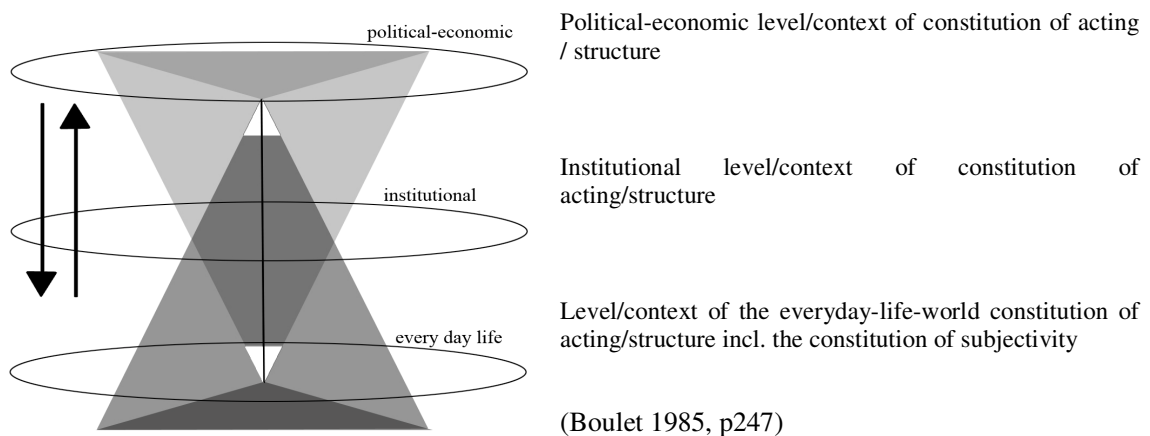
Thus the classroom teaches both compliance *and* critical thinking – and both teachers and students will use language and tactics that simultaneously serve to reinforce both competitive and collective relations.

Structuration can, therefore, be considered a dialectical process that is saturated with different levels of power tied to facilitation but also domination or oppression. Resources need cultural schemas to direct their use, while schemas need resources if they are to be sustained, reproduced and regenerated over time - that is, not abandoned or forgotten. Thus, schema and resources should only be considered to properly constitute structure “...*when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time*” (ibid. p13). Sewell suggests that we can achieve a theory of agency that meets a theory of structure “*when we adopt a multiple, contingent and fractured conception of society – and of structure*” (ibid. p16) Such a conception, he suggests, is possible when we recognise that multiple structures operate simultaneously at different levels: schemas transpose to unfamiliar contexts, resources accumulate unpredictably and, finally, structural complexes intersect and overlap.

A holistic three dimensional action-theoretical metaphor

Boulet provides an interpretative framework that uses the metaphor of a ‘hologram’ in order to re-integrate dichotomies, and effectively deal with the various ‘parts’ while keeping the ‘whole’ together (1985; also Wilber 1982). The physical properties of holograms mean that the entire reality is reflected in every single point, and the whole is also dependent on all these points, “...the various elements are multiskilled, interchangeable, and systematically allow for areas arising in other parts of the system” (Morgan & Ramirez 1983, p5). In Boulet’s hologram there are three ‘action levels’

Figure 11: Boulet’s levels / contexts of constitution of acting



This conceptualisation reasserts the relationship that “[d]evelopment, production and consumption, as well as their environmental effects, are thus overlapping and reciprocating forces, aligned in a dialectical fashion” (Shutkin 2000, p51); in effect, the interrelationship between everyday life and social structures means we simultaneously make the world and are made by it.

Boulet posits that our *everyday life-world* consists of aspects including consciousness, drives, habits, obligations, time, space, and money; as society becomes more infused and saturated by the world of acquisitive and accumulative capitalism, we are increasingly positioned as competing, individual actors. For example, in our workplaces, we are increasingly regulated, supervised, routinised and stratified; whereas in the private sphere of leisure, household, child rearing, and play, we increasingly operate as nuclear families, seeking to shield ourselves against the escalating burdens and coercion of the ‘outside’ world. With fewer and fewer opportunities for collective activities, we develop a subjective consciousness of *ourselves and others as objects* – intensifying as people start to believe that there is no alternative way of living.

The *institutional* 'level' *mediates* between the everyday and political-economic levels; it is 'here' (I use quotation marks to indicate that 'here' does not only denote a spatial entity) that norms and values get 'crystallised' into rules which articulate orientations and margins for action – they exclude some actions and make others possible. Institutions are increasingly dominated by the principle of profit – even those in the public sphere and, particularly of interest to this inquiry, welfare and community development. Interactions in these settings become instrumental, where the client is treated as an object, outcomes are set centrally and there is little possibility for professional discretion or open-ended negotiation of outcomes (Jordan 2000). Boulet suggests that one strategy agents can use to ameliorate this is by revealing these contradictions and seeking more symmetric communication.

The *political-economic level* has three action domains: production, distribution and reproduction, which affect the action-parameters at the other levels, but are simultaneously affected by them. All three domains have historically occurred at the local 'small society' (or 'community') level, but as economic capitalist globalisation increases the scale upon which it operates, they occur at the national and international levels where people – and their national governments - no longer have control over them. Alternative forms of organisation are posited, such as worker cooperatives in the production domain, critical intellectuals at the distributive domain and base groups at the reproduction domain.

The critical aspect of this framework is that it challenges the tendency to see things as reducible, mechanistic 'parts' able to be analysed and dealt with separately. It encourages a more thorough understanding of the complexities of structure, agency, place, relationships and identity; consequently, both analysis and action can occur and mutually inform action across all these realms.

Boulet enhances this conceptualisation with an important variation on mainstream operational approaches – such as Rothman's - to categorise development practice along three overlapping *modes*:

- ***Functional community development:*** occurring when people organise around an interest in achieving material improvements such as street lights, road improvements, better housing, employment, and so on.
- ***Territorial community development:*** occurring when the common interest of the people is the social relationships they have between each other. Therefore, they may aim for improvements like clubs, festivals, places to meet and inclusion of those who are marginalised, and
- ***Categorical community development:*** occurring when people identify in like-groups; for example by age, gender, ethnicity or some other common feature which partly determines their personal and social identities and associated interests.

(Boulet 1985, p222)

This analysis provides an important insight into the intersections between place, identity and material conditions; while we have come to assume the 'functional' mode when talking about community development, an improvement in material conditions may lead to a *decrease* in other aspects of development, such as relationships and a sense of collective purpose or commonality of fate.

Postmodernism and agency

I will now turn more deliberately to a post-modern view in order to gain some final insights into the discussion of the relationship between structure and agency. The post-modern '*incredulity toward meta-narratives*' (Lyotard 1984) regards many of the Marxist contributions as little more than '*discourses*' that are socially constructed - just as other meta-narratives have been, for example: universal laws of history and economics; an account of the whole of society; progress towards a classless society; freedom from illusory 'false' consciousness leading to 'true' consciousness; and subjects existing in clearly distinguishable, stable social positions, such as 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie'. This *totalising* vision is replaced in postmodernism with a much more tentative approach to knowledge as *discourses* which are created as '*language in use*' (Phillips & Hardy 2002). A constructivist perspective is less interested in understanding our 'true' selves, instead favouring an understanding of how discourses are inscribed and act to create social conditions; thus, a post-modern view does not insist on truths and laws of change because

...if ideas of consciousness and distortion are abandoned, one can live with the recognition that there is no single way in which to perceive "society" globally and no utopia in which all would describe it univocally. (Hoy 2005, p200)

If we find ourselves positioned in multiple groups, each of which may have competing interests – there is no longer one distinguishable '*enemy*' against whom we should fight for our interests. The critical post-modern discourse sees us as enmeshed in systems of domination that are continually constructed and reconstructed, just as we are inextricably involved in creating the same systems we pretend to reject. Thus, dichotomies based on conceptions of *false* and *true* are unnecessary and meaningless, as we are all simultaneously contributing to oppression and suffering from it – these contradictions *live in us*, not only '*out there*' in the world.

Bourdieu's dual concepts of *field* and *habitus* have equally helped me to illuminate this process of entrapment (1977). A *field* is conceptualised as the '*social arena*' in which people manoeuvre and struggle over desirable resources, which they achieve through the use of both social positions and structured power relationships. *Habitus* is defined as the regular practices that make up social life – these are guided by durably acquired systems of cultural meaning that are themselves dialectically engendered by objective conditions. Thus, people are neither automatons nor do they have complete free will – instead we have limited dispositions.

This leads me to the final and crucial questions of this part of my thesis: *how are we as 'agents' able to significantly re-configure the very structures that give us capacity to act? What kinds of more ethically and politically informed action may be possible if this action itself occurs within ambiguous contexts of interpretation? How do we act in contingent circumstances that can never be fully transparent to our own consciousness? Is there some balance between 'one right theory' and anarchistic 'anything goes'?*

I am returning to passages in the previous chapter on methodology; the de-constructivist perspective challenges actors to perpetually de-codify and ask critical questions about the history of the concept of a human being, the notion of critique, the authority of the question and the interrogative form of thought (Hoy 2005, p228). De-constructivism also suggests that we are no longer fighting against people, but rather struggling to create new discourses. According to Hoy,

...instead of speaking of the same subject who has come to see its true interests, we should recognize the same subject as becoming increasingly discontinuous with itself, not as more truly itself. Or at least, different stories are equally possible. (ibid. p211)

He further elaborates by suggesting that, rather than seeking a 'change in consciousness' *"...perhaps we should say that subjects find themselves using different discourses in the present than in the past. (ibid. p211)*

Some critical theorists also suggest that, by separating our *selves* from what we do, we become reactionary and are thus deceived into participating in a regime of reactive forces. One becomes reactionary when blame and hatred is directed both outwards at others **and** inwards at oneself, sometimes termed the '*traits of the slave*' (ibid p27; see also Fanon 1967; Memmi, Facey & Braudel 1984). In contrast, '*affirmation*' and '*the play of difference*' offer a philosophy that seeks to find '*moments of resistance*' within the interrelatedness of dichotomies

Deleuze argues that affirmation cannot be opposed to negation, as the dialecticians would have it, for otherwise affirmation would be making opposition essential to itself. Deleuze then characterizes affirmation not through opposition to negation, but through the play of difference: 'Affirmation is the enjoyment and play of its own difference...multiplicity, becoming and chance'. (Hoy 2004, p25)

At this point in this investigation I want to pause to reflect on disparity between this position and where I 'started' in chapter one - namely, assuming a linear, rather instrumental model of community development, which has as one major component the task of facilitating local people to have their 'consciousness raised' to see their 'true interests'. As a result of all his / her efforts, the facilitator can leave the 'scene' with confidence, knowing that the community has been enabled to catch up to its

neighbours, to claim its fair share of the industrial era advantage, and to achieve 'structural change'. In contrast to this, I am now discussing a position that seems far more 'relational', and considers agency as continually challenging *virtual structures* through day to day lived experience and uncertainty. I am now able to explore a model of community development that attempts to grasp these dichotomies more holistically, after briefly presenting some more contemporary prescriptions for the role of the state, given the above 'post modern' discussion. I will briefly outline Giddens' formulations in this respect and introduce the related concept of *subsidiarity* or the *subsidiarity principle* as it is used in continental European welfare state discourses.

Prescriptions for the 'post-modern' state – community development as subsidiarity

When Napoleon signed a concordate with the Pope in 1801, he agreed to separate the role of church and state, and thus gave himself powers for life. Later, in Catholic social teaching in the 1890s the Pope articulated an alternative to laissez-faire capitalism on the one hand and totalitarianism on the other, termed as the principles of 'subsidiarity' (Fourage 2004). These principles have since been enacted in many European countries by separating the role of the church from the state, and have become embedded in several of their constitutions – however they are less familiar in Anglo Saxon countries where there has recently been an increasing overlap between religion and state, as exemplified by George Bush's 'axis of evil' proclamation, or alternatively Australian Cabinet Ministers making political speeches at evangelical churches.

The principle of subsidiarity holds that central authority should have a subsidiary function, thus delegating matters over to the smallest or most local authority. The corollary is that the state should not take on functions which exceed the capacity of individuals or groups to act independently. "Positive subsidiarity" is seen as a strategy and ethical imperative that has as its core to enhance the sovereignty and dignity of individual human beings – as enacted at all the previously mentioned three levels of the everyday, institutional and (global) political-economic. Small, local and devolved institutions act as mediating structures which allow individuals to act and tie this action together through a social whole. According to Titmuss (1970 p225)

...the ways in which society organises and structures its social institutions – and particularly its health and welfare systems – can encourage or discourage the altruistic in man; such systems can foster integration or alienation; they can allow the 'theme of the gift' – of generosity towards strangers – to spread among social groups and generations. This...is an aspect of freedom in the twentieth century which, compared with the emphasis on consumer choice...is insufficiently recognised.

This draws us back to Giddens, who foregrounds what he calls the '*three major revolutions*' confronting '*late modern societies*': globalisation, transformation in our personal lives, and our

relationships with nature (1998). He argues that we now have to confront a new '*decision matrix*' consisting of four '*social institutions*' of generations, work, family and gender and, that in a '*post scarcity*' and '*post traditional*' society, we may need to reject certain forms of production that we see as threatening to the environment or counter-productive to society's wellbeing. In order to tackle these challenges, we need to re-conceive a new '*life politics*' which is about the personal as well as the global: "[*l*]ife politics is a politics of identity as well as of choice" (1994, p91). Rather than accepting our work, family and cultural roles as fate, according to Giddens, life politics requires '*late modern*', '*proactive*' and '*doubly reflexive*' individuals to contest and question all areas of social existence through a process of '*dialogic democracy*'.

One of the critical roles of the state is therefore to use policy innovations to re-invigorate '*social democracy*' and '*enable*' its citizens to participate in all areas of social and political life. Giddens' formula for the '*inclusive society*' posits the six main themes of *equality as inclusion, limited Meritocracy, renewal of public space, beyond the work society, positive welfare and the social investment state,*

'generative politics' would require the state to enter negotiations with social groups in an 'open' and non-prescriptive attitude as regards the outcomes of those negotiations. Certainly the state should not seek to impose outcomes on communities. On the contrary a 'generative politics' would require the state to treat social groups as part of a '...reflexive citizenry' (Giddens 1998, p71)

Such a '*generative*' politics would execute decentralisation of political authority as well as generating '*capital*' in order to enhance individuals' autonomy, through a partnership between state and society.

While Giddens is optimistic about these transformations, he warns against dangers to '*dialogic democracy*', such as fundamentalisms, compulsive behaviour or addictions. Giddens has become a key adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose New Labor government has adopted much of this '*Third Way*' rhetoric since coming to power; however, despite nine years in power, this has failed to translate into any radical democratization, but has rather been criticised as being more interventionist in its supervision of welfare and public order (Jordan 2000). Australian politicians have to a lesser extent also adopted aspects of Third Way jargon, as referred to earlier in discussions about social capital and social entrepreneurship, and Australian attempts to emulate this (Botsman & Latham 2001; Latham 1998; 2003; Winter 2000).

Ife – reconciling the dichotomies of community development

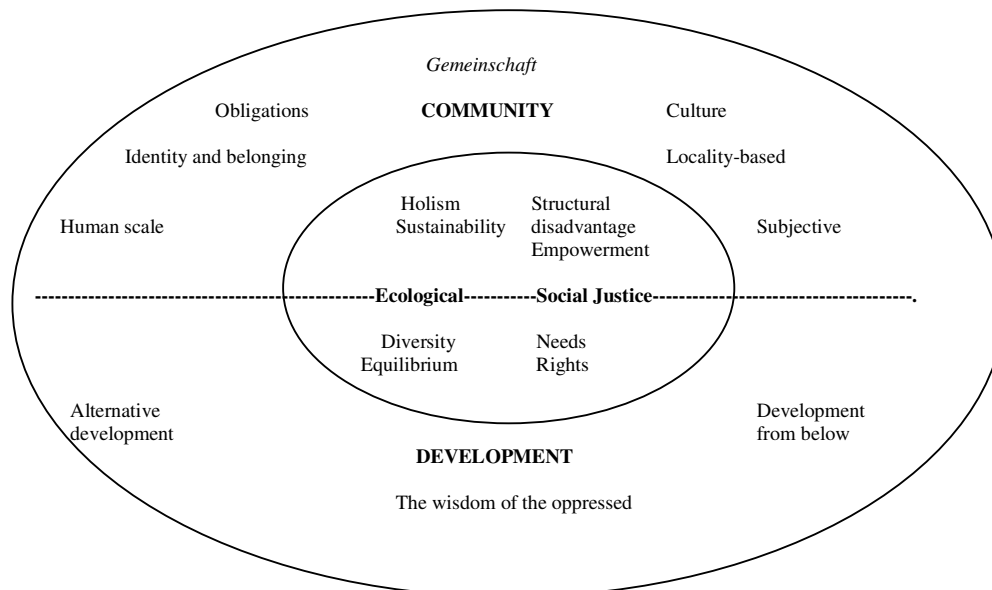
Jim Ife (2002) offers an analysis that goes some way towards integrating many of the debates and issues raised above; he takes a position similar to that reached in this thesis: *we are on the verge of apocalyptic system collapse as a result of simultaneous crises in global ecology, politics, society and*

economics. The central theme of his analysis is reintegrating the dialectical relationship between the major challenges of environmentalism, social justice, the local, and the global – recognising that neither one can be solved without all the others being simultaneously addressed. As I have argued, Ife has come to the conclusion that all our outmoded systems of thinking and organising, such as church, family, market, state and welfare, have failed to respond to any of the major challenges we now face and they will continue to do so because of the in-built biases of capitalism and other discourses, such as patriarchy and racism (two issues I have not had space to address).

Conceptualising community: Ife makes the case that there is *no alternative to traditional institutions* other than oppressed people themselves gaining power through community association, and conducting local scale experiments in disengaging from the global and state-sponsored economy. He argues for a *subjective, constructivist* view of community and emphasises face-to-face interactions, human scale, identity/belonging, *Gemeinschaft*, local culture and connection to place/land/physical environment. The goal is a **self directed, self reliant community**, which can be achieved through a process of *change from below*. In order to be **less reliant on external resources**, it would be de-professionalised, with appropriate technology and have local employment, skill sharing and economic activities as parts of its ‘arsenal’ of local strategies.

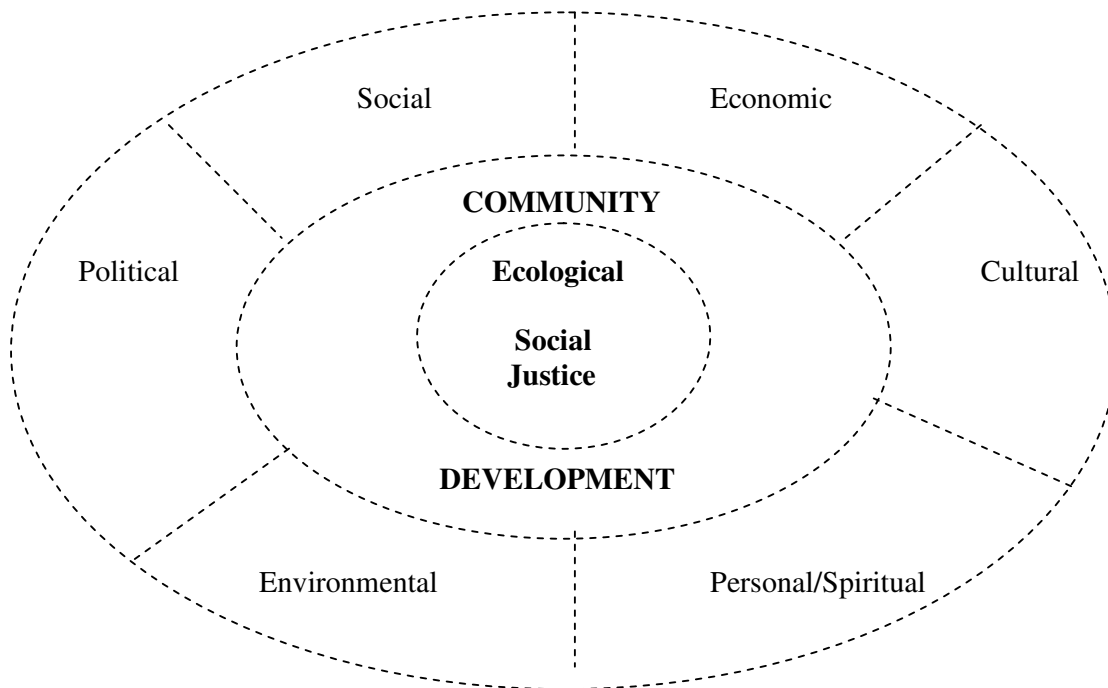
Community workers, including those employed in the welfare state, are conceived of as being central to visioning and facilitating this new future, particularly because of their aforementioned positioning at the interface ‘*between*’ the middle classes and the poor, where they experience daily the results of system failure. Human services workers, Ife suggests, are motivated and willing to work outside traditional structures, and have the benefit of fluency in discourses of equity, human rights, structure and power. This would require a “...*radical reformulation of human services, including medicine, law, nursing, teaching, social work...*” (p93); a vision so radical it requires a ‘*complete*’ paradigm shift and *entirely new mind set* (p101).

Figure 12: Ife’s vision of community development” (2002, p90)



A second key part of the formulation offered by Ife is that, in order to deal holistically with our predicament, we need to embrace environmental discourses of holism, sustainability, diversity and equilibrium - areas I have not had space to cover in this thesis (see Allison 1991; Hay 2002; Keulartz 1998; Lipietz 1995; Merchant 1989, 1992; Plumwood 1993). Ife places much emphasis on *human rights* in community development, which he defines as necessarily beyond the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights, to include economic, social, cultural and collective rights. Together, he argues, these principles can act as guides towards the future. This is represented graphically as follows:

Figure 13: Ife's Integrated model of community development



(Ife, J. 2002, p161)

Conclusion

We have now undertaken an examination of community development from several different perspectives. Commencing with a historical view of the ‘conquest’ of Australia, the tremendous changes effected in the UK and the United States after the ‘Enclosure Laws’ and the Industrial Revolution and the effects of several consecutive ‘waves’ of globalisation on the ‘Majority World’. I then explored the literature highlighting dichotomies that seemed to indicate an ingrained crisis of community development, followed finally by a more in-depth discussion of some social-scientific literature. This concluded with a *‘theory of practice’* which is represented operationally by Ife’s integrated models of community development. All of the above explorations, I hope, have provided elements of a useful *scaffolding* from which to rethink how community development could work - in certain circumstances – and be better seen for its potential as well as its limitations for change, rather than continue with mere trial and error, oversimplified formulations of (local) community change processes, or efforts pitched at more ‘powerful’ configurations like the state or global markets.

Using the variously ‘harvested’ elements of the interpretive framework I have just presented, the next chapters will investigate how some of the suggested possibilities for change have been put into practice through the Victorian government, and its funded project, the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project.

CHAPTER 4:

THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S CONSTRUCTIONS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to gain a more in-depth understanding of how a 'reform'-government in twenty-first century Australia, has attempted to achieve some of the ideals of facilitating and nurturing the development of (a) community. Specifically, I look at how the Victorian government has defined and constructed community development between the year of their election in October 1999 and 2005, when the research for this thesis had to be drawn to an end. In doing so, I ask the following questions: *what type of analysis do they employ when assessing the 'post-industrial' context they are facing? What type of policy / strategic / cultural / discourse innovations are they able to identify and generate? To what extent are they able to build on the rich historical lessons of the past or are they setting-off in previously unseen directions? How did they go about negotiating strategic 'spaces' between the contradictions of a globalising economy, on the one hand, and their own agency, on the other? To what degree does their approach address or extend Ife's (2002) holistic model of the milieu and strategies of community development? Overall, I seek to illuminate my central questions of 'what is the good life' and 'how are we to live together'?*

The following examination, whilst centring on Victoria, should be read in conjunction with some of the information in the previous chapter about 'Community Development in Australia': there is a necessary overlap as many of the events in Australia have had their effect on Victoria and vice versa. This more detailed presentation is informed by an examination of policy documents, speeches and interviews with government officials, as well my activity as a participant-researcher in the events of the past four and a half years. This chapter prepares the ground for later chapters, where I shall describe in detail the case study of a community that was the 'target' of development intentions emerging from the context set in this chapter.

The Federal political-economic system and community

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly describe the three-tiered system of Australian government as it represents a very different structure to both the American and English systems and thus creates different possibilities and limitations in regards to facilitating, making possible, or not impeding local community autonomy, authority, action and self-sufficiency. This requires a brief historical-institutional context.

Prior to 1900, Australia represented a system of six self-governing British colonies – each with independence to respond to the needs of its local citizens. In 1901, a system of State/Territory and Commonwealth governments was established, with the States ceding significant power(s) to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Parliament is now based on a Westminster system inherited from England, with the addition of a Senate borrowed from the United States (rather than a House of Lords), thus sometimes termed a ‘Washminster’ system.

With Federation in 1901, power became more centralised as the Commonwealth Parliament began making laws in fields such as income taxation, industrial arbitration, international trade, defence, foreign affairs, financial corporations and immigration (Alexander 1982, Davidson 2002). States retained their own constitutions and parliaments, but only with powers to make laws in areas such as education, the environment, health, policing and criminal law. The States were and are also dependent on the Federal government for their financial survival, as they are unable to independently raise the needed revenue for their functions. One outcome of importance to this thesis is the considerable overlap and duplication between the two levels of government, the resultant power struggles and complicated arrangements to organise cooperation and/or settle disputes. One of the seminal examples was Labor Prime Minister Hawke’s 1980s use of the High Court and World Heritage legislation to prevent the Tasmanian government from damming the Franklin River (Australian Heritage Commission 1986). Most recently, the capacity for local decision-making has been continually undermined as the Liberal-National Coalition Commonwealth Government continually uses its financial powers to impose its ideological agenda on formerly State-controlled areas, such as secondary and tertiary education, health systems, industrial relations and anti-terrorism laws (Walsh & ANU 1991). At the time of writing, all states and territories are Labor-governed, with the Commonwealth being Liberal-National coalition-governed.

A third tier of governance is Local Government, whose populations in Victoria range from 30,000 in rural areas to around 200,000 in urban municipalities. The role and function of local government is also highly contested, historically contingent and dependent on ‘higher’ tiers of government. The Local Government Act, however, defines municipalities as an autonomous sphere, or a

...distinct and essential tier of government, consisting of democratically elected Councils having the powers that the Parliament considers necessary to ensure the peace, order and good government of each municipal district. (Constitution Act 1975 Part 2A)

According to the principal role of political participation and self-determination, “[t]he primary objective of a Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community...” (Victorian Local Government Act 1989). This is to be achieved through promoting and improving activities such as,

- *...the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district;*

- ...the overall quality of life of people in the local community;
- acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making;
- “advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments; and
- fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life. (ibid)

In practice, however, Councils are limited to activities like planning, facilities, infrastructure, services and local laws. The rates raised by Councils provide only about **half their revenue**, thus - like so many other institutions that are situated between the life-world of the people, and the global political-economy - they are dependent on resources from above, with all the ‘strings’ that come attached. Councils have also increasingly become agents of State and Federal governments through providing many services that are effectively controlled by the latter – such as aged and children’s services. Thus, frequent criticisms emerge about the three tiers of government reproducing endemic duplication, power-struggles, ineffectiveness and inefficiency.

As a postscript, the Victorian State parliament also regularly uses its powers to suspend, dismiss and re-instate Councils. These political arrangements mean that there are constant struggles for local governments to make decisions that are respected by other levels of government – most recently in town planning, controlling the spread of poker machines and ‘cost shifting’ to the local level (Commonwealth of Australia October 2003).

It would take more than a full thesis to explore how these arrangements are enacted, which is not the purpose of this study; however, one brief example may suffice to illuminate the process. In November 2005, the Federal Coalition Government introduced a number of radical Industrial Relations laws which, they say, will increase employment, reduce ‘rigidities’ and make Australian industry more competitive. In practice, this will severely limit the ability of many workers to negotiate wages and conditions collectively or to set more than a few minimum employment conditions; the new laws will likely lead to the loss of wages and conditions for many workers, especially the most vulnerable. The State (Labor) Government promised to challenge these laws in the High Court and local resistance was organised through Unions and community groups. Local communities, the industries of which are least able to compete in the global market and whose residents have little bargaining power in the workplace, will experience these changes - thus consolidating a process which has been underway for more than thirty years. This will simultaneously increase the demands on local Councils for residual services, thus corroborating a process that has been titled a *politics of exclusion*, where, “[a]djustment to global competitiveness is the new categorical imperative...[itself facilitated by an]...ever-widening circumference of regulation in the form of policy initiatives and legislation” (Hoogvelt 1997, p138).

Boulet’s (1985) holographic framework, that I discussed earlier, can also help to locate this analysis within a political-economic scaffold. Decisions about the ‘*political economic*’ sphere are demonstrably

being removed from the local and transferred to the global level – thus dialectically increasing the imperatives for forms of ‘*resistance*’ and agency within the domains of production, distribution and reproduction. In effect, the processes and imperatives generated within the global political-economy are mediated through the different levels of government to increase the ‘*colonisation*’ of the everyday life-world. As outlined above, I posit that these *levels of structuration* dialectically create and recreate each other – to put it more plainly, “...*the archival version of colonial history frequently fails to accommodate or speak to the opaque and contradictory processes which characterise the politics of the people*” (Gandhi 1998, p 173).

A new era of community for Victorian state politics?

The current State Government era commenced in September 1999, when the Bracks Labor government found itself unexpectedly elected to power. According to a senior Minister, “*I have to say, some of us were somewhat surprised at the time. Pleasantly surprised... against the expectations of all the pundits.*” (Thwaites April 2004, p1). The shock one-seat majority was widely attributed to a ‘*protest vote*’ against the Kennett-led Coalition’s crash-through style and extreme ideological agenda. Ironically, rural electorates were credited with tipping the balance – despite being dismissed by the previous Premier as the ‘periphery’, while simultaneously experiencing the most severe consequences of the privatisation policies. A newly elected Minister explained Labor’s reaction:

There was no doubt that if you looked around regional Victoria at the time, hospitals were being closed and many schools and services were being pulled out of regional Victoria.... So we had a clear agenda in the first 3 years of our government to deliver in health, education and community safety and to govern for the whole state. (ibid, p1)

As discussed above, this followed in the footsteps of previous State and Federal Governments of both persuasions that ‘liberalised’ the economy in the form of deregulating the banking system, floating the dollar, dropping trade tariffs, legalising and facilitating the spread of gambling, creating ‘*industry partnerships*’ for public infrastructure development, bringing in a Goods and Services Tax, creating ‘mutual obligation’ welfare regimes and commencing an ongoing process of privatising transport, education, health, telecommunications, electricity, water, gas, and so on.

The incumbent government came to power with the political ‘imperatives’ to be less severe than Kennett, while re-assuring the business community that it was pro-economic development, was fiscally disciplined and responsible. For instance, core election promises had been to maintain an AAA rating by international credit agencies, have an annual budget surplus of at least \$100 million and have government’s finances independently audited by a private accounting firm.

Growing Victoria Together

Could a 21st Century Labor government now reverse the trend of economic rationalism, return what had been lost and re-instil confidence in democracy (while simultaneously meeting voters' expectations that economic growth would be continued and wealth created)? An eagerly awaited document titled "*Growing Victoria Together: Innovative State. Caring Communities*" was released to convey the vision of State Labor into the new Millennium (2001). Growing Victoria Together (GVT) had three priority goals for the next decade that were in keeping with *Third Way* language from other parts of the world:

1. *Providing decent and responsible government.*
2. *Getting the basics right – good schools, quality health care, more jobs, safe streets.*
3. *Leading the way to a better Victoria with lifelong learning as the key (ibid. p2),*

thus recapturing some of the moral-democratic ground abandoned by the former Premier, while attempting to frame a path that had elements of state provision, economic participation and local self-determination. While GVT remained the overarching policy framework, it consisted of only eighteen pages of text which were more rhetorical than prescriptive – unlike the previous years of Labor governments that were centralist and *welfarist* in orientation and practice (such as the 1980s 'Social Justice Strategy'). To illustrate, GVT stated:

It is clear that we need a broader measure of progress and common prosperity than economic growth alone. That is the heart of our balanced approach – a way of thinking, a way of working and a way of governing which starts by valuing equally our economic, social and environmental goals. (ibid p5)

As for how progress would be evaluated, it was promised that measures would "...continue to be developed in order to ensure they are responsive to local community concerns" (ibid. p3).

This political approach deserves some pause for further theoretical analysis as it deeply affects the processes and outcomes of community development. GVT is consistent with *Third Way* approaches being used by governments throughout the Western world and an equally significant corollary to the above indicated stories of economic rationalism and post-Fordist techno-economic paradigm (Manne & Carroll 1992; Pollitt 1993; Pusey 1991, Walsh 1995). As discussed extensively above, various national and international governments have been busy putting in place this *ensemble* for decades. *Third Way* theory asserts that older notions of procedural, legal-rational, bureaucratic forms of government based on a Weberian model (Weber, Girth and Mills 1958) have proved themselves to be inadequate for meeting social needs. '*Big government*' and the '*welfare state*' have been attacked in a historic confluence by both 'sides' of politics: '*conservatives*' who worry about efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and management control and '*progressives*' who worry about human dignity, caring/appropriate services and empowerment. These critics have thus sought to,

“...stigmatise and marginalise bureaucracy, in general, and public bureaucracy in particular, as being outmoded and as functionally and morally bankrupt” (Fournier and Grey 1999), along with their “...tax and spend approach to treating new issues with more and more programs” (Considine 2001, p7).

Many of the recent experiments with the *Third Way* have been discussed above: at a meta-level, they challenge both the traditionally conceived roles of the state and the assumptions about the relationship between markets, states and civil society. In practice, this has included earlier New Public Management mechanisms like contracts, competition, specific performance outputs and private-public partnerships. The most recent iterations claim to capture both market mechanisms *and* democratic self-governance – thus the attention to *enterprising states* (Considine 2001), *network government*, *social enterprise* (Hughes 2003), and *the enabling state* (Botsman & Latham 2001; Wieranga et al 2003). The public-managerial approaches involve increased attention to defining innovative outcomes with a putative delegation of authority to practice-level actors who have the self-responsibility to experiment with new forms of service delivery. Of most interest to this thesis is the requirement that, at some times, this will create or enable *new forms of relationships* between the state, citizens and the private sector that not only challenge the citizen-customer dichotomy, but importantly *mobilise actors* in creating *new networks* based on trust, reciprocity and public interest (Fox & Miller, 1995; Barzelay & Armajani 1992; Wierenga et. al. 2003). This has far-reaching consequences for the day-to-day work role of public employees as well as for the organisation of the public sector itself. According to Considine,

In its most extreme form this implies a state role which is closer to that of the management consultant or the small business than to the older model of paternal insurer and provider. Social protection gives way to risk management. Security is replaced by a calculus of the entrepreneurial possibilities of running one’s life, career or household as a solitary accomplishment. Government becomes less a matter of providing things and more a question of managing incentives (2001, p8).

This has dramatic consequences for citizens who are also expected to be *enabled, motivated, entrepreneurial* co-producers – with most impact potentially on those citizens who are ‘*socially excluded*’ and thus are ‘*dependent*’ on the state for support and services. Such a social transformation requires,

...a whole ensemble of supporting macro-economic institutions, social organisational forms, political settlements and even cultural values, which together and only when they are in place, permitted the economic benefits of that system to materialise to the full. (Hoogvelt 1997, p93)

Growing Victoria Together captured much traditional ‘*left*’ rhetoric such as: ‘*common citizenship*’, ‘*caring*’, ‘*social infrastructure*’, ‘*wellbeing*’, ‘*life chances*’, ‘*fairness*’, ‘*cultural resources*’ and ‘*better quality of life for current and future generations*’. GVT also recognised many issues of importance to

the human-services field, such as: *‘early intervention and prevention’, ‘cycles of inequality, poverty and crime’, problem gambling, public housing, public dentistry, legal aid and Aboriginal Reconciliation*. Importantly, there was reference to environmental issues, to the extent that “*promoting sustainable development*” was to be “*...built into everything we do*” (GVT, p18).

In keeping with *‘balancing’ ‘Caring Communities’* with the *‘Innovative State’*, GVT made its major commitments to an economic model of development, through the vehicles of infrastructure improvement, employment creation, industry growth and financial austerity. Consistent with Third Way ideology, the goal was to have people apply themselves to economic participation in the paid workforce:

...the most effective actions which the Government can take to make Victoria a fairer community are to expand job opportunities and improve access to affordable, high quality education, health, housing, transport, communications and energy services. (p22)

Likewise, educational improvement involves an assumed linear path from schooling into the paid workforce, this GVT states narrow quantitative indicators for increasing primary school literacy rates and year-twelve (Secondary School) completions.

Victoria’s *Third Way* initiatives are thus far less developed than those in some culturally similar countries like England or New Zealand (Craig & Larnar 2002), where there has been both more substantive theorising and more associated social reforms. The legacy of GVT may well be its success in capturing much of the *‘old language’* of the left while effectively resituating it in a primarily capitalist political-economic context with some obscure references to Keynes’ interventionism. Thus, various systemic factors have conspired to ensure that the government has re-constructed its role from *within the ideological-practical frame of economic rationalism*. Lakoff explains the significance of this process in framing political debate:

*This is very important to do. The goal is to activate **your** model in the people in the “middle”....What you want is to get them to use your model for politics – to activate your worldview and moral system in their political decisions. You do that by talking to people using frames based on your worldview. (2004, p21).*

More recently, a prominent journalist derided the state Treasurer and Premier as

...essentially fiscal conservatives who have maintained the legacy left by the fiscal radicals, Stockdale and Kennett. Victoria is still a state of small government, cautious prioritizing of spending, and an obsession with being a competitive business environment. (Colebatch 2005)

“Community” in Growing Victoria Together

A striking feature of GVT was its use of the ‘*warmly persuasive*’ (Williams 1976) term ‘*community*’ – appearing about 43 times in the document. It stated that the “...*issues of most importance to Victoria over the next ten years... [are] ...[b]uilding cohesive communities and reducing inequalities*” (GVT, p22). The document avoided the term ‘*community development*’ and created a “*community building approach*” which was defined as “*listening to local experience, supporting local connections, providing responsive services and investing in the infrastructure which makes communities good places to live and work.*” (ibid. p22). Further, GVT claimed that “[*c*]*aring, cohesive communities*” would result from employment, services, environment and social networks (ibid. p22). The five “*priority actions*” to “*build cohesive communities*” can be summarised as:

- new community building initiatives (one of which is the focus of this study);
- enhancing community participation in cultural activities;
- creating better work-family balance to allow participation in community life;
- rejuvenating those areas worst affected by social and economic disadvantage;
- increasing the supply of public housing. (ibid. p22)

Consistent with *Third Way* approaches of enabling, mobilising and facilitating new partnerships between states, markets and civil society, there was little substantive commitment to how these objectives would be achieved. The measures for “*demonstrating progress*” in building community for example stated that “[*i*]*n a crisis there will be more people Victorians can turn to for support*” and “[*i*]*nequalities in health, education and wellbeing between communities will be reduced*” (p23), or “*participation in community, cultural and recreational organisations will increase*” (p23).

Government programs and administrative structures for ‘Building Communities’

Given that *Community Building* was claimed to be “...*at the heart of our approach to Government in Victoria*” (Thwaites, DVC 2005), what concrete measures were put in place to create such changes and how would they affect the potential for innovation at the local level? As Craig and Lerner state,

... ‘*local partnerships*’ are more than rhetoric and/or ideology linking different agencies in nominal ways. Alongside warm generalities like pluralism and inclusivity sit a wide range of technical and structural mechanisms of government realignment. Here, partnership implies a reconfiguration of practical, technical and political processes... (2002, p3).

In October 2001 a series of relatively minor administrative reforms were commenced. A new ‘*Office of Community Building*’ (OCB) was created - albeit only with eight staff – with a brief to be “...*a focal point for Victorian Government community building relationships...*” (DVC, 2005a). This office also advised a new Minister for Victorian Communities, administered a *Community Building Resource Service* and managed the new *Demonstration Projects*. An interdepartmental committee was also established to coordinate State Government community building initiatives across the departments. A

Community Support Fund (CSF) was set up to distribute \$42m per year (not coincidentally accrued from gambling revenue taxes – itself highly destructive of community). The CSF guidelines were expanded to enable community groups to submit for ‘*community strengthening and prevention activities*’ which address

...diverse needs in communities, particularly those experiencing social and economic disadvantageThe Fund supports programs addressing problem gambling, drug issues, young people and families in crisis, as well as initiatives in sport, recreation, tourism and the arts.” (DVC 2005a; Community Support Grants, March 2004).

In the post-Kennett era, this initiative had contradictory effects; while it allowed much-needed resources to flow into the starved community sector, it also had the effect of precipitating an explosion of competitive submissions between many groups. It was into this environment that one of the few and relatively piecemeal ‘place-based’ initiatives was announced.

The Community Building Demonstration Projects

Ten ‘*Community Building Demonstration Projects*’ (CBDPs) were announced across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria, with an eleventh focused on Aboriginal issues. They were scheduled to operate between October 2001 and 2005 and promised to provide resources directly to local communities:

The Community Building Demonstration Projects are a flagship initiative designed to teach Government and communities more about community building processes and to guide broader changes to government programs and services. Over three years each project will test new approaches to identify and address priority community issues, mobilise local skills and resources, and develop new leadership and partnerships. (DVC 2005a)

Unfortunately these ‘*major programs*’ were only to receive total funding of seven million dollars – about \$150,000 per year per project. Their identification as *demonstration* projects also legitimated no commitment to the long-term or to further expansions. The projects were framed as oriented to *poverty alleviation* rather than the *development of community*. Their locations were based on indicators of poverty, unemployment and gambling ‘density’, thus claiming to identify the ten most *disadvantaged* geographical areas and/or groups in Victoria. The government claimed a *people-centred* approach that would be coupled with “*concrete initiatives*” to address issues like “*transport, education, jobs and services*” (Thwaites, DVC 2005a).

Thus, consistent with some of the dictates of Third Way, the model was constructed as creating *partnerships* between disparate organisations and *making government programs and services more responsive*. Accordingly,

A key element of the model for this initiative is based on developing partnerships between State Government, Local Government and an extensive representation of organisations, businesses and groups in the community. The State Government through the Office of Community Building will act as a facilitator and supporter of community-led processes and be responsive to potential changes to programs and services that emerge from projects. (DVC 2005b)

One example of this responsive approach was the dictate that all State Government departments “...undertake to identify ways to adapt their programs to more effectively contribute to community building and to learn from their involvement with the Demonstration Projects” (DVC 2005c). The next step was for departmental officials to try and garner *in situ* the support, resources and skills to operationalise these objectives. While the language of partnerships remained very unformulated (Balloch & Taylor 2001), there was nevertheless some potential for citizens to locally organise, to create new alliances between previously disparate or opposing groups and to make more legitimate claims on their local government departments.

Victoria ‘doing’ community building in the 21st century

The early years of the Labor government incumbency were characterised by slowing the *pace* of change established by Kennett, but, as stated above, providing only cautious new *direction or vision*. Consistent with the new political paradigm, the Minister for Victorian Communities was circumspect about the policy and practices of community building:

...it’s a bit of a social experiment that we are undertaking. We will be analysing the outcomes – we will be seeing what works and what doesn’t. (Thwaites July 2004, p11)

At a 2004 conference on community building, the Minister was no less circumspect, “[t]here is a problem in that all of this can be very theoretical. You can spend a lot of time talking about Social Capital without doing anything” (Thwaites April 2004, p5); and soon after, “...in terms of communities, it’s probably harder to put a picture in your mind of what successful community strengthening looks like.” (Thwaites July 2004, p3); to which he added: “[w]e are treating this as an objective task – not just warm and fuzzy stuff – because it is about really starting to change the way that communities operate.” (ibid. p15).

The Minister commonly referred to the example of *Wendouree West* as a vehicle to concretise community building to at-times sceptical and/or confused audiences; while *Wendouree West* is a relatively successful case study supported by another and more generous government funding program, it is also atypical of most contemporary geographical communities in Victoria. It is a government housing estate located on the outskirts of Ballarat, itself a Regional City about one hour drive from Melbourne. The population of only a few thousand people has discrete *geographical*

boundaries, while *demographically* consisting almost exclusively of highly disadvantaged people on pensions and benefits; finally, physically, the housing stock consisted of degraded Housing Commission units. The community had recently been targeted for a '*Neighbourhood Renewal*' project – as distinct from the Community Building projects (and not funded through the OCB) – which supplied multi-million dollar resources for the repair and upgrading of public housing stock, within an ethic of local consultation and participation. The Minister claimed,

“There could be no better example of community building and community strengthening”, because; “...we got to the stage where local residents would refer to the area as a bit of a ‘war zone’ – with boarded up shops, poor lighting and a whole range of other problems.” (ibid, p4).

Success was measured by a major improvement in physical facilities, involvement of local people, employment creation and increased pride. According to the Minister, the most important programmatic ingredient was '*bottom-up*' involvement, because “...it is the residents that are going to run this. Not the bureaucrats, not the Department, not the do-gooders from somewhere else, but the residents themselves” (ibid. p6). Community building firmly located in solving entrenched social problems:

As a government, we could be throwing millions of dollars into an area like, say, child protection, but if we are not actually changing what's happening at the community level, then we're wasting our money and we're throwing money away. So the Bracks government believes that we have to invest in community strengthening if we're going to have systemic change, which is what we need. (ibid. p8)

The Minister appeared unaware of the fact that, for several years prior to the *Neighbourhood Renewal*, Wendouree West had had the patient, committed presence of Ministers of Religion, who had laid the most important building stones of the later success of that project, that is, the trust and cohesion amongst several groups of local residents and activists, who had equally been instrumental in getting the project funding in the first place...

The interpretation I have given so far of the Victorian Government's approach points to a small vision and cautious incrementalism; the contemporary era of reform around social policy goals stands in stark contrast to the case studies outlined earlier in this thesis – such as the Tennessee Valley Authority or the Australian Assistance Plan. Even the *Third Way* reforms were limited in scope and substance when considered from both a policy perspective and that of technical and structural governmental realignment. A senior bureaucrat within the government claimed that, as the new bureaucratic arrangements had only been in place recently, they should not yet be expected to account for any significant outcomes. The 'new' department was, however, “*looking at a range of extensive reforms that would tackle the instruments of public administration, including the role of government, Councils, and parliament*” including, “[c]hanging the way government works.” (28th April 2004, DVC)

When asked about the relationship between the ‘new paradigm’ and ‘old-style’ community development, a senior department official answered that,

Community building and community development have significant similarities but there are also major differences. CD theory and practice in the 70s was sociological – as defined by people like Alinsky and Freire. However, the 90s is different because,

1/ we have real-time knowledge of community dynamics

2/ it is not social policy but economic – about resources and sustainability, as much as addressing disadvantage

3/ the interdependence of the four capitals: social, economic, human, environmental, which is different to CD because it was sociological

4/ we are now looking at the institutional arrangements, as a result of the critique we have of the social capital literature – Putnam etc. – which is a-historical. (ibid.)

Later he claimed that, because there is “*very little literature*” informing the mission of the new government apparatus - but it was hoping to integrate material across “*planning [later adding ‘land use’], public value, communitarianism, and OECD empirical data on regional government*” – he had a 5 year goal to achieve,

1/ Improved strength of local institutions, with the community sector linked/relating to local government, [all of which is underpinned by] valued local democratic institutions.

2/ Local government, the private sector, and the government operating in a tripartite relationship with each other – to the level that this becomes a mainstream expectation

3/ Revaluing local knowledge and what it looks like – local process

4/ Pooled, area based funding

5/ A broad church of distributed leadership (ibid.)

When discussing the potential of the current government to define and respond appropriately to these ‘*quadruple bottom line*’ issues, he claimed,

This is a small government, placed at the Southern end of a big continent. The 1970s grossly over-promised and under-delivered. The question is, ‘What are the features of community that we value’: things like identity, trust, values that form judgments and decisions. The question is not ‘what is community?’ – this is pedantic. What we are on about is neighbourhood plus or minus (ibid.)

Thus he appeared to summarily dismiss previous efforts as discredited relics of the (Whitlamite and social reform) past, although he also acknowledged some interest in why “*...some AAP RCDPs [Regional Community Development Projects] are still operational 30 years later.*” (ibid.)

Having framed the ‘*figure-ground*’ context in this way, the Government then seems to have become absorbed in theory and practice conceptualisations that avoided both macro-level global analysis and micro-level practice analysis. To give one rather lengthy example, gained from an interview with a middle-level manager within the Office for Community Building:

So some of the principles in the early days of some of the community building initiatives

which were about sustainability of community and the communities being able to develop and have some control over their own resources, communities even less well-off, could still have strong social networks that would be, give them some capacity to be more resilient to change, and that there was some demonstration, particularly this came out of some of the rural communities, you know community asset work in the States and Canada that, communities that could do that, could therefore grow their resource base and attract, ummm... funding and infrastructure to sustain. So that was sort of the assumption and premise about some of the community capacity building initiatives that were set up, based on, the Nebraskan model....

Some of the earlier thinking for Victoria, I think, in this government was pretty much lead by social policy social justice framework, and then I suppose the next phase was really the Demos work in the UK, as different to some of the work by Putnam in the US who came out here and talk to across, you know to government, across ministers and secretaries about his measures and what they had done on looking at social capital nationally in the US and trying to measure that and show the economic.... You know that one was equated with the other. So there was that work....

The other one was planning was a really strong focus of looking at the impact that was occurring through globalisation and through marketplace and through, people wanting to live within particular communities. It was looking at the demographic impact that was going to occur, so not waiting for it to happen, but saying communities need information to basically plan their own decisions. And then they need good governance processes for people to have a say in their community - so another key part of that was not just consultation but actually engaging residents in knowing about what was happening in their community and then having a governance process which was....(5th November 2004, DVC)

This rhetoric suggests that the various references to community development, integrated urban planning, public value, place management, distributed leadership, creative cities, governmentality, trust, citizenship, social capital and ‘*post-industrial*’ public administration provide a vexing pot-pourri of ideas and possibilities.

At a *programmatic* level – as opposed to the more theoretical issues discussed above – the main activities across the State Government represented a proliferation of small community-focused initiatives across many government Departments. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, as many as one hundred programs sprouted across Education, Health, Justice, Regional Development, Local Government, Adult Education and Natural Resources/Environment (DVC 2005b; Mowbray 2004), with names like *My Connected Community*, *Healthy Communities Resource Team*, *The Developing Social Capabilities Project* and the *Community Building Hubs Initiative* (DVC 2005d).

A revolution in public administration? The Department for Victorian Communities

Following the re-election of the Victorian Labor Government in 2003 – incidentally with a vastly increased majority and control of both houses of parliament - a major restructure of departmental functions led to the creation of a *Department of Victorian Communities* (DVC). At the time of writing, this department has over six hundred staff and an annual budget of nearly one billion dollars (DVC

Corporate Plan 2004-2007). Its main purpose is purportedly to put substance to the ideals of creating a 'joined-up' form of government administration, by breaking down boundaries between traditional bureaucratic structures. The DVC was not built on new resources, but brought together a range of previously bureaucratically separated 'population based' portfolios: youth, multicultural affairs, Aboriginal affairs, women, seniors, veterans and local government. To this list were later added 'volunteers' and the 2006 Commonwealth Games portfolio. One innovation that tries to put substance to the idea of 'joining-up' is that the DVC reports to *eight* ministers. Given the scale and complexity of this Department and the fact that it is evolving in a highly politicised environment, an analysis and even a description of the DVC, its policies and processes are well beyond the scope of this thesis. As suggested by Considine, these experiments in public administration

...promise a different world for the governed and a new power structure for the governors...Enterprised states are now constructed or 'made up' by the efforts of intersecting authorities seeking greater influence at ground level. The older focus upon basic legal and material rights has been joined by the efforts of states seeking to alter and mobilise the cultural power of new hybrid public-private institutions. Groups of citizens are selected for special treatments that seek to define their self-identity or subjectivity as a far more precise object of official attention (2001, p7)

I will now briefly outline some of the main corporate statements in order to give the flavour of the official rhetoric:

DVC's goal is for all Victorian communities to be active, confident and resilient. To achieve this vision, DVC is committed to the following objectives:

- *Communities that shape their future – helping communities respond to new challenges, by working together with government, community agencies and businesses.*
- *Communities that encourage participation – creating opportunities for increased participation and volunteering in community activities.*
- *Communities that embrace diversity – supporting and advocating for Indigenous communities, young Victorians, women and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.*
- *Communities that gain lasting benefits from the Commonwealth Games – ensuring the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games and major sporting events provide lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for all Victorians. (DVC Corporate Plan 2004 2007 p7)*

The Department for Victorian Communities claims that its underpinning values are

- ***Communities first*** – taking the time to listen properly and actively invite the views of others – planning and engaging people before doing
- ***People and place*** – highlighting the importance of people and place, understanding and appreciating difference – between people and between local areas
- ***Doing government differently*** – acting as a broker for communities and serving as a catalyst for change; being responsive, approachable and flexible. (ibid. p9)

Another version of the government's thinking was given in a speech by the new Minister for Victorian Communities:

Another reason for setting up this new Department is to foster our understanding of the importance of Social Capital. We know that communities where there are strong trust links, where people are able to find support amongst their fellows, tend to be more successful, happy and healthy. Social Capital is an area of discussion ... We want to give this a go within our government and see how it could work best for Victoria. (Thwaites April 2004, p4).

With the invention of the new Department, the term 'Community Building' virtually disappeared from the lexicon to be replaced by the new label of '*community strengthening*'. 'Strong' communities were defined as having partnerships between community organisations, strong local leadership, local control, volunteers and to be '*innovative, creative and sustainable*' (ibid. p6). The new Department at least attempted to develop '*Indicators of community strength*' - two rather disappointing but perhaps understandable examples of which include "*feeling safe walking alone down the street after dark*" and "*the ability to raise \$2000 within two days at an emergency*" (ibid. p7).

At the programmatic level, the community-style agenda once again led to some bureaucratic changes, such as the re-alignment of multiple departments' geographical boundaries (and associated restructuring) in order to promote a common approach. The DVC is also showing a commitment to '*place*' by appointing '*Place Managers*' to lead '*Local Presence Teams*', which are based in the regions to represent or sometimes co-locate different functional departments. A further related reform is the creation of new consultative structures designed to ensure that senior bureaucrats meet '*regionally*' with both each other *and* other senior officials who have functional responsibilities in those regions – for example CEOs of local governments and departmental secretaries (DPC 2005b).

These are just a few selected examples of the rapidly changing activities of a Labor Victorian Government in the 21st Century. Obviously, to try and do justice to and deal more comprehensively with these initiatives would be well beyond the scope of this thesis – suffice it to say that such a plethora of ongoing changes is symptomatic of a '*post-industrial*' public service that is characterised by a state of ceaseless and highly contested flux. The question to be asked in this thesis is whether local level officers, activists and program organisers are able to use these changes to gain more local autonomy and develop in ways that they choose. These same questions are being explored in Britain, where far more comprehensive reforms have been implemented. As stated by Balloch and Taylor:

Will it really produce more efficient and effective systems? Or will it dissipate energies through a proliferation of new structures, which are ill-defined, inadequately resourced and which do not change the underlying power structures or cultures? ...will new partnerships exclude more vulnerable groups and communities and prove less rather than more accountable to those they are supposed to serve than previous institutions? (2001, p2)

In an effort to develop a more 'orientated' and evaluated view, I now return to the broader historical-political context of 'community' and government in Victoria.

A Government in Crisis?

At the time of writing, the Labor government has been in power for six years and, as could be expected in a globalising context, is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain an **image of a reform government** that is willing or able to address social justice issues in the midst of all the pressures to '*keep up*' with the demands and expectations of markets, international competition (now increasingly searching for 'cheap' labour) and the need to keep a sufficiently large proportion of the electorate '*loyal*' to the governing party to gain re-election. For example, an influential 2004 report comprehensively showed that disadvantage continues to be strongly locationally disparate (Vinson 2004) and that had not changed between 1999 and 2004 – the full period of the government's incumbency. Whilst one may challenge the validity of using statistics and/or even expect decisive changes in engrained problems over a still relatively short time period, the power of the number and media interpretations thereof will do damage.

A second major problem for the government is **gambling**; desperate to fix a budget black hole in the late 1980s to early 1990s, the previous Labor government had legislated to allow the introduction of poker machines into local hotel venues and clubs. There are now 30,000 poker machines in the state, with many of these concentrated in low income areas, totalling losses by their users since 2000 of over eleven **billion** dollars (The Age, Editorial, 28 May 2005, p8). The government is now dependent on this income for well over ten percent of its taxation revenue and, given the dynamic of electoral discourse, no party at present can even hope to get elected on a program of increasing taxes in the more 'traditional' areas of taxation, i.e. property/ownership, income and capital gains. At the same time, the government has to face increasing public disquiet about failing to take serious steps to reduce gambling and accepting advice on its rather devastating effects. The government has proved itself unwilling to reduce the density of machines in low-income areas or to take other steps that would jeopardize its financial income or that of powerful industry interests, in this case, the gambling duopoly of two major corporations. In late 2004, an independent Gambling Research Panel was summarily sacked by the Premier – following the production of a series of damning reports – and replaced with a government appointed Advisory Council. Obviously, the government finds itself between a rather uncomfortably 'hard place' of public opinion and a 'rock' of expectations by that same public to see its taxes reduced or, at least, not increased.

Another major area of concern is the **environment**. Victoria has been in a seven year drought and has just experienced the hottest October and December since records were kept (Gauchi 2005, p7) and forecasts are for a dry summer which, if it occurs, will undoubtedly cause serious social and economic problems throughout rural Victoria. The Premier has announced a belated, short term and reactive \$500 million drought relief package, followed by another \$500 million 'provincial statement' (Minister for State and Regional Development 2005), while rural environmental and social indicators

continue to decline. It now has become clear that global warming is, in fact, *'happening'* and that the production of greenhouse gases will have to be curbed, questioning certain decisions made about coal-based power generation to which the Government has recently re-committed itself. Simultaneously, industry groups are lobbying to dredge Port Phillip Bay to allow 'super-tankers' to enter and thus keep Melbourne Port *'internationally competitive'*, but there is great evidence that this will damage the sensitive and struggling ecology. There is also staunch community opposition – of the previously mentioned NIMBY variety - at every site where the government has proposed to site a toxic waste dump. Further, Melbourne's 2030 Strategy (DoI 2002) to reduce or rein in urban sprawl has started to become unmanageable, as new home owners and developers demand that more land is released and resistance against increasing density grows in established neighbourhoods (a strong Save Our Neighbourhoods community organisation has emerged and plays the local and state political game with much savvy, supported by an array of public figures).

The government also faces serious challenges to its reputation of *openness and accountability*. Within government operations and decision making, a pattern of relatively small but consistent bureaucratic failures and less-than-transparent actions has developed. While major police corruption has been exposed, the government is also seeking to restrict Freedom of Information access, one of the crucial areas the previous government was seen to be deficient in, leading to its – surprising - fall and illustrating the greater volatility in voter preference, away from traditional party-lines. An election promise was broken when a freeway was converted into a toll way and other major public infrastructure development projects have all struck delays and massive cost overruns. One area where the government has been supportive of spending is on an extensive series of international sporting events. For example, the original budget for the 2006 Commonwealth Games was \$350 million, which was then doubled to nearly \$700 million, with estimates that it might reach \$1 billion – incidentally including \$30 million for the opening and closing ceremonies – and claims of cover-ups and corruption (Ker, 2005. p8). The Games also absorbed most of the \$14.7 million *'Volunteering Community Enterprise Strategy'* that was supposed to *"...strengthen Victoria's community sector at a state-wide and local level"* (DPC 2005b p53).

Labor rediscovering fairness?

Prior to the 2005 budget, after a period of sustained economic growth and successive annual surpluses, one prominent academic predicted: *"[d]o not be surprised if equity all of a sudden finds a place in Labor's financial framework to the great relief of Labor's heartland, having been overlooked for five years in a row"* (Hayward 2005, p21). The Premier duly announced that helping the most disadvantaged was *"at the heart of this budget and at the heart of the Government's forward agenda"* (Colebatch 2005, p31). The government could easily afford to put billions of extra dollars into the neglected *'core functions'* of health, education, transport and police – while simultaneously providing

significant tax concessions to the business sector - without risking criticism that it was returning to the *Keynesian* era. The centre-piece was a '*new blueprint for social investment*' in which, to its credit, the government announced that, despite '*significant improvements*', "...*not all Victorians are getting a fair chance to share in the benefits of the State's strong economic performance*" (DPC 2005a p2). The government identified that disadvantage remained linked to several factors including *unemployment, family poverty, low skills, injury, family violence, discrimination and geographic isolation*. As well, it identified 'categorical' groups disproportionately affected by disadvantage - newly arrived migrants, sole parents, homeless people, older workers, people with disabilities, former prisoners and indigenous communities. In its second term in power - and with control of both houses - a Labor government acknowledged that high concentrations of disadvantage were linked to place, "...*in particular suburbs, neighbourhoods or small country towns*" (DPC 2005a, p22).

A funding package of \$780 million was attached to these statements in a later document titled: "*A Fairer Victoria. Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage*" (DPC 2005b), announcing that the government now knew more about "... *the building blocks of a stronger society*" and that "[*t*]*he lessons learned by the Government over the past five years have enabled us to develop a long-term framework for helping people, groups and places overcome disadvantage*" (ibid. p4). **A Fairer Victoria** announced dozens of apparently new programmatic initiatives, for example a *Neighbourhood Justice Centre* which would "...*enable the court to deal with the causes of crime in the community, as well as offenders.*" (my emphasis, ibid. p38)

Activities of most interest to this thesis are – obviously - linked to our embryonic notions of *community* and *development*, especially understood in ways previously circumscribed as enabling people to gain a better understanding of the predicaments facing them, so that they may start to value and reclaim their '*commons*' and find ways to establish social and economic relations that enable them to maintain relatively autonomous links with the global political-economy. Taking this as a gauge, there was some cautious and incremental development of the *Third Way* approach (although this term was not used as part of the government lexicon). For example, it was claimed there would be new ways of working with communities, in that "...*groups and communities need to be consulted and actively involved in developing approaches to local issues [and]...giving communities a greater say in determining their futures*" (ibid, p27). The proposed strategies to achieve this goal were, predictably, *community owned businesses, corporate social responsibility* and "...*a coordinated approach in these [geographic] areas, involving all levels of government, non government agencies and the local community*" (ibid. p27). There was also claimed to exist new philosophies for government to work with disadvantaged people, such as a '*client-centred*' approach, '*user involvement*' in the design and delivery of services and "...*giving disadvantaged people more choice and capacity to make decisions about matters affecting their lives*" (ibid. p26). There was little commitment, however, to how the practical, technical and political processes of governance would be altered to achieve this.

While *A Fairer Victoria* formalised the new rhetoric of '*Building Stronger Communities*', the *Community Building Demonstration Projects*, previously a '*flagship*' initiative of *Growing Victoria Together* (and the subject of the case study that follows), disappeared without fanfare from the government's agenda. There were only two relatively minor *place-based* programs that engaged directly with people in communities; one was the expansion of the existing '*Neighbourhood Renewal Program*' which operates in public housing estates – itself limited to only \$7.5 million per year – and the other an extension of existing '*Community Capacity Building*' projects which were to provide about \$120,000 per year to twenty communities in,

...regional, sea-change, metropolitan fringe and growth corridor areas. The initiative will bring local residents together with government and community agencies to plan for and address local needs, build local leadership and foster community networks. (ibid. p52)

All this demonstrates little awareness of a need to engage with either the '*mainstream*' population in questioning how we are to manage our collective future, or even with disadvantaged communities. The major concerns of the government still show themselves to be primarily *economic* in nature; '*A Fairer Victoria*' claims that disadvantage "...*undermines Victoria's capacity to sustain the strong economic and productivity growth needed to create a fairer and more prosperous society*" (ibid. p2). The Premier and the Minister for Victorian Communities also announced:

*Without fairness, some people and places will slip further into hardship and deprivation, generating deep divisions within society and creating negative social and economic consequences for everyone. Without fairness, it becomes much harder to maintain attractive and safe communities where people want to live. Without fairness, it becomes more difficult to secure the **long-term economic growth needed to create jobs and raise living standards.** (DVC 2005a, p1, my emphasis)*

Closing observations

One of the main purposes of this chapter was to gain a deeper understanding of the Victorian government's definition and contextual understanding of community development. The Bracks Labor government came to power promising major change in seemingly '*innovative*' frameworks, like *Growing Victoria Together*. After five years, with the publication of the Fairer Victoria statement, it virtually confessed that this was little more than rhetoric. Social justice under this '*progressive*' government has, to date, meant being less regressive than its predecessor. There is little leadership or public discussion of any of the major issues facing Victoria, Australia or the globe. As mentioned, it has been unprepared to even take on the gambling lobby, which is patently causing needless damage but generating needed tax revenue. Birnbauer, in '*The Age*' newspaper, reiterates this point:

Is that all there is, Steve? The Premier, when asked about reform, defaults to talking about the need for a competitive economy and good labour skills. Labor supporters still wonder what Bracks and Labor stand for, apart from an obvious and calculated desire to retain power (Birnbauer, p26).

Reflecting developments in many Anglo-Saxon countries, Victorian Labor softened the pure economic rationalism of the 1990s. Thus, there is the potential to address ‘*the social*’ outcomes alongside ‘*the environmental*’, the ‘*democratic*’ and ‘*the economic*’. The government has been repeatedly at pains to point out that it considers itself in ‘*partnership*’ with business and community – although it was relatively weak at developing a clear policy framework to realise this. Instead, the theoretical and conceptual-strategic notions for community have been dispersed across urban planning, social capital, capacity building, triple bottom line, networked government, and so on. Comparing the several textual materials I have mentioned, here with some of the rhetoric in previous works dealing with community development, many of the assumptions about ‘*community*’ that are uncritically posited – if offered at all - seem rather similar to principles which go back at least several decades. By far its major administrative/technical commitment has been to reorganising its administrative apparatus, to enable previously single departments ‘join-up’ in responding to community need or for the implementation of certain programs; this experiment is, however, still in its early days and its (benevolent) effects on communities and their growing wellbeing and autonomy remain to be seen.

In terms of innovative programs that engage directly with people in communities, the government has shown itself to be very limited, especially in responding to the need for *long-term investment in processes of community development*. *Neighbourhood Renewal* and *Community Capacity Building Initiatives* cover very small numbers and population sizes. Whilst the direct engagement in communities is apparently an area that government officials recognise as important, as they continue to talk about *place-based* disadvantage and about “*individuals and organisations trying to find solutions to local issues aimed at addressing disadvantage*” (DPC 2005b, p13) – we have limited approaches to actually achieving this.

A more structurally informed analysis suggests that the State Government is constrained by processes at the political-economic level, which increasingly are being played out at national and global levels – more, the government seems ideologically committed to enmesh the state within these levels without much thought of possible consequences for local communities from such enmeshment. The global model of societal development – and hence, community development - is economic and rationalist, with countries increasingly integrated into a global economic system. From Australia’s point of view, it could be said that we have been relative winners in the global system up until now; thus a ‘*lucky*’ and materially wealthy electorate has decided that a capitalist economy is the answer for its wellbeing. Whilst we are led to believe that this results in some both necessary and unavoidable insecurity for all of us – not to mention for our commons and our children – we also tell ourselves that those least able to compete will receive compassionate support, provided they respond with a sense of ‘*mutual*

obligation'. The electorate will, at present, accept no less than a fiscally austere government; there is virtually no discussion or questioning of wealth, its accumulation and even less of its re-distribution beyond the assumption of *more markets* accompanied with neo-liberal trickle-down economic mechanisms, despite occasional promptings that “[i]t is not true that we must continually crank up the economic machine, starve the poor and work ourselves to death” (Theobald 1997, p15).

With very few exceptions (the Australia Institute, sometimes church groups and an “odd” academic or journalist), there is even less discussion of any long-term alternative models that could prove to be more sustainable or that might involve less focus on individualised material wellbeing and its necessary growth. There appear to exist very limited options to develop an alternative frame that will help us understand and act on this situation, locked into a self-reinforcing cycle of privileging structure over agency. The question is prompted by Theobald,

People can no longer leave sociocultural, as well as economic, decisions to a few controllers, while themselves concentrating on a range of personal problems from the search for shelter to a good vacation spot. Whatever our standard of living or our habitual associations, we now need to admit that each of us must be concerned with the total situation of our society. Our prime requirement for working in this way is the development of a new set of conceptual tools. (1997, p48)

Having established some of the political and administrative context, I will next provide an introduction to the local communities that were ‘chosen’ as the sites for a funded *community development /building demonstration* project. This sets the context for the subsequent chapter which offers a detailed case study of how a local level community might analyse these political-administrative realities in order to strategically resist, create local autonomy, or renegotiate their relationships with the state and business.

CHAPTER 5: THE DAREBIN COMMUNITY

Now there are some things we all know, but we don't take 'em out and look at 'em very often. We all know that something is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars...everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling is that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. (Thornton Wilder, Our Town)

Introduction

In this chapter I present an overview of the community that was selected as the site for a Community Building Demonstration Project. I have argued throughout this thesis that community can be likened less to a machine or objective “thing”, and more to an infinitely complex ecological system consisting of relationships, self-organising feedback, dynamic flows of energy, ‘virtual’ dialectical structuration that encodes both domination and resistance, discourses, and ontological instantiation (Capra 1996; Dawkins 2003; Giddens 1984; Hoy 2004), themselves taking place at all levels from the intra-psychic to the global (Norris 1997; Morowitz 2002). In an attempt indicate some of this complexity – and keeping in mind considerations of ‘community studies’ outlined in chapter 2 - I have chosen to use data from a range of sources, including statistics, photographs and narrative.

The chapter commences with nominally locating Darebin in a global and national context. I then take a brief historical overview of changes that have led to the municipality as it exists today, in reference to some of the earlier themes discussed in part of Chapter 3 ‘Community and development in Australia’, and the organisational theme for this thesis: imposition, resistance and working in-between. A statistical and demographic outline is given which reinforces the case that poverty, inequality and disadvantage are both multifaceted and locationally concentrated. An attempt is then made to ‘flag’ some of the assets of the community, as well as community members’ own perceptions of their strengths and achievements. This prepares the ground for Chapter 6, which provides a detailed case study of the Community Building Demonstration Project that was conducted in the location.

Locating the global in the local

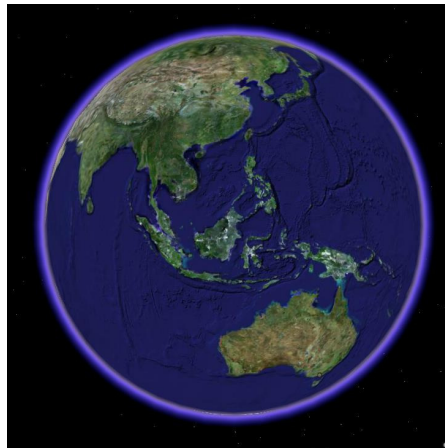
The following images have been gathered from the readily accessible, yet highly sophisticated world-wide-web technology ‘Google Earth’. I have several purposes in using these images: to re-present earlier references to an interconnected global ecology; to ‘place’ Australia in its geographic context; to locate the project area within Australia; and to explore the changing nature of spatial perception that is

increasingly available to us through technology, yet iteratively changes the nature of our perceptions of, and thereby relationship with, place.

The following image shows the earth as a tiny blue planet suspended in space. The miraculous ecology of an organic, interdependent, and 'closed' system is clearly apparent. It was this image - first seen during the lunar missions of the 1960s (with the exception of the enveloping cloud patterns, which Google Earth excludes) - that played a significant role in changing many people's anthropocentric assumptions about our interdependence with the universe, leading some recent commentators to claim that,

Healthy and resilient ecosystems and societies are becoming our new and dominating scarcities. In order to raise long-term welfare and quality of life all over the world, most of the world's countries will need to develop approaches (including organisations, institutions, technologies and new methods of monitoring) that are different from those that are dominant today. The new paradigm – a global 'taking care of the planet by taking care of each other' culture – must be implemented in partnership across all national and community boundaries. (Robâert 2002, p51)

Figure 14: Satellite image of the globe



(Google Earth 2006)

I have included the next image because it shows the total continent of Australia which, as discussed briefly above, has many peculiar environmental and demographic features. Melbourne is in the bottom right hand corner – in one of the rare temperate regions of the country. Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with over 85 percent of the population living in major urban centres (Dore, Woodhill & Greening Australia 1999; Walmsley & Sorensen 1993). It is the driest continent on earth, with 70 percent classified as arid or semi arid (Geoscience Australia, March 2004;).

Figure 15: Satellite image of Australia



(Google Earth 2006)

The next image shows the State of Victoria, with Melbourne located on the tip of Port Phillip Bay, just above the Tasman Sea. Most of the state is used for agricultural production, with the North West corner bordering on an arid zone – and most of the population concentrated in the city of Melbourne. The green patch to the East is the Great Dividing Range which extends thousands of kilometres into New South Wales, and further into North Queensland.

Figure 16: Satellite image of Victoria

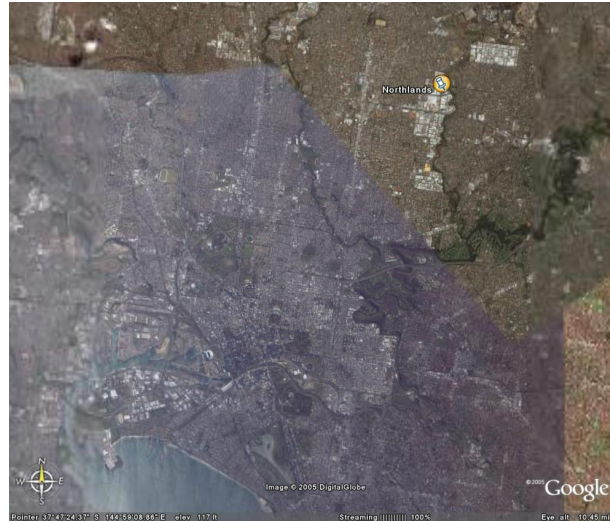


(Google Earth 2006)

Finally I 'zoom in' on the City of Darebin which is located eleven kilometers North-East of the Central Business District. It is an inner suburb amongst urban sprawl that extends across approximately sixty kilometres in any direction. The main shopping centre is 'pinpointed' as it is located in the project location. Darebin is clearly shown as mostly housing, connected by visible road transport systems to all other parts of the city- not forgetting a multitude of visible systems like

utilities and communication. It is also intimately connected with all other areas through natural systems like waterways (the Darebin Creek is a clearly visible feature), atmosphere, and plant and animal corridors.

Figure 17: Satellite image of Melbourne and Darebin



(Google Earth 2006)

A history of Darebin

What we now call Darebin was originally known as Kulin land by the Aboriginal people. A subgroup of the Kulin tribe known as the Wurundjeri hunted, lived and celebrated for tens of thousands of years amongst what were rich lands and watersheds of the Darebin and Merri Creeks “*Darebin was an area of beautiful grassy woodlands, with emus, kangaroos, bandicoots, fish, lizards and waterbirds supplying plenty of food*” (DECC 2004) . By the 1840s the settlers from the new colony of Melbourne had surveyed the land to the North commenced selling it off at public auction. The frequent disputes between settlers and Aborigines largely ceased with the removal of the remaining Aboriginal people to a reserve several kilometres to the East. By 1858 there were only 33 Wawong people left in this reserve (The Australian Army), and eight years later in 1865, the last remaining people of the Kulin Nation were moved 30 kilometres further to the East, where they were ‘settled’ on 300 acres of swampy, unsuitable land. In 1917, after the last full blooded chief of the Wawong tribe died, the remaining Aboriginal people were again resettled to Lake Tyers, a further several hundred kilometres to the East (DECC 2004). It was to be many decades before the locale would become a significant geographical community for Aboriginal people.

The white settlers first exploited the rich timber resources and then commenced sheep grazing. By the late 1800s Darebin had open farmland, market gardens, orchards, crops, villages, stores and the

associated infrastructure of dams, a railway, and a rudimentary road system. By the 1920s Preston and Northcote were proclaimed cities and, during the depression years of the 1930s, grew as rural settlements on the outskirts of the burgeoning Melbourne metropolitan area. In the 1940s Australia's economy was militarized and, with subsequent departure of thousands of young servicemen, the formation of households and families temporarily ceased. This set the stage for the establishment of the social, physical and economic formation of Darebin as we see it today.

In the late 1940s the burgeoning economy led to the establishment of a new manufacturing industry, and subsequent labour shortages – in turn supplied by intakes of migrant workers from throughout Europe. Many factories were established along High Street and the municipalities of Northcote and Preston began their greatest growth phase. A post-war shortage of up to half a million homes in Melbourne was exacerbated by several factors including a lack of builders and a wait on materials of up to two years. In response the government regulated the pricing and selling of houses, monitored rental costs through the 'Fair Rents Board', and committed itself to 'War Service' housing for returned servicemen. The policy strategy involved a mixture of fixed-rate, 45 year loans, and the building of large, planned housing estates (Hammett, Freestone & Goodman 2000; Hayward; Kendig 1979).

While the land closer to Melbourne was already occupied - or expensive, especially the sought-after inner Eastern and bayside suburbs - the North had large tracts of flat, cheap farmland that was easy to develop for manufacturing and housing. It was also near to established factories that had to move further from the CBD - particularly in the textile, clothing and footwear industries. Soon gridlines were drawn on maps, graders pushed-in dirt tracks, and neat rows of new dormitory suburbs sprouted, interspersed with industrial estates. In the suburbs of Preston and Reservoir, a high proportion of housing was built by the government according to the dictates of the planning experts: they used cheap prefabricated materials (typically fibro-cement or asbestos), and complied with a maximum size limit of 10.5 squares. Little consideration was given to civic spaces, streetscape, landmarks, or natural values - although some large reserves of land were set aside. In some cases housing was built on one side of a street, and industrial estates on the other side. According to residents who lived there at the time,

It was real frontier area – there was no beach, no hills, nothing – just paddocks and dirt roads. There was not even any transport or shops (interview November 13th 2005).

Strong state-sponsored investment in education, health, public sector employment, public housing, and public works coincided with the establishment of numerous large government instrumentalities in the area, including the State Electricity Commission, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, and a major tram depot. Preston and Reservoir were also selected by the newly formed Housing Commission as sites for many new housing estates and 'walk-ups' that would be built to accommodate people on welfare and benefits. Further public works were undertaken in 1956 when Melbourne

hosted the Olympic Games, and thereby the erection of temporary housing for the thousands of visiting athletes in the neighbouring suburb of Heidelberg. Titled the 'Olympic Village', this was tagged to later become public housing, in effect dramatically increasing the concentration of people in the area who were unemployed, single parents, and on welfare. In this period Preston and Reservoir were almost completely working class, at an early stage of family formation, and Anglo Saxon – large migrant groups were not to settle until some year later. Gradually the assorted infrastructure of hospitals, schools, local 'strip' shops, and services started to be established. However Preston and Reservoir quickly gained a reputation as lawless, social ghettos,

They were considered the 'boonies' – the end of the line. When we met people [at dances] we would never tell them where we were from or they'd turn their back on you. Or, if I'd been to a dance in the city, my only way to get home in those days was to catch a taxi; I would always tell the driver 'East Reservoir' after I got in, otherwise they would refuse to go...

It was just a dumping ground to put people when no one wanted them....For most of us, we saw success as moving out, and that's what most of us did when we could – to Epping or Mill Park, or other nicer suburbs... (ibid).

However these previous residents also reflected on a sense of solidarity and common destiny amongst many of the residents. Much socialising relied on town hall dances, family visits, sports, games and church youth groups – as there was limited television, commercial entertainment, or shopping - and hotels were closed at night and on Sundays. The local economy also relied strongly on local producers and shopkeepers such as butchers, bakers, hardware and banks. These dormitory suburbs also meant women stayed at home while men went out into the workforce. According to interviewees,

Most of the families had lots of young kids, not like the families of today, so we all grew up together, went to the same schools together, and later to the same pubs....

Everybody played either footy, cricket, or netball if you were a girl.....People couldn't go far because they didn't have a car, or at best one per family. If you couldn't walk, you wouldn't go. Most of my mum's friends were other people in the street, and my cousins and uncles lived nearby. Every weekend there seemed to be someone's birthday, or some other reason for us all to get together, and they were big numbers because families had lots of kids. (ibid)

Interviewees also talked of "local codes of social conduct" that dictated a range of acceptable and unacceptable norms for interacting with others, such as when visiting, partnering, dealing with people in authority, and talking with people from 'out of town':

If there was a disagreement, it was often sorted out in a fight at the pub. But there was never any threat of violence or assault in the streets. It was assumed that children would play in the streets, and people would be out in public...people knew each other and would look out for you. (ibid)

This view of course does not consider various levels of family violence that might have gone on behind 'closed doors'.

By the time Australia's long boom ended in the 1970s, Darebin was regarded as the "shoe capital of Australia", thus leaving its workforce and community at the epicentre of the turmoil caused by policy decisions to deregulate, privatise, withdraw government intervention in the economy, and transform the social security system to an 'active society' model (Cass 1988). As one ex-factory owner said,

I could tell you the date it happened, it was August 1973. My partner in the factory phoned me up and said 'Have you read the paper? That fucking Whitlam, he's dropped the tariff barriers. (ibid)

Working class jobs were further decimated over the next two decades as successive governments sold off instrumentalities which provided local employment such as the SEC and the Tramways Board. Much of the workforce in and around Darebin - some having done decades of unskilled, repetitive work - were in a very disadvantaged position in either finding other jobs, or retraining to enter the 'knowledge' economy - thus increasingly found themselves 'restructured' into unemployment, underemployment, casualised and insecure work. According to an interviewee ex resident who worked in the textile trade in Preston "*[t]he only people left in clothing are Vietnamese families who work as outworkers from home, with the help of extended family, or get cheap stuff made overseas and sell it from the back of their car*". (ibid)

A further socio-economic shift for Preston and Reservoir occurred in 1970s when the Colonial First State corporation took management of the giant "Northlands" shopping complex. Described as the "premier shopping location for the North", it consists of over 75,000 square metres of floor space, including a Hoyts cinema complex, and over 200 specialty shops. Alongside the 1990s legislation to permit 7 day shopping, this also effectively spelt the death of many of the small strip-shops that had grown up over earlier years, and thus further devastated the local, interdependent economy. These local operators cannot compete with Northlands which provides seven day per week, undercover shopping, in heated or air conditioned surroundings. While some stores are locally owned, many belong to a national or global chain of stores such as McDonalds, Gloria Jeans, Myers and The Athlete's Foot – accounting for annual traffic of over 11 million customers and a turnover of over \$380 million in 2005 (www.northlandshopping.com.au November 2005). According to one respondent at a consultation for the Community Building Demonstration Project, "*Tyler Street shopping precinct needs revitalising – after the supermarket went, things died. The sense of community goes with the small family shops*" (DCBDP 2003a). The deleterious effect on community through the continued expansion of these complexes has become a topic of concern through reports such as "Melbourne 2030 – Planning for sustainable growth" (DoI 2002), however the government has also shown it has little power to act.

Multiculturalism and community

The 1960s to the present saw Preston and Reservoir gradually become increasingly multicultural, partly as a result of the concentration of public housing, but also as newly arrived groups consolidated in the area. The main thoroughfares of Darebin became lined with hundreds of specialty shops from Italian tailors and ice-creameries to (in more recent years) Asian supermarkets and restaurants, thus bringing in an extremely diverse range of foods, cultures and norms. At the 1996 census Darebin had one the most diverse populations in Victoria, with residents originating from 126 countries and forty percent speaking a language other than English at home (City of Darebin 2005) - more than one in four people do not speak English well or at all. Countries of origin include, from highest to lowest proportion, Italy, Vietnam, Greece, China, the United Kingdom, Asia, East Asia and the Pacific (DCBDP March 2002).

It is worthwhile to briefly consider some of the implications of migration in terms of 'community'. Migrants bring a diverse multicultural mix that greatly enhances the range of norms and values in their adopted country. The traumas of migration to Australia are also well documented, as people leave behind their links to place – including their extended social networks and rich historical-cultural roots - only to find themselves living as relatively excluded 'inferior' citizens in a society that is relatively individualistic, stratified, and racist (Pettman 1992; Vasta & Castles 1996). In effect, the process of migration can leave many people bereft of 'Gemeinschaft' community. This outsider status can also have the contradictory effect of enabling new communities to band together in common adversity, and to encourage associations that celebrate and maintain their common cultural heritage, and contact with the 'old country'. Darebin has a rich diversity of such organisations that operate as cultural associations.

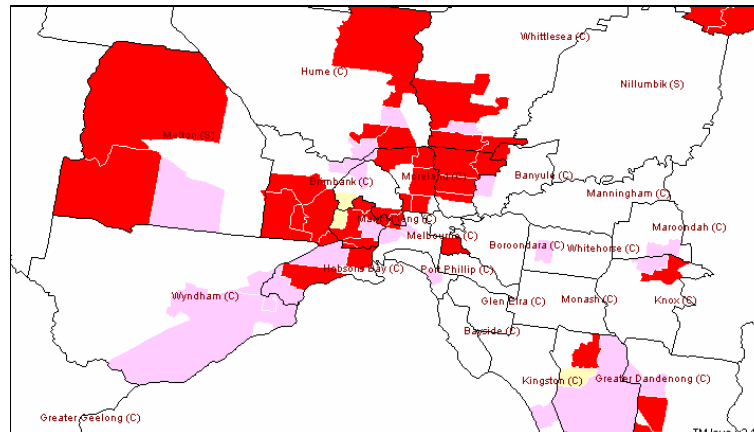
The State Government chooses Darebin for community building

In 1999, the Victorian Government decided to chose Darebin as the site for 'community building' based on comparative statistical data from all Victorian local government areas. The Burden of Diseases data - which measures the prevalence of illness - rated Darebin as the 68th worst off area out of a total of 78 in the state (Darebin Community Health Centre 2000). The Socio Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) rated Darebin as the 27th most disadvantaged out of 32 metropolitan municipalities in 2001 (City of Darebin statistical fact sheet 5). Electric Gaming Machines 'density' was another figure used by the state, calculating 9.36 machines per thousand adults, compared to a Melbourne metropolitan average of 7.51, rating Darebin as one of the worst affected areas in the state (DCBDP March 2002).

Spatial distribution of disadvantage in Victoria

The following is taken from a major recent data-set that claims to show the distribution of cohesion and disadvantage within Victoria

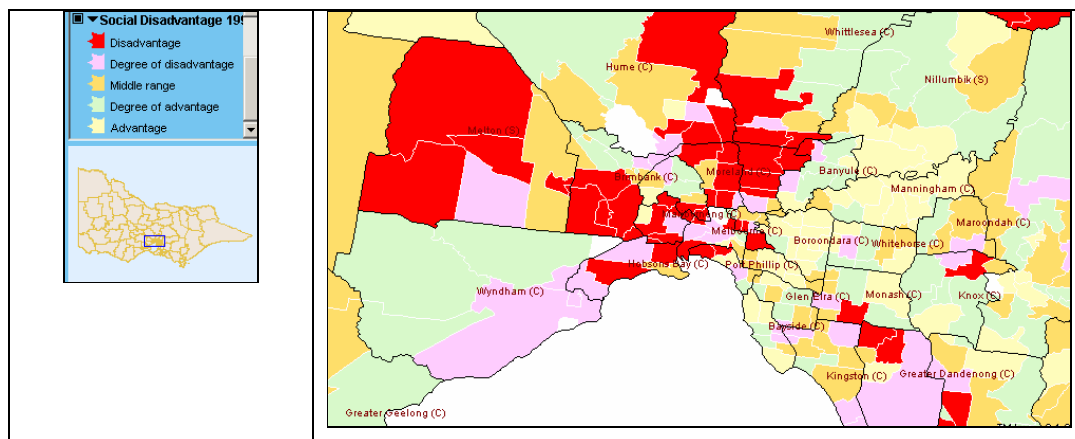
Figure 18: Map of Melbourne suburbs' 'social cohesion'



(Vinson 2004)

The areas coloured red represent low social cohesion, pink represents 'middle' and tan is high. The picture suggests that areas of low social cohesion are concentrated in the North and West of Melbourne (Darebin is located between Moreland and Banyule).

Figure 19: Map of Melbourne suburbs' 'social disadvantage'



(Vinson 2004)

This image is the flip-side of that above, suggesting that in 1999 social disadvantage was concentrated in areas to Melbourne's North and West - as compared to the East which is relatively advantaged, suggesting that disadvantage is disproportionately distributed across different areas. The indicators of primary social disadvantage used to calculate this data include unemployment, low income, early

school leaving, unskilled workers, child abuse, psychiatric hospital admissions, criminal offences, mortality, and disability / sickness pensions (Vinson 2004, p46; see also ABS 2001).

Although the City of Darebin is a relatively small geographic area it is also widely stratified in terms of housing values and social class – with this trend increasing dramatically in recent years. This is partly a reflection of increasing inequality in Australia, but more particularly as a result of a boom in inner city house prices – themselves the result of various government policies. Selected parts of Darebin have thus become highly attractive to housing speculators and young professionals wanting access to employment in the central business district (CBD).

Table 1: Residential property prices in the City of Darebin 2001 - 2004

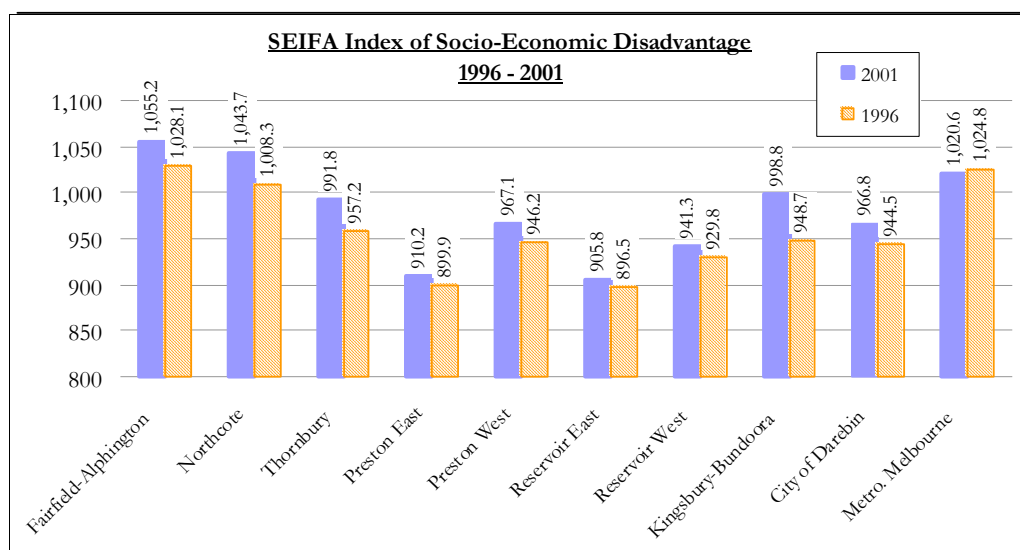
	2001	2002	2003	2004
Median house price	255,000	300,000	329,000	341,000
Median unit/apartment price	170,000	205,000	229,000	232,000
Median vacant house block	105,000	146,000	208,000	240,000

(DSE 2001-2003)

The above table shows that median land prices rose nearly 230 percent over three years from 2001 to 2004. Units increased by around 50 percent in value between 2001 and 2003, and houses by about 35 percent. However within Darebin prices vary widely. For example, some suburbs have median housing values of \$513,000 (doubling in value between 2000 and 2003), while others have median prices of \$284,000 – even this ‘low’ figure is still out of reach of most ordinary families (City of Darebin 2006; April 2004).

As one example of this gentrification, the number of professionally employed people in Darebin is now higher than the Melbourne average (City of Darebin June 2001, p11). This gentrification may explain the City of Darebin improving on the disadvantage index from between 1996 and 2001, from 30/32 to 27/32 (City of Darebin, August 2004). The following index of Socioeconomic disadvantage is calculated from data including income, education, unemployment, and occupation. A lower score represents higher disadvantage. All areas have improved between 1996 and 2001, some significantly - except Melbourne metro which has slipped back slightly. The most disadvantaged suburbs have improved least: Preston East and Reservoir East.

Table 2: The index of disadvantage, Darebin and precincts



(City of Darebin August 2004)

Selecting the project location

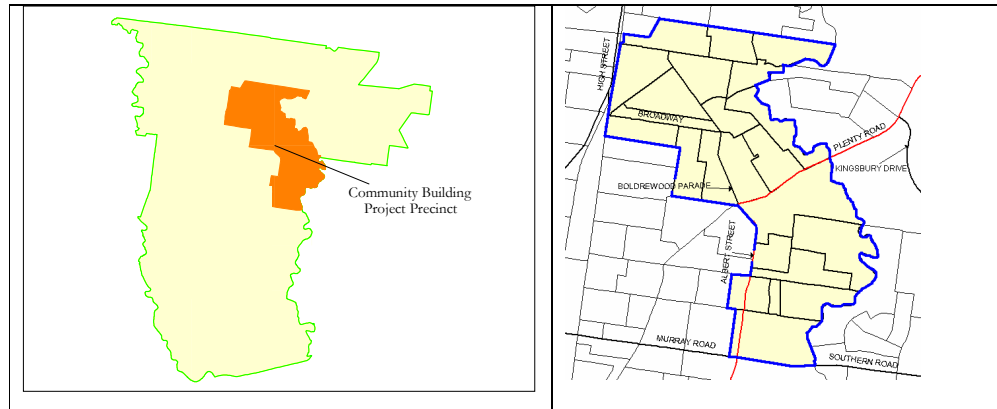
Once Darebin had been selected by the State officials as the municipality for a Community Building Demonstration Project, a ‘committee’ of local officials and residents was formed and asked to choose a discrete geographical sub-location, according to the following state-imposed criteria:

- *Evidence of social and economic disadvantage (equity).*
- *Identified local level leadership.*
- *Impact for effort (bang for the buck).*
- *Readiness/preparedness [for community ‘building’].*
- *Resilience of the community. Building on existing connections.*
- *Location and identity. Needs enough scale (approximately 10,000 people) and diversity to help with broader whole of government reform.*
- *Foci – Community infrastructure.*
- *Potential for demonstrating solutions including policy.*
- *Hot issues.*

(Community Building Meeting Minutes, October 30 2001)

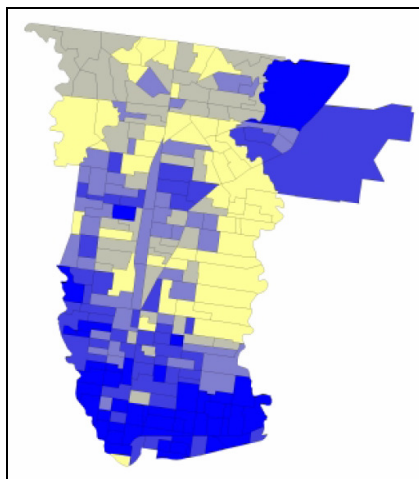
The suburbs of East Preston and East Reservoir were well known as areas of disadvantage, and were thus chosen by Council planners who for some time had been seeking strategies to focus improvements on this area. However, the size and focus on disadvantage came at the behest of state officials. The following image shows the location of East Preston and East Reservoir within the municipality.

Figure 20: The project location within the Darebin municipality



The following represents East Preston and East Reservoir relative to other districts in the municipality. According to this SEIFA map the lighter areas represent a lower (more disadvantaged) rating.

Figure 21: SEIFA image of the Darebin municipality 2001

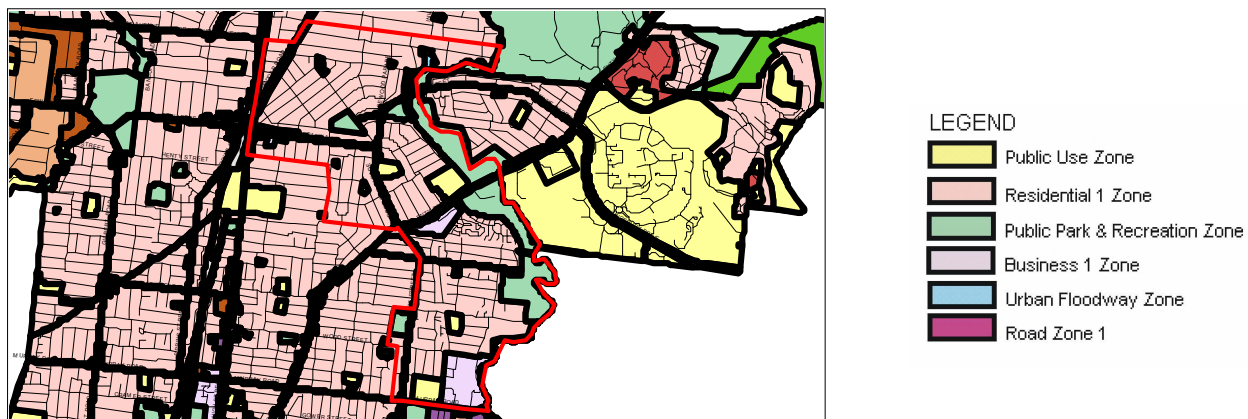


(City of Darebin August 2004)

Land use in East Preston and East Reservoir data

The following image gives a graphic outline of land use zoning in the Community Building location and surrounds. This shows mainly suburbs of planned residential housing, intersected by major roads. The location is bounded along the Eastern edge by significant natural reserves and public parks including Darebin Creek. The large public use zone to the East is Latrobe University which has hundreds of hectares of extensive parklands. There are only selected, discrete business zones – with the nearest industrial areas located in West Heidelberg just to the South East.

Figure 22: Land use in the project locations



East Preston and East Reservoir - General statistics

The population of East Preston and East Reservoir is ageing, with **one quarter** being over 60 – around 10 percent higher than the Melbourne average. More than 1 in 5 people have a disability. Despite the established nature of the community, it is still quite fluctuating, with over one-third of people changing address in the last five years – consistent with Melbourne averages. One in five people of driving age have no motor vehicle (the average for Melbourne is one in ten) meaning that many people use public transport or walk. The population per household is very low, with approximately **6 in 10 households having either one or two people** living in them. More than 1 in 4 families have only one-parent – which is nearly **double** the Melbourne average (DCBDP March 15, 2002).

Table 3: Key Demographic Features of East Preston and East Reservoir

	Melbourne average	Project location
Individual income \$169 - \$299	19%	34%
\$800 or more	18%	6.5%
Median annual individual income	\$20,800 - \$26,000	\$10,400 - \$15,500
Family income \$300 - \$399 per wk	8%	16%
Less than \$700	26%	40%
Indigenous people (% of population)	0.4%	1.8%
Residents purchasing their dwelling	27%	15%
Residents living in Ministry Housing	3%	19%
One parent families	15%	27%
Type of employment: manual, prod.n, clerical, transport, labouring	29%	71%
Unemployment	6.5%	13%
Year 12 education or equivalent	43%	28%

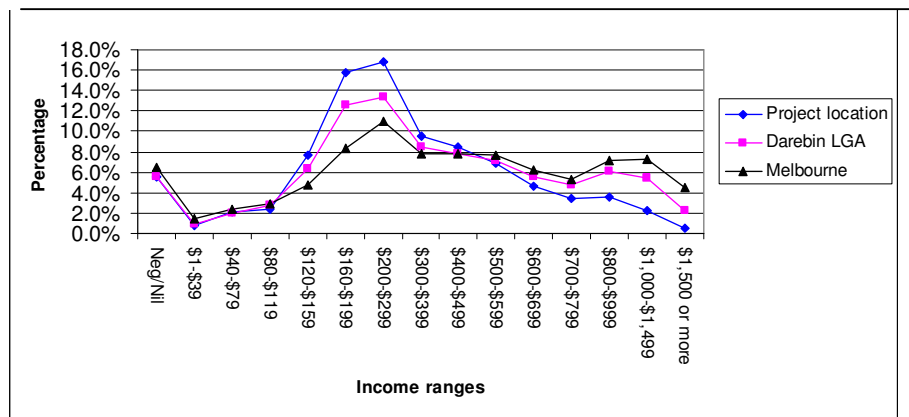
(DCBDP March 15, 2002)

Unemployment has steadily fallen in the last eight years to around 13 percent, remaining at around double the Melbourne average. Education levels are also consistently lower than average, with over 1 in 4 people leaving school prior to age 15. Employment type of residents in East Preston and East Reservoir is consistent with a working class area, with around 70 percent of employed people in manual, production or clerical positions. The general demographics are summarised below.

Incomes

The following graph shows that people in the project location earned a higher proportion of low wages – in the \$120 to \$299 dollar range, and a lower proportion in the \$700 plus range.

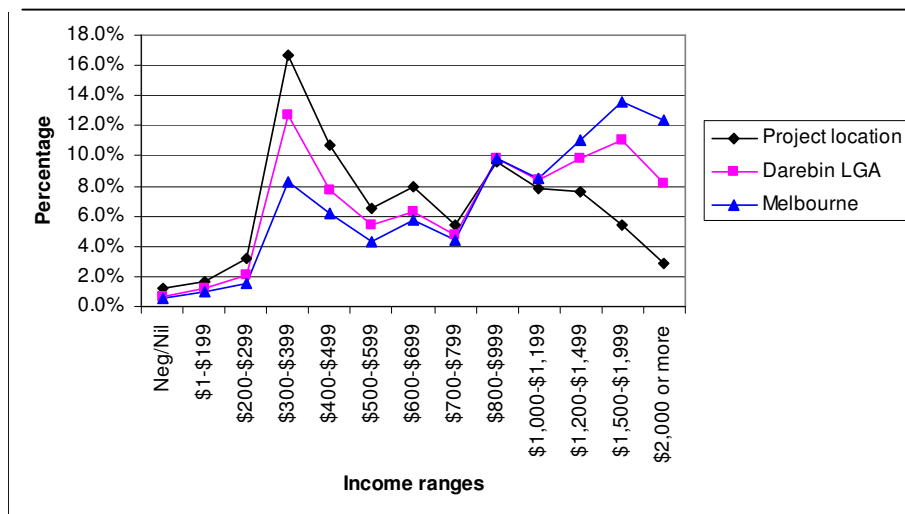
Table 4: Individual weekly income



(OCB 2001, p10)

Family income figures show a similar pattern.

Table 5: Family weekly income



(OCB 2001, p11)

Higher proportions in the project location earn lower incomes, and fewer families earn higher incomes. 16 percent of people were earning \$300 to \$400 per week, compared to the Melbourne average of 8 percent. Approximately 40 percent of families earn less than \$700 per week - which Council regards as below the poverty line - compared to 26 percent in Melbourne. There are few high income earners relative to Melbourne, with one-sixth earning \$2000 or more (City of Darebin 2005). Individual median incomes are around \$10,500 to \$15,500 per annum, or approximately half the Melbourne average (OCB 2001, p11).

Burden of diseases and other social indicators

Hospital use, Medicare use, and mental illness are higher than state averages (Darebin Community Health 2000). Particularly high risk groups are Koori's, teenagers and young adults, being diagnosed with health issues related to diet and sexually transmitted diseases. Older groups are at risk of preventable diseases caused by smoking, alcohol, overweight and blood pressure. For children the main concern is asthma, which is thought to be caused by poor air quality, followed by poor immunisation statistics and high levels of abuse. Early parents are also a high risk group for health-related problems (Darebin Community Health 2000).

Child abuse statistics also indicate that notifications and substantiated cases in Preston and Reservoir were two to three times this of comparable local areas (though numbers are absolute, not a proportion of population, and this could also be a result of greater levels of surveillance) (City of Darebin, Stronger Families and Community Strategy, Year unstated, p4). Many other social indicators are available on the area, including crime, child protection, school ENTER scores, Risk and Protective Factors (Bond et al 2000), school completions, pensions and benefits, etc., but further exploration of this information is not possible within the limits of this thesis.

Gambling in Darebin

Since 1992 when poker machines were first legalised by the State Government, 16 venues in Darebin have grown to house nearly 990 'pokies'. More than one-third of these are concentrated in or near East Preston and East Reservoir, placing the ratio of machines to people at nearly four times the state average. This pattern of the gambling industry concentrating installation of Electronic Gambling Machines in low income areas is consistent across the state as those areas generat the highest profits.

Total poker machine losses predicted in the 2004-2005 financial year for the 'greater' Darebin area are \$86.7 million - providing the State Government with an estimated \$28 million in taxes. In the same

year, the East Preston and East Reservoir pokies will siphon \$30 million out of the local economy (The Darebin Leader June 2005).

Table 6: Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) gambling

	18+ Population	Number of venues	Number of EGMs	EGM per 1000
E Preston & E Reservoir	9,220@	4*	269	29.18
Darebin	105,328#	16	986	9.36
Melb. Metro.	2,664,449#	341	20,006	7.51

*venues within 2 kilometre radius of study area @1996 Census #2001 population projections (Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation)

Gambling losses in Victoria are estimated to rely on 1 to 2 percent of ‘problem gamblers’ who spend \$5,000 to \$10,000 each (Davidson 2005, p21) – when estimated relative to the population in the project location, this equates to around 200 people. Clearly the various challenges faced by the people are neither an act of nature, nor are they simply ‘their own fault’.

Housing in the project location

Consistent with a suburban development, 70 percent of residences in East Preston and East Reservoir are separate dwellings, with the remainder consisting of flats and semi-detached dwellings. Visually the area presents as relatively neat and clean, with all the ‘usual’ suburban amenities of nature strips, street trees, and footpaths, as the following photographs show.

Figure 23: Image of local housing



Public housing is a main feature of the area, with around 20 percent – or 2000 people – living in around 1000 “ministry” dwellings. Per capita this is close to seven times the Melbourne average (DCBDP March 2002). A number of sizeable public housing estates were built between the 1950s and 1970s, with the intention that they be modern, cost-effective, and efficient. A large number of ‘spot purchases’ of individual dwellings were also made by the public housing authorities – leaving five

types of public housing stock. In the project location there are 3 main housing estates, each with 4 to 8 blocks containing 6 to 8 units. The walk-ups have external stairs and some have external laundries, as shown in the following images:

Figure 24: Images of public housing estates



With demand far outstripping supply for public housing in Melbourne, some applicants may remain on a Ministry of Housing “waiting list” for up to 7 years before they receive an offer. To deal with this predicament the housing authorities manage a system of ‘segmenting’ their waiting list into 4 groups. This has significant implications for the population mix in housing estates, the levels of disadvantage, and the likelihood of positive social relations between neighbours. The first priority is those people who are categorised as ‘recurring homeless’ - usually younger people who have been in and out of intensive homeless services for some time and thus more likely to have experienced traumatic backgrounds. They may be singles, couples or single parents, but must be assessed by housing officers as ‘at risk’ in relation to employment, education, legal, financial, parenting and relationships. The second priority group on the waiting list is people who require ‘supported housing’, such as those in wheelchairs or with other high support needs. The third group is those who are assessed as having ‘special housing needs’ which in effect means they are currently living in unsuitable housing for personal, family or health reasons – this group includes some newly arrived refugees. The final group, who may have to wait for up to 7 years, are those who are currently in housing and are not in ‘urgent’ need – typically people on low incomes in the private rental market. People have the opportunity to refuse their first two offers, with the ‘walk ups’ being the least preferred option because of their small size, age, difficult access and poor design – as a result they are only taken as a last resort by people with little alternative choice.

The process of public housing allocation creates a concentration of highly disadvantaged people living in the same area, often with critical personal needs, and living in sub-standard accommodation. For example, a major concern for the Reservoir tenants group – mostly representing elderly, frail and established residents - has been the increasing number of drug-using young people, and an increasing proportion of people with mental illnesses. The tenants group has spent many years trying to change these processes in order to make the estates more liveable, as well as to increase funding for maintenance. Most of the estates in the location have had no significant refurbishment since they were built, except for several that received funding in the 1990s under the Federal ‘Better Cities’ program (see below).

Figure 25: Image of public housing estate renewed under the ‘Better Cities’ program



Many reports detail the social problems being experienced in these types of housing estates (Bessant et al 2003; Bryson & Winter 1999; Digney 1999; Guinness 2000). As well there are many reports detailing the experiences of people living in similar areas (Bryson & Winter 1999; Costello 1996; Digney 1999; Gibson et al 1996; Peel 1995, 1997, 2003).

Aboriginal people

At the time of this study, more than one thousand residents from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent are living in Darebin (not necessarily in the project location), making it one of the most concentrated populations in Melbourne. This is partially explained by a certain ‘critical mass’ but also the attraction of a range of specialist Aboriginal services that have developed in or nearby the area, such as the Aborigines’ Advancement League, the Gurwidj Koori Neighbourhood House, and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.

Darebin as a place of infrastructure and physical assets

East Preston and East Reservoir are very well serviced by retail facilities, having fifteen shopping locations nearby (and the Northlands complex) that are all used by local people. In terms of economic activity Darebin has over 5,000 businesses. Public and private facilities in or near the area include bowls, indoor skating, tennis, football, golf, a velodrome, an indoor sports stadium, an international sports centre, four swimming pools, leisure centres, and over eighty kilometres of bike paths. There are social club facilities, sports clubs, halls, and meeting places for groups including scouts, senior citizens and maternal and child health care.

In terms of education, the broader Darebin municipality has twelve primary schools, seven secondary schools, five preschools, libraries, a technical college, a U3A, an adult education service, neighbourhood houses, and Latrobe university. There are many churches, multicultural support services, dentists, doctors, nursing homes, and a hospital. The municipality also boasts an extensive network of arts organisations in the fields of dance, singing, music, performance, theatre, visual arts, writing and circus.

Figure 26: Location of some assets in Darebin



Darebin Community Health Centre

The Darebin Community Health Centre is a major no-cost or low-cost public health service, purpose built in the centre of the suburban housing estate of East Preston. Established during the Whitlam era in the 1970s, it has since come to be one of the major congregating points for people in the community

and its programs are significant part of many people's live. Of interest to this case study, it also became a central location and partner in the "Community Building Demonstration Project".

The Community Health Service is managed by a locally elected Board of Management, with a mandate to have a whole-of-health focus, and to prevent the use of tertiary and acute services. The stated values are closely aligned to community development, including to:

- *Work within a model which recognises a holistic view of health, as a state of social, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being*
- *Value the wisdom and experience of clients and carers and other members of our community and to actively encourage their contribution*
- *Deliver accessible services by minimising financial, social, cultural, language, physical and geographical boundaries. (www.dch.org.au)*

Since its inception the staff numbers of the community health service have steadily climbed to over 100, and a total budget of \$8.6 million. The very diverse range of programs include podiatry, physiotherapy, optometry, occupational therapy, needle exchange, nutrition/dietary, speech therapy, youth services, Koori access, community liaison, support groups, fitness, cultural groups, employment, and parenting – many with a community development emphasis. The main services provided in 2003 were general health (\$2.1 million), dental (\$1.9 million), medical practitioners (\$0.9 million), counselling / social work (\$0.7 million), aged care (\$0.7 million), and health promotion (\$0.4 million). Darebin Community Health also provides many other services in conjunction with other local human-service organisations such the 'Moreland Hall' drug and alcohol centre, and the 'Breakeven Gambling Service'.

Local government – the Darebin City Council

Darebin Council is the largest single employer in the municipality, with over 800 staff and a budget of over \$90 million (City of Darebin 2004). The mandate, policies and services provided by Council affect the community in many intimate ways, with responsibilities including the development of infrastructure, planning, open spaces, traffic, arts, libraries, and economic development. The largest proportion of the Council budget is expended on human services and culture/leisure, totalling around \$20 million per annum (Darebin 0506 budget appendix C). Human services include aged care, disability, youth, children's, maternal & child health, family support, Aboriginal, and multicultural services.

The Council has become increasingly aware of the extremes of wealth and poverty within its boundaries, and has sought ways to respond to this appropriately and equitably. For some time before the Community Building Project commenced it had evolved a Darebin Neighbourhood Strategy in response to the following identified context:

- *A community always changing, with increasingly high expectations,*
- *A community able to think globally, but acting (often passionately) locally,*
- *A community crying out for connection at a local level,*
- *A community tackling complex problems requiring sophisticated and integrated solutions,*
- *A continuing national focus on competition,*
- *Never ending demands on Council services,*
- *An increasing pressure for short term responses, perhaps at the expense of the long term stewardship of assets; and*
- *A community where disadvantage exists and where Council must demonstrate local leadership and advocacy. (City of Darebin, March 2001, p1)*

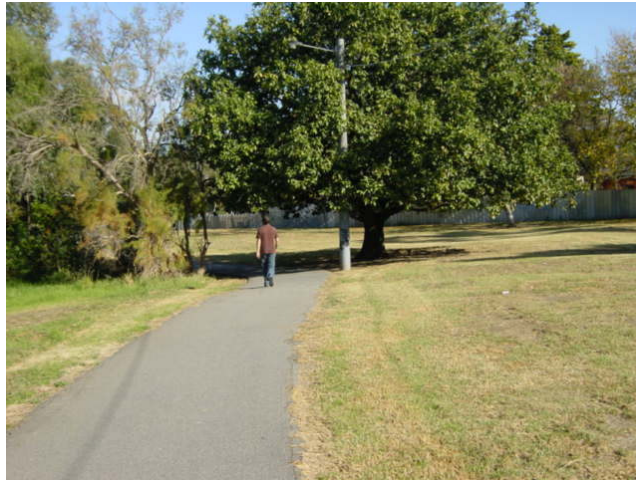
In order to respond to these issues, Council set out to address local disadvantage in neighbourhoods through the implementation of a range of programs and ‘social justice’ initiatives that focus on economic development, employment, access and equity, poverty, problem gaming, community consultation, aged and disability, drug and alcohol, community safety, food insecurity, public health, and community development. Council also promised to advocate strongly on behalf of the community and to, “...support [the] community in their own advocacy efforts” (City of Darebin, March 2001, p15). In short, the Community Building Demonstration Project was about to arrive as a junior partner in a complex and historically situated milieu.

Darebin as environment

The following images show that, despite the East Preston location being an intensively developed urban environment, significant tracts of public land have been maintained. These reserves near the location include 900 hectares of public parkland, a wildlife reserve, wetlands, grasslands, a significant section of the Darebin Creek, and Bundoora Park. These have been maintained by multiple government instrumentalities, often with pivotal support of volunteer parkland conservation groups and advocates – including the Darebin Parklands Association, the Friends of Darebin Creek, and the Rockbere Conservation Group.

Figure 27: Land use showing environmental amenities





Council itself has also identified environment as a major priority, while stating that a “sustainable city” is a part of its future plans. As part of this commitment, Council undertakes tree planting, revegetation, waterway rehabilitation, volunteer support, funding and various policy frameworks. This can often be a controversial role given the ever present pressure for intensive development “*[t]he responsibility that Council is acknowledging can sometimes be at odds with the views of current, local communities; and Council is identifying here the need to balance sometimes competing demands*” (City of Darebin June 2005, p8)

Darebin as party politics

Many residents and local officials proudly assert their more-or-less working class backgrounds and connections with community-based organisations, public services, unions and the Labor party (at an international level, Council has a sister city in East Timor, and Council officials were involved as official electoral monitors in that country’s vote for freedom). At both the levels of state and federal politics the area has always been comfortably held by Labor candidates: local Councillors are predominantly Labor; as are currently all 9 state parliamentary representatives (6 of whom are Ministers in the Bracks government). Unfortunately, being a safe seat has meant that it was often ignored by politicians of both persuasions, as it does not hold the sought after swinging voters of ‘middle Australia’.

Darebin stakeholders fighting for the welfare state

The Preston and Northcote Community Hospital (PANCH) Campaign

Some of the historical factors have led the Darebin community into a long history of fighting to get assets. During the 1950s local residents fundraised and campaigned to create a hospital in the North –

eventually their collective efforts led to the Preston and Northcote Community Hospital (PANCH), which was seen as a symbol of great pride and achievement. When in 1996 the Kennett government announced that, as part of its cuts to public health funding, PANCH would be closed and the site sold to a private hospital consortium, it served as a lightning rod for 'left' activists, Labor politicians, and trade unionists who sought to defend their hard won gains of the 'welfare state'. The government in opposition made a campaign promise to build an alternative hospital. The Preston Reservoir Progress Association formed a subcommittee called "*People for PANCH*" who began organising rallies, petitions, newsletters, delegations, letter campaigns and street theatre. Despite these efforts, the campaign was unsuccessful, and PANCH was sold. However Bracks announced upon his election '*New PANCH Health Service Rises from the Ashes*' (Media release, June 24 2003) – agreeing to build a \$7 million service in the former car park of the old hospital. While the new service is not 'stand alone', it operates as one component of a network of local public health services – in particular the Darebin Community Health Service (Australian Institute for Primary Care 2000; Preston Reservoir Progress Association).

The Northlands Secondary College Campaign

Northlands Secondary College has one of the highest Indigenous populations of any secondary school in Victoria, and is of great importance to the local Aboriginal community. The school is widely regarded as having a unique curriculum that is culturally relevant and helps students to overcome the hardships of mainstream education – for example receiving honorable mention in the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991).

In 1993, when the Kennett government announced the closure of 300 schools, Northlands was targetted. Parents, students and teachers fought the closure and, after the school was locked-up, continued to run classes on the lawns and at the nearby Northcote sports pavilion. The Northlands resisters led a three year court battle, despite facing a strenuous defence from the State Government. Eventually the full bench of the Supreme Court approved the reopening of the school, basing its decision on the grounds of equal opportunity. The school is the only one of those targetted that continues till today. Coincidentally, the same school Principal became a committee member of the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project.

Darebin as joined and dis-joined government programs

How does the modern, joined-up state operate 'on the ground'? In this section I have an opportunity to briefly explore this bureaucratic reform-agenda from the perspective of the various outlets of government services – my aim is to set the scene for how this affects efforts to influence community development.

The trend in State and Federal governments to ‘incentivate’ existing human services organisations to work together, or to fund them to create new networks has been underway in Darebin for several years. As has been discussed earlier, this approach is claimed to have multiple beneficial effects: to create a new logic for reorganisation of government service ‘entrepreneurship’; to transform the ‘end-user’s’ experience of services – in effect making them ‘seamless’; finally, to create community and/or solve intractable social problems (Considine 2002). The actual programs operating in Darebin total many hundreds – as diverse as employment, education, training, immigration, multicultural affairs, planning, police, health, housing, justice, youth, transport, infrastructure, women’s, industry, aged, disability, child care and indigenous issues. Currently there are numerous experiments underway to encourage and facilitate more coherent cooperation between these various networks – thus all are potentially implicated in the Community Building Demonstration Project. I will briefly outline a few of these experiments in order to give a taste of the current climate, in particular to illuminate some of the implications for locally based workers and citizens who are attempting to understand and act in this new ‘logic’.

Primary Health Care Partnerships (PCPs) are a significant recent initiative described as a “...major reform in the way services are delivered in the primary care and community support services sector in Victoria” that will, “put consumers at the centre of service delivery” (Primary Care Partnerships). PCPs work across the full range of private and public health services through activities that focus on planning, health promotion, service coordination, protocols, information sharing, electronic referral, training, and evaluation. The North Central Metro PCP, auspiced by Darebin Council, involves dozens of directly and marginally related health-community workers and services in and around Darebin, with the stated aim to,

Plan cooperatively to better understand the impact of socio economic status and the social and physical environment upon the health and wellbeing of consumers (North Central Metro PCP).

The **Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network (INLLEN)** is another such post-modern public administration initiative. It was funded by the State Government in 2001 with the aim of increasing retention rates, and improving employment and education ‘outcomes’ for young people aged 15 to 19 years. It describes its mission as to ... *build partnerships, which put learners first and improve living, learning and earning outcomes for young people and adults in our communities.* (Inner North LLEN)

The LLEN model claims to encourage a disparate range of ‘stakeholders’ to build knowledge of each other’s existence; become sensitive to the variety of issues and priorities and perspectives; and thereby act more collegially, collaboratively and creatively in achieving a common goal: targeted outcomes for

young people. The various stakeholders on the INLLEN include unions, employers, schools, Technical and Further Education providers, Group Training programs, welfare services, local government, and various related government departments. The INLLEN also is represented by the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) which is a high-level research group that advocates on behalf of their issues within the government. In this way it is hoped that ‘grass roots’ knowledge is able to be used to influence structural-policy change.

The **Stronger Families and Communities Strategy** is a federally funded initiative that focuses on service integration at the early childhood level. The government states that,

Strong families with healthy, well-adjusted children require strong, stable communities in which to grow. To this end, the Strategy also continues to support communities and initiatives building capacity, leadership and mentoring. (SFCS 2004-2009)

To this end, the strategy facilitates collaboration and partnerships amongst key programs in early childhood, parenting, relationship skills, mentoring, community building and volunteering, with an emphasis on “[a] community development approach to improving outcomes for young children” (SFCS 2004-2009).

Other examples of this style of initiatives exist, but would be too detailed to discuss in any more depth here. The Darebin Stronger Families project, which ran simultaneously with the Community Building Demonstration Project, wrote in a report to government:

Phase one of Darebin’s approach saw a comprehensive mapping of a range of diverse issues. Through a process of community consultation and rigorous analysis of local information the mapping resulted in a number of key priorities being identified. The appointment of a community development facilitator through phase two will assist Council and partners to develop a clear focus for further funds to be allocated. In particular the issues identified relate to family violence with a focus on the Northern part of the City of Darebin. This issue has been selected for further analysis as well as a coordinated community based response... (City of Darebin Stronger Families and Community Strategy, p3)

It should be remembered that local government has a strong involvement in most of these developments – for example through the participation of elected Councilors and senior officers on many boards of management. These initiatives also require the participation and activation of community-minded citizens in their implementation.

Darebin as community based ‘resistance’?

Darebin also has a rather extensive assortment of activities that ‘grass roots’ citizens are involved in – the aims of which range from problem alleviation, to fighting against imposed changes. These groups

are most often associated with community based welfare services, but in some cases operate as autonomous entities. Below I provide a few select examples to give the flavour of these activities – they range from being unfunded to having budgets of several hundred thousand dollars.

- The “Voices on Loneliness’ project aims to connect older people with each other and the wider community. A group of older people, supported by a project officer, interview and talk to isolated older people and try to involve them in social and community activities.
- The “Creating Healthy Environments in Preston/Reservoir” project provides recreational opportunities for newly arrived people particularly Iraqi men.
- The “Koorie Elders Group” aims to acquaint older Koories with mainstream health services.
- “Feeling Good About Using Public Transport” is a peer support program aimed at people with disabilities who are not comfortable with using low-ride buses.
- The “Men’s Shed” aims to promote mental health in men by providing a space for them to build social support networks.
- The “Beyond Survival” program takes a social action orientation with people who have experienced childhood sexual abuse.

Other free or low-cost groups include the Peer Led Drug Education Project; Vietnamese Youth Program; Girly Stuff Group; Women’s Massage and Relaxation for over 50’s; Play Groups; Greek Women’s Group; Living Longer Getting Stronger; and Happy Wanderers Walking Group.

Social capital in Darebin

As I have mentioned in earlier chapters, the concept of “social capital” has become the latest manifestation of ‘community’ in public policy discourse – yet the concept itself, and its measurement, remain highly contested (Baum et. al. 1999; Putnam 1993; Vinson 2004; Winter 2000). Given the evolving and complex nature of these discourses – and the associated lack of consensus about definitions – I do not intend to empirically analyse social capital in East Preston and East Reservoir. However it is worth reflecting on the *relationships* or ‘Gemeinschaft’ that may exist between people in this community, given the factors discussed above such as geographic location, physical layout, history, population, and relationship to the broader political economy. How strong or weak might be the norms of reciprocity, trust, cooperation, collective action and social networks? Or, to use the measures proposed by Onyx and Bullen, how strong or weak might the following be:

- *Participation in local community;*
- *Proactivity in a social context;*
- *Feelings of trust and safety;*
- *Neighbourhood connections;*
- *Family and friends connections;*
- *Tolerance of diversity;*
- *Value of life;*

- *Work connections.* (Onyx et al 2002, p35-36)

There may be some tendency for these to be strong through close physical proximity, a sense of common adversity or history, and comparatively less wealth stratification. An ageing population and a high proportion of people on pensions and benefits would imply that residents have more time to spend together and build relationships. A highly multicultural local population could lead to great enrichment through diversity, and thus *tolerance of diversity*. People in the community may also be engaged in high levels of *territorial, categorical and functional modes of community development* (Boulet 1985) because they have worked on campaigns together (like PANCH), they are tied to local place and various forms of local ‘commons’ (Bollier 2002) through lack of mobility, and local activities are organised according to categorical interests, for example, through age specific or cultural specific groups. From the perspective of popular movements, residents may be more able to define themselves outside of traditional categories, and thus both resist their ascribed identity and create an alternative to mainstream labels (Broham 1996).

However there are also many factors that are likely to lead to diminution of social capital. The damaging effects of material poverty are well documented, as well as the recent intensification of ‘active society’ policies such as increased surveillance, tightened eligibility, and the change from a rights-based discourse to one of ‘dole bludgers’ (Jordan 2000; Bryson & Winter 1999). Likewise, multiculturalism can lead to suspicion, conflict and discrimination unless groups with highly diverse mores are given adequate opportunities, support and orientation to meet and overcome suspicion and develop relationships. According to one respondent at a consultation conducted as a part of the Community Building Demonstration Project,

There are problems with assimilation with newly arrived migrants. They must learn to fit in with our way of life, they should live our way, they need to learn English before they come. (Reservoir East Primary School Parents and Friends Group) (DCBDP 2003a)

This can be exacerbated by intense public housing developments which tend to create a ‘ghetto’ effect as a high proportion of people with disrupted lives are moved into the area. Finally, I will mention the increasing commodification of society: the intensification of competition, withdrawal of support, and the running-down of the public sector, which effectively excludes people who have fewer financial resources from quality education and health, while simultaneously exposing them to increasing advertising and promotion of material values as the source of all ‘social good’. As discussed in Boulet’s model (1985), there is a dialectical relationship between activities at the institutional, political-economic, and everyday life-world ‘levels’ that tends to force people more into the private sphere.

Darebin as a place of strength and value

As a part of the community building project, a range of consultations were conducted with residents, community leaders and service agencies. One consultation which was trying to elicit a strength-based response (Beilharz 2002; Kretzmann, McKnight and NWU 1993) asked the following question, “What would you nominate as key strengths of the area?” Following is a selection of some of the answers:

“Great community ...friendly, nice people.” (Holy Name Church)

“It is a working class migrant area...feel comfortable...lots of people with similar experience.” (Why Be Lonely Club)

“Close to Aboriginal health services.” (W.T. Onus Hostel)

“Lots of history in the area – a good sense of community.” (Holy Name Church)

“I live near a town called Reservoir and I have good friends.” (Reservoir East Primary School)

“In our streets we have Italians, Greeks – Orthodox and Greek – all are very friendly...we have Chinese next door.” (Holy Name Church)

“I’m happy where I am, 43 years I’ve been here. The only thing that would make me move is if they built on the reserve.” (Sullivan’s Reserve Barbeque)

“You can see big trees, you can hear birds.” (Sullivan’s Reserve Barbeque) (DCBDP 2003a, p20)

These statements show that there are a very wide range of aspects that are important to different people: many people have things they love about their area, and this often relates to feeling comfortable and familiar with people. The project consultation report reached the following conclusions about what people like about their area:

- *The natural and built environment (parks, reserves and shopping centres);*
- *Their family, friends and neighbours;*
- *The accessibility of services, especially public transport. (ibid p25)*
- *There is a friendly, diverse and active population characterised by words such as strong, resilient, coming together, new Australians, friendliness and a sense of activism and participation.*
- *There is access to broader government services represented by Government and Council, schools, transport, sporting facilities, environment, health, and housing services.*
- *There is a depth to local services and activities characterised by words such as accessibility, open space, Community Health Centre, networks, venues and Self Help Groups. (ibid p2)*

A short video produced as part of the Community Building Project to reflect community strengths and needs is available to be viewed on CD in the sleeve at the rear of this thesis. This provides an insight into the various views people have about their community strengths and needs (filename: Community Strengths)

People feeling healthy and well

People attending a festival as part of the Community Building Demonstration Project in East Reservoir were surveyed by a community health worker and asked, “What contributes most to your health now?” A selection of the responses are provided below, showing that people valued more than just an absence of illness and, when ethnographically ‘prompted’, were able to name an inspiring range of environmental factors, a few of which are quoted below. The bolded heading is the category inductively chosen by the worker after analysing the data, with quotes from the respondents following:

Our own attitudes and the encouragement of others

It's so important for me to get out of the house, not to stay at home and stagnate. My home is the place I want to be to rest and come to at the end of the day, but it isn't where I want to be all the time. I took care of Max and when he died, I had to find a way of getting back out and into things. Family is important, but you can't rely on your family to keep you active and “alive”. I took up writing at the age of 75. It makes my brain work, it keeps me thinking. But it is also really important to have the right outlook on life – to be open, to want to join in.

I'm now learning to use a computer. Graham, one of the creative writing group members has really encouraged me, so I am. (Marj pointed to the story she had written in the collection of short stories “Belonging”).

The importance of inter-generational connections

I have an 89-year old mother and a while ago I was beginning to notice that she was becoming depressed. I wanted to do something, to respond to her sadness. Then I got an idea, where I asked my daughters(young women) to write to her. That connection has really helped her come out of herself and be interested in others and in herself again. My daughters are also really enjoying this new connection. It has all grown in ways that I just didn't expect.

The nuclear family just hasn't helped us. It has stopped our children from having relationships with other adults, including older people. I have two children and they really only have me and their father.

I really enjoy having a “nanna” relationship with the children of my niece. The children bring me up to date with what is happening in the lives of younger people, but also they give me a chance to come down and play games, to have fun. I can give them that time, which sometimes their parents don't have time to do.

Learning from each other

I don't have a family here, so being able to mix with other women is really important, to seek their advice and learn from them. I have three kids, all teenagers and I like listening to women who might have children who are a little older, just so that I can learn from what they have done.

Feeling useful and contributing

It's so important that we don't get bored. It's easy for women my age (80+) to be bored, to not be part of things going on, to not be active. I've been doing volunteer work for a long time (I had to give it up recently) but it's so important to feel that that we are useful,

that we are contributing to other people, that we have something to offer and that people appreciate this. Someone said to me “Gee you’re good” (for all my volunteer work). It’s not about being good, it’s about wanting to feel useful and a part of things.

I’ve got to be everywhere and it makes me sad that people can’t be part of things. I think it’s really important to pass on information of all groups and events that are going on. I take photos of all sorts of thing so that others can enjoy what I’ve seen. For example, we went out on a bus trip. All the others went in to play the pokies. But it was such a beautiful day, I went around and took photos of all the things around and then showed it to everyone, all the things that they had missed out on.

The importance of being welcomed

I’ve been here in Australia for 3 months (from Korea). In my first month, I was unhappy, everything was hard, I kept asking myself what I was doing here. In my second month I met some Australian people. I was at the park with my children and they began to talk to me. They are my neighbours and they have become my friends. Now I am in my third month here, and I love being in Australia. My new friends have helped me.

In response, one of the other women in the group shared information with her about a Minister in a local church that she is a part of, who is Korean – to help her connect with other Korean-Australians... and from there the conversation affirmed how we need all sorts of people in our lives – people who share and people who are different from our own experiences, in particular our own cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

(Mansourian, J. 2004)

A personal narrative, March 2002

The Council staff on the Demonstration Project committee have asked me to come to the first Christmas break-up for the program. I know my way around these suburbs because I once lived nearby. When I was an ‘unemployed youth’ I attended the now defunct ‘Community Youth Support Scheme’ in Northcote. But that was on in a major retail area, and I know little about these back streets – the Community Health Centre is not easy to find. I wonder what it would be like living in these suburbs? How would I talk to my neighbours if they obviously came from the four corners of the earth? It feels unfamiliar. I have no experience or empathy with this area, much less idea of how ‘we’ should proceed with ‘community building’. Fortunately I am part of a bigger program and I can rely on others who might have some ideas.

An hour later I have met the residents and staff at the barbeque. They all seem friendly enough and, thankfully, welcoming of my being there. I am starting to feel enthusiastic now that I have a sense of the people that this is supposed to be about: it also feels good to part of something practical once again. After dinner, people are absorbed in apparently important conversations about (I think) local life and the project. The obvious option, rather than imposing on a conversation, is to clean-up the tables and scrape the barbeque plate – the consequence of which is not only doing mundane and unappreciated work, but getting barbeque fat splashed on my pants. This seems very ‘low tech’ – a long way from either the text book analyses, or real social problems.

On the way home my thoughts turn once again to money. After 20 years my wife and I have nearly paid off our mortgage. I had promised myself I was going to ‘downshift’ by this time, but it seems I’m too afraid – would it mean career suicide, what will my friends think, and who will look after me in my retirement? A financial adviser just told us that we are financially better off to negatively gear than to put money in the bank. But it is gradually dawning on me that this means investing in corporations that are ruining the environment. I’m disappointed in myself for the gulf between my ‘talk’ and my ‘walk’. What does it mean when Hoy says,

...instead of speaking of the same subject who has come to see its true interests, we should recognize the same subject as becoming increasingly discontinuous with itself, not as more truly itself. Or at least, different stories are equally possible....perhaps we should say that subjects find themselves using different discourses in the present than in the past. (2004, p211)

Closing discussion

I have attempted to explore the Community Building project location from a range of perspectives. This commenced with a global-satellite view, followed by a historical review which situated the current relative disadvantage within many decades of government *economic and social policy* decisions: it is neither a sudden phenomenon, nor can it be easily reversed or ‘blamed’ on the people living there at the moment. Following this I provided a brief range of more detailed statistical data which illuminated the nature and extent of resource inequality both within Melbourne and within Darebin, thus confirming some of the earlier discussions of global-local political economic decisions which increasingly exclude those people considered ‘unbankable’. However the community have also been involved in more than passively accepting the impositions they experience, but have often been involved in shaping, transforming and resisting. This critical description of the Darebin project area also touched on some important assets, including the key resource of the local public sector / human services, and their latest attempts to metamorphisise into a ‘joined-up’, seamless web. Finally I returned to the micro experiences of people and how they attempt to make a life within their (our) own community. In the next chapter, I will analyse the gradual unfolding of the project that hoped to learn about working with local people to identify their needs and take steps to fundamentally address them.

CHAPTER 6:

THE DAREBIN COMMUNITY BUILDING DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter tells the story of the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project, covering the period from September 2001, when initial notice of the imminent funding of community building projects was given to the Darebin Council, to mid-2005, when funding for the project expired. Over this time, a range of activities across several levels of operation and across organizational domains were undertaken to ‘build’ the community. Consequently, I will report on and discuss the role of the state and local governments, the non-government organisations, the project staff and the members of the community as they worked with each other to gradually understand what community building or development *might be* through successive efforts of planning, action and re-planning. In the spirit of this thesis, I am particularly interested in illuminating questions that were raised previously and especially in the Third Chapter, in the context of the historical and theoretical overview of the developments of ‘community’ and ‘community development’ in Australia, the UK and the US and in the Majority World. After presenting a descriptive overview of the project, I shall return to a more reflective stance, using the conceptual framework and referring to some of the debates discussed in the Third Chapter.

The community building project involved many activities ‘visible’ to participants and non-participants alike (especially also visible to the ‘monitoring gaze’ of representatives of the funding body, the State Government) – such as meetings of the committee of management, various formal proposals, and several large-scale promotional events. But these were underpinned by less easily discerned human interactions amongst individuals and groups of participants, combining in dynamic, mutually influencing ways. In reconstructing the project as a case study for the thesis, I have tried to do justice to both the visible foreground and the more ‘hidden’ background as well as to their interpenetrations. As discussed in the Chapter on Methodology, the intention is to present the work as a hermeneutic ‘story’ that is understandable, holistic and provides a ‘thick’, interpretive description. Whilst I use a primarily chronological frame, I also pause to reflect and analyse events that are particularly important or illustrative. Data for this section have been gathered through participatory observation, interviews, analysis of minutes of meetings and other documents and reflective work in diary format, often relating back to personal experiences in a variety of settings.

Stage One: Initiating Community Building in the Project Locations

Two years after its election, the Bracks Labor government prepared to implement an experimental community development initiative. In September 2001, the Office for Community Building (OCB) sent a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Darebin City Council, requesting a meeting to talk about Council's willingness to participate in a Community Building Demonstration Project. The State Government had identified the nine (at the time) most highly disadvantaged locations in the state, based on data mentioned in previous chapters, and now wanted to consult with potential 'recipients' prior to making any announcements. Three senior Council officers were delegated to meet with government officials in order to hear about the innovative – and still very 'draft' – proposal and discuss how it might best proceed. Soon after, the three Council officers then met with a hurriedly constructed '*Local Consultative Committee*', consisting of three residents and a Darebin Councillor. As no policies or guidelines were yet available from the Office for Community Building, these initial conversations were provisional – but the offer of \$500,000 to address disadvantage in the municipality was regarded as virtually impossible to refuse. The 'committee' agreed that Council should proceed, and met with the newly appointed Head of the Community Support Fund (as previously mentioned, a fund which is 'fed' by taxes imposed on gaming venues in Victoria) to inform him of such.

Within a few weeks the Victorian Premier publicly launched a new "*Community Building Strategy*" at a gathering of community representatives held in the Western suburbs - with Darebin being announced as one of the locations. The Premier defined the evolving and somewhat amorphous initiative using concepts like,

...establishing long term cooperative partnerships at the local level;
...local leadership, communities control their own future;
...resources directed where most needed;
...business contribute to communities, [and a]
...change in government to be more responsive to the local" (Bulletin Nov 2001).

Two days later the Darebin Mayor, Cr. Kairouz, announced the project in a press release using the following descriptors:

...the Community Building program is an important initiative to develop the capacity of local communities to address social and economic disadvantage and the impacts of rapid social change – such as unemployment, social isolation and family breakdown.

We hope the program will help alleviate poverty, respond to economic and social disadvantage and create employment opportunities ...Community Building initiatives are extremely important, as they allow people to have a say about the future well-being of their own communities, identify priority issues and develop ways to address them...

The program will also focus on the need to develop broader alliances and negotiate support and resources from external agencies such as government departments. (Media Release October 10, 2001)

The project stakeholders thus began to - both – respond or ‘tune in’ to emerging and partly existing discourses, and create their own ones about ‘community building/development’. These constructions included the *local* as the site for change, *disadvantage* as the primary issue (poverty, family breakdown), *community control and self-determination* as a process, and government - business - community ‘*partnerships*’ as a course of action. These themes were to continue to evolve as they became part of the schema through which community building/development was mediated between the state and the people.

A week later, on the 16th of October, the Council was requested to hold a public meeting *prior to the end of the year* in order for ‘community representatives’ to consider aims, target areas, auspice arrangements, and to identify a working-group to develop a program proposal which, they were told must be delivered to the OCB by March 2002. Council was also instructed that the public meeting should be attended by at least thirty to fifty representatives from business, Council, government, non-government organisations and local people (DCBDP October 29, 2001). Thus, from the inception of the project, state officials took a directive role in determining many aspects of the process: Council was given very little time or authority to engage local people, or decide the nature of the consultation they thought most appropriate based on their understanding of and connections with the local communities. The imposed time-line of a public meeting in December, and a project proposal in early in 2002 was also extremely rushed, given the embryonic nature of the project, people’s prior commitments, the expectation of *volunteer* engagement, and the impending Christmas break. It was also uncertain as to whether the as yet amorphous ‘*project proposal*’ might have to mirror traditional funding applications – with pre-determined ‘outcomes’ and ‘performance criteria’ – in conflict with the rhetoric of an evolving, community-driven, ‘bottom-up’ process. Nevertheless, a public meeting was hurriedly agreed, with reservations expressed by one of only two local volunteers present, who,

...expressed her concerns about being involved in organising a process which does not meet local community requirements. Would like to be sure this is the ‘real thing’. (name removed) does not wish to be part of a process that raises expectations and then does not deliver. She is concerned this could lead to loss of credibility for Council and this group. (CBDP Minutes, October 30 2001)

A Council forum was hurriedly organised to plan the public meeting and, more importantly, to discuss what Community Building might mean – particularly given that Council was likely to be identified as responsible for either success or failure of the project by both local people and the state. Records of the meeting show that Council was concerned about these expectations,

[g]iven the small amount of resources available to achieve these large-scale and complex goals it is important to consider whether or not there can be a primary objective and what is realistic. (Darebin Forum Discussion October 29, 2001)

Councillors were also cautious about endorsing an as-yet-unknown process that was interpreted by stakeholders in multiple and contradictory ways. Given the lack of policies, guidelines or protocols from the state, this meeting wrestled with a range of important questions:

- *To what extent is Community Building an empowering process for communities dealing with disadvantage and poverty?*
 - *To what extent is Community Building a strategy to try and organise communities to help achieve large-scale government objectives?*
 - *When targeting the program, how do we identify areas of social and economic disadvantage without problematising areas and focusing on individualistic responses rather than community participation and local democracy?*
 - *How will the program be handed over to the community to run?*
- (Darebin Forum Discussion October 29, 2001)

Despite these misgivings and prescient reservations, in late November invitations were sent to 70 people for a meeting to be held between 5.00 to 8.30 pm, on the 11th of December at the Council chambers. The invitation stated:

This occasion provides the opportunity for a wide range of people in Darebin to:

- *be informed about and discuss the Community Building Initiative;*
- *contribute to identifying ideas and opportunities for the demonstration project over the next 3 years; and*
- *learn about opportunities for funding to support other Community Building projects.*

In particular, we expect that a planning group will be formed to work together on developing the demonstration project, and to involve residents and agencies in that process. This group will be supported to plan, gather knowledge and prepare material on the design of the local project. (City of Darebin November 27, 2001)

It eventuated that 36 people attended on the night (City of Darebin, December 11 2001) and briefly discussed their ideas about the benefits and outcomes of community building, the possible areas within Darebin for the project, and the issues to be considered – with the notes of this meeting reflecting a mix of idealistic enthusiasm, realistic caution and puzzlement. The question of auspice was a critical one, as the Council wanted to both ensure the project had a capable auspice, but not be perceived as dominating it. When the question was put to the attendees “[h]ow should the auspice proceed?” one local resident responded “*Council!*” The only other organisational (auspice) option at this time was the Community Health Centre, but their manager (who was involved in the committee) thought it beyond their resources. This recommendation was accepted, and Council became the auspice. In an interview, a Council officer later commented about the gap between rhetoric and possibilities for good process:

The OCB are worried: “What if the community says no! They can’t say no!” So they enforce involvement and dictate to the project. Later, when a whole lot of bureaucrats turn up, they see a whole lot of people there and say “Great”! (interview June 15th 2004)

The Proposal Planning Group and its process

The ‘*Proposal Planning Group*’ received 15 nominations, consisting of Council officers, two local Councillors, community groups, non-government organisations, one trader, a representative of a Member of Parliament, and only several local residents. They ranged from highly-paid executives, to base-level welfare workers, a local minister of religion, semi-volunteer councillors, and full-time volunteers. Most had a strident commitment to the community, which they had demonstrated through many years of dedicated involvement and – in some cases - activism. At the same time, as could be expected, there were a few participants who signed-up in order to achieve political motives or, in the case of representatives of MPs, had been told by their employers to do so. Most had heavy commitments through either full-time work, or a mixture of work and part-time, volunteer obligations. The closer they were situated to the ‘grass roots’ community, the more they faced restrictions of financial resources, dealing with the jargon, and managing the necessarily imposed, rather formal procedures. It is important to note that this very diverse group of collaborators did not know one another, and thus needed practical time for building a working relationship if they were going to share their various perspectives and work effectively together to puzzle through the rather substantial challenges facing them. However the timelines made these “wishful ideals” impossible, thus, in practice, leaving the major responsibility to a middle-ranking Council officer who had been given time release to support the proposal group.

The pro-forma ‘*Application for Stage 1*’ provided by the government required the group to answer questions that included:

- **Issues:** ... please indicate the key issues affecting your community...
- **Project Description:** ...what is your project attempting to do? What are the broad goals for the project?
- **Project Process/es:** What process/es do you propose to use to engage the community and how will you ensure that the diversity of the community is represented? E.g. indigenous, people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- **Project Benefits:** What do you anticipate will be the key outcomes and benefits from the project?
- **Partnerships:** Who are the partners...and what will be their input?
- **Budget:** Income and expenditure
- **Project Location:** Where will the project take place? Describe the proposed project location/s and community that will be the focus of the project. What process have you undertaken to make this choice?

(DCBDP Project Proposal Year One, March 15, 2002)

Clearly, it was an onerous, unrealistic and hypocritical expectation that an under-resourced, unrepresentative, diverse and newly created planning group could answer such questions in the time constraints – particularly given the lack of any clear program guidelines, commitment to ongoing funding, or protocols specifying principles or procedures for ‘partnering’ with the state. The Proposal

Planning Group set about writing a submission for “community building” within the known parameters of \$500,000 being expended in 3 one-yearly stages – though this soon changed to make Stage One of six months duration and the final stages over the balance (despite the advice of Council). The group developed a relatively sophisticated 39 page submission (ibid) which addressed the questions while attempting to foreground the following: the need to think holistically about systemic issues; the desire to consult and engage widely; and the aspiration to establish processes that would cede control of the project to the communities in question, as reflected in the following objectives from the “[a]ction pathway to be pursued”:

- *Seek out all relevant information about the location and its neighbourhoods eg services, organisations, networks, nature of the population etc (via Mapping Project and Area Profile).*
- *Ensure local residents receive relevant information about the Demonstration Project (via Promotions Strategy, Action Plan for Engagement, Neighbourhood Forums).*
- *Identify, map and engage the local skills and knowledge possessed by community members and other stakeholders (via Mapping Project).*
- *Link with existing social networks, services and structures in defining the scope and thrust of the project/s (via consultation and planning activities, Neighbourhood Forums, Governance Committee).*
- *Identify the required social, economic and political and financial resources that will lead to the creation of the sustainable productive assets (via consultation and planning activities, community visioning, Neighbourhood Forums, Governance Committee). (ibid.)*

There were four expected ‘project benefits’, described as:

Whole of Government / Whole of Community Cooperation and Partnership” [defined as]...*new collaborative multi sector partnership*” [based around, amongst other things] ...*agreed protocols... and ...client service charters*

Community Capacity Building / Social Action Networks [involving]...*social capital creation, ...managing local affairs, ...participation in community and social action projects.*

Consultation and Planning [involving] *greater insights and deeper body of knowledge about the nature, assets and potential of the location [upon which] a range of innovative strategies [will] have been established.*

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement [to] *check progress in responding to neighbourhood priorities and to understand the outcomes.* (ibid pages not numbered)

The Planning Committee tried to counter the Government’s imposition of pre-determining ‘expected outcomes’ by expressing their desire to see this document as a ‘stepping-stone’ to a more community-driven action plan:

To ensure community ownership over local economic, social and environmental priorities, the Planning Committee will raise this list of issues with the community during the Stage One process and ultimately throughout the project, to identify which issues should be made priorities in the Action Plan. (ibid)

Thus, the first year goals stated a desire to,

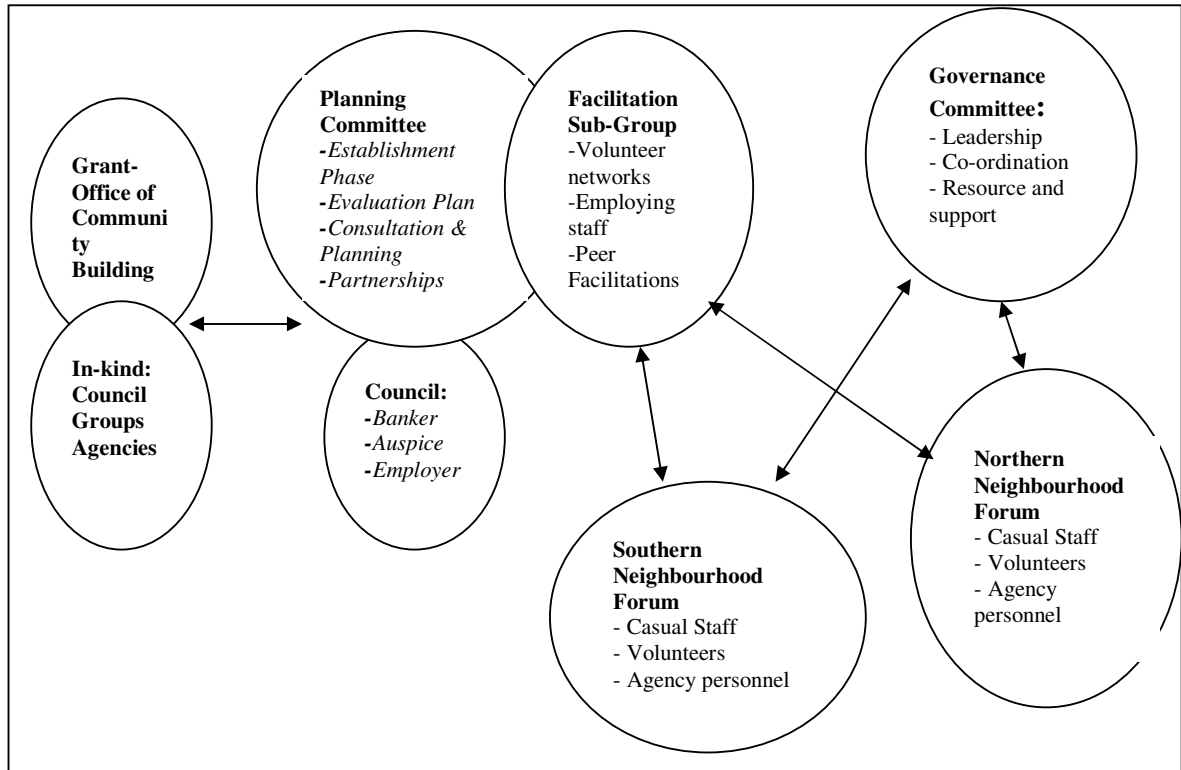
...build on existing capacities; improve social opportunities / participation (in community activities and social action); bottom-up ownership; consult / listen / hear their views; establish multi sector partnerships; and share responsibility for local members' solutions. (ibid)

At the same time as prioritising process over outcome, the proposal also began to express a vast range of priorities for action. For example, the proposal discussed a number of ambitious concepts across the domains of *economic, social, cultural and environment*, including *equity, justice, resistance, struggle*, “[to] engage local people to become a dynamic force for transformation”, *empowering, participation, social opportunities and community governance* (ibid), thus evoking the vocabulary of many previous episodes of community development and associated activist traditions.

This proposal was also developed at great expense to the healthy functioning of the Proposal Planning Group. They had no time to build relationships, or share their various understandings of the task ahead, and had little resources or information. However they were required to consider what were proving to be increasingly difficult questions – and felt responsible for achieving benefit for the community. After a series of intensive meetings their commitment, confidence, energy and enthusiasm were severely tested.

As time was moving on, a number of structural – organisational strategies were put in place in order to set the project in train. The Planning Committee was renamed the “*Community Building Working Group*”, to reflect its intention that it be only temporary, while overseeing the transition of power to two ‘*Neighbourhood Forums*’. Each Forum would consist of local residents, one group based in the Northern precinct and the other in the Southern precinct. To facilitate these two Forums, two temporary community workers would be employed for a period of four months, as “[p]ast experience suggests that when project staff are appointed up-front, there is a real risk they become the defining influence rather than responding to the respective local planning group priority issues and requirements” (ibid). A ‘*Governance Committee*’ was also planned to be established, with the dual role of advising the two Neighbourhood Forums, and liaising with the State Government. A concept map was developed as follows:

Figure 28: Proposed management process and project team links



(DCBDP March 15 2002, Appendix 13)

Darebin Council strategically stated its goal to limit its role to “*auspice and banker*” for several reasons, some political and some pragmatic. Firstly, staff and elected Councillors continually stated that community self-determination was the goal. Secondly, Council was concerned about carrying costs if and when State Government funding ceased in three years time. Thirdly, Council was concerned about whether the increasing expectations of the project could be met, given the given the political and resource limits imposed on Local Councils and which I have indicated in the previous chapter.

Meeting with the Community Building Working Group

I will briefly present and discuss my first encounters with the project to give an insight in the constraints it confronted. My first meeting occurred during the Christmas break-up barbeque I mentioned in the two vignettes I included in thesis. In March 2002 I attended my first Committee meeting which was held in the Council chamber, a venue set-up for formal Council meetings, with a large, oval shaped table in the centre and rows of tiered seating for the ‘gallery’ - neither welcoming nor friendly. The Committee consisted of fifteen people, four representing Darebin Council, one representing the State Government, five from local human services agencies, and five who were active volunteers in local services and community affairs. After brief introductions, we launched straight into

the formal agenda, chaired by an elected Councillor. It was clearly meant to be a *business* meeting, with most items, given my relatively recent arrival, well beyond my grasp. Thus it took me several months – and a good deal of determination - before I was comfortable or informed enough to contribute much to these meetings – an experience I suspect was common to many participants. In this process I found the tension between resources, expectations, complexity, politics and open-endedness very difficult to manage, as I will further discuss below.

In chapter Three, I have briefly discussed the dialectics between the *structures* of the global capitalist political-economy and the *agency* of people – in particular in the context of their ‘enactment’ of the social relationships on all levels (every-day, institutional and political-economic) as they are ‘determined’ by power and financial interests. As could be expected, the contradictory dynamics inherent in these relationships within and across the ‘levels’ were also reflected amongst members of the Planning Committee. A number of citizens had joined the committee to monitor that Council did not stealthily take over the project (as they and their constituent groups did not trust Council and believed this was their agenda). Another local organisation joined in order to achieve its long-term goal of accessing funding for a mini-bus – for which they planned to submit once the project began distributing funding. One participant and long-term local activist had joined in the hope that it might lead to a very major role in a project that promised to be innovative and leading-edge. Several Council staff were also highly paid executives who wanted to maintain their job tenure. I, of course, had my PhD interests – and ongoing employment in the sector - as key objectives. At the same time, there was a great level of idealism, inspiration and altruistic endeavour toward the goal of fundamental community change, as one participant indicated in the Proposal:

You can imagine my excitement that, now 20 years on, our State Government is embracing the community building process to foster social empowerment, community capacity and ‘social capital’ as key ingredients for ‘Growing Victoria Together’ (ibid. Appendix 9).

Council’s interests were to comply with the requirements of the legal contract to which it was soon to be a signatory, and to maintain a positive relationship with the State Government – from which it received funding each year – while also achieving improvement for its constituents. However, Council gradually found itself embroiled in a compromised position as it was allocated a ‘mediating’ role between the State Government and the local people. “Community initiative” might mean that local citizens would be critical of the state, or even take direct social action against it. How was Council and its representatives to balance these competing loyalties? How were they to give the project sufficient support to enable ‘success’, without taking over? How were they to be seen from both sides – government and local residents - as being ‘interested’ and supportive while avoid being asked to ‘take sides’? Finally, how could Council (and elected councillors) be identified with - at least some of – the potential benefits and successes?

The ‘agency’ of the people operating within the ‘structure’ of capitalism

The difficulties of praxis were to become apparent as the ideals of transparent, collaborative and respectful processes were to meet the dominant culture of individualism, competition and capitalism.

The ideals of process were stated in the proposal as follows:

The initial Proposal Planning Committee (PPC) has sought to set in place accountable and transparent decision making processes to encourage sustainable multi-sector partnerships, community participation among the representatives of community groups, NGO’s, Council, Business groups and the State Government. (ibid)

These intentions proved slow and labour-intensive to achieve in practice - where universalist claims are countered by post-structuralist relativisms and where both positions are saturated with often denied and uncritically accepted power differentials (Hoy 2005). The Planning Committee made many (time-consuming) efforts to develop democratic procedures that codified membership, voting rights, quorum and so on. Many concerted efforts were made in-situ to create respectful interactions, invite opinions, share leadership, be supportive, and air any objections. One unintended outcome was meetings becoming over-full, often running over time and leaving many unresolved items to be raised ‘next month’. This not only caused frustration, but at times a feeling of panic as we were constantly propelled forward without time to catch breath, or resolve the growing list of grievances and expectations which became increasingly frustrated as time went on while ‘nothing was being *done* in the community’.

The Planning Committee however had little choice but to ‘push on’. The project took on an increasing list of tasks, including a community-wide forum, a ‘*facilitation sub group*’, the employment of facilitators, an evaluation plan, an orientation activity for regional managers of government departments, and a public launch – announced as: “*The Honourable Bronwyn Pike, Minister Assisting the Premier on Community Building, will visit Darebin next week to help launch the Darebin Community Building Demonstration Project.*” (Media Release, 24 April 2002)

Within all these demanding activities, the committee still did not have time to explore its own conceptual framework for community building/development as a foundation for its future planning.

One sub-committee member raised the scale of the difficulties facing them:

The facilitation sub-group has been discussing various ways of approaching the development of an action plan for engagement for this project. We have been faced with several dilemmas:

- *what types of information do we need, for which audiences?*
- *what to do first?*
- *how to ensure the breadth of coverage for this project*
- *what resources are available to us during this stage?*
- *should we take any action prior to the worker being employed?*
- *how to respond to the sense of urgency to get things moving without*

compromising on having a planned approach?
- how do we let the community know what is in this for them?
(DCBDP July 2, 2002)

In this environment, no-one seemed to notice that the project complexity and effort was growing increasingly out of proportion with the actual resources allocated to it. One consequence was an increase in the number of sub-committees - and thus workloads - on the participants. The Planning Committee had intended to set aside time to broaden its membership base to be reflective of the people living in the local community. Instead an inexorable decline in membership began as there was little time for advertising for recruiting, welcoming, orientating or supporting prospective members. Those few people who did inquire soon moved on, and as numbers dwindled, more pressure was put on those who remained.

Government working in ‘partnership’ with the people?

A ‘*funding agreement*’ is an important tool which operates at the ‘institutional’ level and through which government (and other political-economic) intentions are mediated into the everyday life-world of the people as possible ways of relating become defined, codified and ‘crystallised’ (Boulet 1985). The first paragraph of the *funding agreement* highlights these contradictions between the various ‘levels’ (bolding added):

The Demonstration Project is a project of the Community Building Initiative of the State Government of Victoria for which the Office of Community Building (“OCB”) is the project administrator. The Initiative provides opportunity for local community groups to work together to achieve greater social, economic and environmental well-being for Victorian communities. (DCBDP Project Proposal Year One, March 15, 2002).

In an example of how the ideal of ‘Enterprising States’ (Considine 2001) unfolds in practice, these contradictions were widely felt by local participants, but rarely named or explicitly examined. How *in practice* was the “*initiative of the State*” to be balanced against the “*opportunity for local community*”? How would the signatories balance financial and other accountabilities with the necessary freedom to change project directions if circumstances demanded it? A more appropriate contract might conceivably have defined (or at least problematised) *the nature of the partnership*, the *goals of (mutual) learning and negotiation*; the *principles of the subsidiarity relationship*, where higher levels of governance and decisions making only intervene when the lower levels they ‘*subsidise*’ are unable to realise their intentions; the terms and conditions of the funding relationship; or certain *principles of self-determination and autonomy*, where the community determines for itself what it means to live well and how to do so.

Further, the State of Victoria as a putative ‘*partner*’, opted for an off-the-shelf funding document with the usual contractual clauses about variations, audit, review / amendment / termination, indemnity and waiver. Council was required to agree to a wide range of conditions set by the state including timelines, evaluation, participation in State Government initiated networks / training / forums and consultation, collaboration with certain departments, and participation in a partnership agreement with government bureaucracies (which, coincidentally, are never actually put in place by the government). In signing the contract, the City of Darebin was also required to agree to recognise the contribution made by the State Government in publicity about the project, including the requirement that “[t]he OCB reserves the right to publicise the benefits accruing as a result of the provision of the Project Funds...” (Office of Community Building 2003, p5).

Further, Council as funds recipient, was subjected to an accountability-reporting regime that was onerous and completely out of proportion with the resources provided – despite the Office for Community Building having a representative on the committee, as shown by the excerpt below:

Requirement	Due date
<i>1st Quarterly Report</i>	<i>1st October 2003</i>
<i>2nd Quarterly Report</i>	<i>1st January 2004</i>
<i>3rd Quarterly Report</i>	<i>1st April 2004</i>
<i>Stage Two Review Action Plan for Project duration</i>	<i>30th July 2004</i>
<i>4th Quarterly Report</i>	<i>1st November 2004</i>
<i>5th Quarterly Report</i>	<i>1st February 2005</i>
<i>6th Quarterly Report</i>	<i>1st May 2005</i>
<i>Final Demonstration Project Review</i>	<i>Due 6 weeks after the completion of the project</i>
<i>Final Evaluation Report</i>	<i>Due 6 weeks after the completion of the project</i>

(ibid p10)

It should be noted that the quarterly reports were substantially detailed documents, yet it remained unclear who was reading them in the State Government, what information they in fact wanted, or to what purpose they were to be used. It also proved difficult for the Council officer delegated to the committee to know how to report the complexity of an unfolding, ‘organic’ and highly experimental project to this ‘invisible’ audience.

Council made an early, fitful effort at challenging these impositions, and engaging in a more dialogic relationship with the state authorities, as shown in the following excerpt of a letter written to the OCB:

I was surprised and somewhat disheartened by the standard Funding Agreement forwarded to the Council for signing in relation to what I thought was a new way of

doing business both between levels of Government and Government and the community. Clearly, we have no objection to signing a Funding Agreement that demands appropriate accountability for the expenditure of public funds. However, this particular Demonstration Project was supposed to herald a reinvention of relationships between Government and communities. Therefore, a standard Funding Agreement ...very much implies that the State Government wishes to maintain an arm's length relationship from the Project. I thought that a prime objective of this Demonstration Project was to pilot a "joined up" approach to Government services at a local level. This would mean that the State Government is an equal partner in this Project rather than an "arm's length" funder. (Breen May 24 2005)

To which the government responded with a standard bureaucratic response:

As you are aware, your letter and concerns have been forwarded to the Legal Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet for consideration in regards to further revision of the standard Funding Agreement, where possible, for future use.... However, it is not possible to complete this process effectively in time for the current funding period. (Turnbull, date unspecified)

Council, for its part, apparently conceded that it should proceed within the institutional and cultural constraints that were rapidly becoming accepted as non-negotiable.

As mentioned above, influence from the State Government led the Darebin project committee to adopt as one of its four key intended outcomes a “[w]hole of Government/ Whole of Community Cooperation and Partnerships” goal, which “[d]rives change in Government Departments to be more responsive to local concerns and more effective in delivering services” (DCBDP January 22 2003). These sentiments are consistent – albeit unconsciously - with Rothman’s earlier mentioned ‘*Social Planning*’ model of Community Organisation. The committee also seems to have adopted these conditions relatively uncritically – with no discussion about why they were agreeing to this, what resources it might require, or what the real parameters of this intention would be – it was thus assumed to be an intrinsically benevolent, worthwhile, complementary and achievable agenda. There was however an early attempt by a member of the committee to better understand these conceptual ambiguities, as reflected in a recommendation to hold a special workshop:

Not only is the Community Building initiative complex, it contains different expectations, values and judgments as is normal when people from different backgrounds come together. Therefore, the Workshop could help us identify and understand these differences as well as focus on ways we can work together and build relationships to achieve common aims. (DCBDP May 28, 2002)

This suggestion was defeated by the Committee who – perhaps realistically – acknowledged that they were struggling to cope with more urgent demands.

Other structural arrangements equally started to supersede and direct – more or less explicitly - the practices at the local level. In April 2002, the Department of Justice (DoJ) was *appointed* as the ‘*Lead Department*’ and given the task of working at the interface of the Project and the several State

bureaucracies impacting on the locality, so as to achieve such *whole-of-government* intentions and processes – although, like most aspects of the project at this stage, guidelines were not yet well developed. The Lead Department was funded to employ a full-time worker who was to be based at Council for several days per week, but primarily to work ‘*in the community*’, as well as ‘*within and between*’ government departments on other days. This can be conceptualised as creating the links between to ‘coal face’ and the bureaucratic decision makers so sought-after in former community development projects of the 1960s and 1970s (Thorpe 1985). A less generous conceptualisation is ‘shuttle diplomacy’: part pragmatic problem-solving and bottleneck-clearing, part attempting to create another administrative culture focusing on opening up ‘*silo-thinking*’ and moving towards interdisciplinary and integrated approaches to issues and ‘places’. For its part, the Department of Justice (DoJ) underwent great machinations to have this appointment made as a “special project”, thus allowing them to competitively advertise for a project officer, rather than simply appointing from within their pool of existing government employees. To the department and the government’s credit, this position was also made full-time – whereas many of the ‘sister’ demonstration projects were only allocated a part time, internally appointed project officer.

A senior manager within DoJ was also delegated to participate in two main tasks: to attend the Committee, and to convene meetings of a ‘*Regional Managers Group*’ consisting of regional managers of the main state departments. At the State level, we were also told of the establishment of an *Interdepartmental Committee on Community Building*, to facilitate the liaison between all Lead Departments and the OCB (DCBDP May 7, 2002). It was rumoured that this process was itself highly problematic because of poor interdepartmental planning: specifically that the Department of Premier and Cabinet (as the most senior government ministry) had created the ‘Lead Agency’ model without allocating resources or consulting affected departments – although how this worked in practice was never reported ‘down’.

The committee’s three-year plan for ‘*community ownership*’

At this stage, the project had only been guaranteed short term funding, and no commitment had been received for even the three year period, presumably this to allow the government to withdraw from any project that did not meet its early milestones:

The Community Building Demonstration Projects have been funded for up to six or twelve months. In-principle commitment has been given for a three year duration to implement the projects in three stages. (OCB December 2002)

These ‘three stages’ proposed by the Office of Community Building themselves reflect the ‘ABC’ style community development (Henderson 1980) that was earlier critiqued in this thesis,

Stage One <i>and planning</i>	<i>Community consultation and engagement, partnership development</i>
Stage Two	<i>Implementation activity and projects</i>
Stage Three	<i>Sustainability planning and overall evaluation (OCB December 2002)</i>

While there were only two-and-a-half years remaining to achieve this plan, Stage One was further undermined when – yet again - the State faltered with providing promised funding on time. This meant that a community worker was not able to be appointed until almost *ten months* after the original public meeting.

With great expectations and relief, the project committee approved a job description for the appointment of a 6 months community development worker position – coincidentally, but significantly, having Council as the auspice, saving the committee from encountering the onerous legal and human resource policy requirements. A community development project officer was appointed (by yet another ‘interviewing’ sub-committee) who, as it transpired, would remain the project coordinator for the life of the project. Given the constraints of gaining a candidate in such an insecure and moderately paid role, the Committee was very fortunate to appoint a skilled and experienced worker. Although she did not have formal community or human services training, she was genuinely committed to the social justice ideals of the project, had a flair for entrepreneurialism, and worked respectfully with people. Her ‘key responsibilities and duties’ were to prepare for the establishment of the two Neighbourhood Action Groups, described as follows:

In conjunction with the Facilitation Sub Group, facilitate Stage One of the Community Building Project and implement and monitor the Action Plan for Engagement. Stage One of the Community Building Project is focused on a range of information, community engagement, consultation and planning activities focused on the Community Building target location and in line with the Project’s objectives. (City of Darebin June 2002)

The Department of Justice, at this time, also appointed their Project Officer – who, as I mentioned earlier, would work half-time in the Project location. Thus, to the relief of the slightly bedraggled committee and stakeholders, there were finally some dedicated resources ‘on the ground’. It remained to be seen how these would live within the tensions and operationalise the various expectations.

The *Proposal Planning Committee* was soon renamed the “*Interim Establishment Committee*” (IEC) – in order to reinforce the intention that it dissolve as soon as the grass-roots ‘Neighbourhood Action Groups’ assumed their planned take-over of governance. However members of the Committee discovered that there were no other willing volunteers stepping forward to revitalise the group, broaden its representative base, or provide an opportunity for some to resign. There were still a range of tasks to do, and, with the appointment of workers, extra responsibilities of supervision, management and planning. These dynamics favoured the paid, public sector workers (and those in NGOs), thus they (we) began to numerically dominate the committee at the expense of the ‘voice’ of the ‘community’.

I can offer one apparently simple example to highlight the demands and dilemmas for the few remaining volunteers on the committee. One such member raised her concerns about the financial expenses she was incurring as result of her involvement: items like travel, printing, phone calls, and so on. As she was on a low-income, these were of some concern – and she felt it set a bad precedent. With support from another volunteer, she raised the suggestion of a ‘*sitting fee*’ to reimburse such expenses. While the committee were sympathetic, it raised many potential problems. At one level, it could be seen by critics of the program – of whom there seemed to be many - as ‘*feather bedding*’, especially in a context where public awareness of such practices was heightened and where party-political discourse on the parliamentary level and in the public media regularly resorts to – often petty – disputes about such transactions (Bessant & Watts 2006). There remained as well many practical problems: how would the money be paid? Would it be a set fee or negotiated per hour? Who would be eligible (for example, to all people ‘*volunteering*’ in the project)? Could it create legal liabilities for Local Council? Who would monitor payments? Would it break a principle of voluntary contribution? Further, the OCB representative on the Committee was concerned that it may set a precedent for other programs across the state.

To resolve the impasse, a motion was agreed to reimburse the volunteer twenty-five dollars per meeting – and the matter was delegated to a further ‘sub-committee’ for enacting. However the person who raised the concern resigned - with some antipathy - and the process was never enacted. This incident highlighted two issues: one was the inevitable inequities that arise in a highly commodified, ‘*econometric*’ and risk-averse political economy – in this case between (often very highly-) paid Senior Officials, middle-level paid ‘grassroots-level’ workers and unpaid volunteers. The second illumination was of the tenuous and fragile nature of ‘social capital’ (Winter, 2000), or the relationships of trust and reciprocity that the project hoped to be able to precipitate and nurture between people.

Community consultation and needs identification

The major activity for Stage One was *consultation with the community*. This was intended to form a rational, empirical basis for deciding the future directions of the project. Specifically, the goals were to raise awareness of the program; identify the various existing community groups; engage potential collaborators (or conversely, engage the Community Building Project in the activities of already existing initiatives); and, most importantly, ‘*discover*’ and prioritise ‘*needs*’. The various theoretical and practical challenges associated with researching community have been discussed extensively in Chapter 2 above, as has been the wide literature discussing the practical and epistemological challenges involved in community consultation and ‘needs’ studies (Chambers 1983; Ife 2002; Kothari & Cook 2001; Sachs 1992; Wadsworth 1992, 1997b; see also Hawtin 1994; Max-Neef 1995).

However the committee and project workers had little knowledge of, or enthusiasm for, such methodological complexities; the urgent need appeared to be for data and decision making. This also meant that pre-existing and parallel research – of which there were extensive volumes, given the identification of the project location as ‘disadvantaged’, and the dozens of agencies who had already been involved there (City of Darebin March 2001 / May 2001 / date unspecified) - was also not identified and ignored.

Two large consultations had been undertaken by a sub-committee prior to the appointment of any workers – one with agencies and the other with community leaders. The new community development workers were directed to further this work – on the assumption they were adequately equipped. To their credit, the workers took to the responsibilities with great enthusiasm, despite, it seemed to me, feeling somewhat unsupported and potentially vulnerable to later criticism.

With the intention that “[d]ialogue and engagement be in an authentic, meaningful and creative manner” (DCBDP March 7, 2003, p1), data was gathered through a range of mediums including interviews, group discussions, ‘listening posts’, community lists, and small-group facilitated activities. Consultations were held with agencies, services, programs and community leaders throughout the municipality, and with many different cultural and language groups, including Vietnamese, Thai, Somali, Chinese, Macedonian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Greek, Italian, Anglo-Saxon-Celtic groups and Aboriginal people. Some of these activities are summarised below:

Table 7: Consultation activity and numbers of respondents

<i>Community Leaders Forum</i>	56
<i>Services and Agencies Forum</i>	60
<i>Community Barbecue</i>	200
<i>Community Focus Groups</i>	24 Focus Groups involving over 200 local residents of different age, cultural, ability and family backgrounds.
Total	Over 500 people participated with 400 providing input.

(DCBDP March 7, 2003, p vii)

As, with hindsight, may be expected, this activity led to often contradictory and piece-meal data about strengths, key issues and future visions; and associated dilemmas of verification, confirmation and prioritising the most urgent, most promising and most sustainable initiatives or interventions. Sustainability was particularly critical given resource limitations, time limitations, and the absence of any long-term prospects for funding. The plethora of issues divined from the consultations were tabulated into the following ‘triple-bottom-line’-based inventory strategy:

Table 8: Issues identified in consultations

Economic	Social/ Infrastructure	Environment	Social/ Community
Unemployment Gambling Poverty Commercial – more shops	Public Transport Housing Education Safety – traffic Recreation – improving pool and gym Youth services Support services	Recreation: -playgrounds -improving parks -sporting / play equipment Community infrastructure Rubbish	Participation/ involvement of local community: - get-togethers - Community connectedness - CALD communities Lack of confidence / self esteem Gambling Community safety PANCH closure Exclusion of indigenous groups Safety Drugs / alcohol/- syringe disposal

(DCBDP March 7, 2003, p4)

People living in East Preston and East Reservoir were also asked about their *Vision for the Future* of their local neighbourhoods. The research concluded that residents “...referred to the desire for ‘harmony’, encompassing notions of peace, community interaction, cooperation and support, understanding, respect and happiness.” (ibid p viii). In a similar vein, the many *strengths* people identified for their communities were documented earlier.

Five *Key Priorities* were then chosen for the project, based on several factors: the research data, a ‘common sense’ understanding of what was best, and the political imperative that the Project be perceived as somehow both comprehensive and focussed. They were to serve as the operational framework for the remainder of the project activities:

- ***Public Transport***
- ***Young People,***
- ***Community Safety,***
- ***Affordable Housing and,***
- ***Community Connectedness.***

The Crisis of Devolution to the ‘Grass Roots’

At this time, the project had been underway for over one year, and the community workers had been employed for eight months. So far, the more concrete goals of Stage One had been largely met and all parties were developing a much more comprehensive understanding of their networks, the community and their respective roles. The Interim Establishment Committee thus found itself facing the necessary

task of dealing with the question of ‘devolution’ to the planned Neighbourhood Action Groups, the operational centre-piece of the project. Thus the issue was raised:

What we need is some consensus about our vision for the Neighbourhood Action Groups, for example, principles, roles, limits etc. We also need to think about future governance arrangements (Governance Committee) and roles of key stakeholders in relation to Neighbourhood Action Groups. (DCBDP March 11, 2003).

Thus, the participants committed themselves to another round of meetings, debate, excitement and potential disagreement as we attempted to find an agreed strategy. A “special planning meeting” decided that the employed worker would organise two ‘Community Forums’ as the foundation for the establishment of two Neighbourhood Action Groups (with the unfortunate acronym of ‘NAGs’) - one in East Preston and one in East Reservoir. Records from these meetings show the ambitious and somewhat unexplicated vision for the NAGs, including terminology like *trust, cohesion, celebration, strengthening, mediating, inclusive, social capital, mobilisation and empowerment*. The plan also stated the NAGs should have, “...a strong culture of community action (it is tangible), take issues to government, be holders of local information, act as an exchange for learning / skill development and control their own budgets” (ibid.).

Many difficult strategic problems also began to become apparent. One cluster of concerns centred on financial and constitutional questions: should the NAGs be delegated authority for spending their own budget (and, if so, what size budget – potentially up to \$80,000 per annum)? Would the groups be legally incorporated, and thus obliged to comply with various bureaucratic accountabilities? How should the NAGs relate to the various structural entities, such as the Governance Group, the OCB, the Regional Managers Group and the Council? How could they be constituted to create representativeness, independence and legal propriety? A second cluster of concerns centred on the relationship of the proposed NAGs to the paid workers: could the NAGs provide paid staff with supervision and support as well as being responsible for their formal employment? Would each NAG ‘have’ a worker, or share one worker between them? Finally, there were concerns about establishing groups with a culture (or perhaps rules?) about trust, collaboration, reciprocity and the ‘common good’ – in other words, the apparently elusive qualities of *Gemeinschaft* and *social capital*. As the obstacles and opportunities became clearer, the IEC became more aware that it stood between a ‘rock and a hard place’: to hand-over these unresolved dilemmas to a small group of un-resourced, inexperienced ‘indigenous’ people would be naïve at best and negligent at worst. On the other hand, to *not* devolve responsibility was to undermine the core principles that the Community Building Project had been working for. For example, the minutes reflect a discussion that

... it will be unfair to load the Neighbourhood Action Groups up with all the information and issues identified by the Project to date. Instead, it will be important for the Group to establish itself and think about the ways that they can tap into the community about the broader issues...[and]... Neighbourhood Action Groups need to be developed as a forum

for local people not for services and agencies. Services and agencies initially need their own network. (DCBDP June 17, 2003 p5)

It was hoped that consultation at the Neighbourhood Forums would shed more light on these questions, but this was not to eventuate. Only three people attended the Northern NAG meeting and fifteen in the South. It was clear that the major assumptions held by the Demonstration Project were not coming to fruition: community building was not being seen by the community as their salvation. How was the Interim Establishment Committee (and, by default its state minders) to deal with this impasse? A major rethink was virtually impossible, given the history, context and political expectations. At a subsequent IEC meeting, it was summarily concluded that

.... the Neighbourhood Action Group was now not the main strategy of the Project. We have learned that they don't work as expected. We have to now decide that the Project will do a range of projects, of which the Neighbourhood Action Groups are one. (DCBDP September 9, 2003, p4)

To which another participant responded gloomily "...community activities are being reduced by default, while service provider activities now dominate." (ibid p4)

The Committee and the Project thus began to face a crisis of confidence, as the primary strategy of devolution and self-determination was obviously not (at best, not yet) going to materialise – thus raising to the surface some of the hitherto suppressed frictions and frustrations that were **structured into the program**. This was exacerbated when the Lead Agency worker, after being in the job for only six weeks, began telling stakeholders that the Project was failing and would not succeed. One Council officer later gave one version of how he saw the issues at this time:

I also felt that some of those involved favoured addressing their agenda and responding to their macro issues, over a process to engage with diverse groups of local people, many of whom were not involved in community decision making processes.

I also thought that some of the committee had no idea about how long it takes and the very organic processes required to develop awareness and relationship and mutual understanding and mutual goals first - before things could begin to happen. The notion about how to start community development was poorly understood if at all. (interview May 9th 2005)

At a subsequent IEC meeting, one of the few remaining unpaid committee members resigned, claiming over-work. The 'Lead-' Department of Justice Project Officer also resigned – largely because of conflict in approach and philosophy with other paid staff. As well, a letter 'of concern' was received from the Board of the local Migrant Resource Centre, who had kept a keen eye on the project, stating:

The key concern of the MRCNE Board was the apparent lack of progress in any evident outcomes consistent with the original purpose of the project. To put it more simply, our Board believes that, given that the Community Building Committee has been meeting now

for over one and a half years, we have yet to see any examples of activities or initiatives to involve the full participation of the community in some kind of community building activity or goal.

We understand that the Committee has conducted a series of consultations including several workshops, a local event and consultations with established local community based groups. We believe that there are a significant number of local community people with skills and talents to take the responsibility of becoming the driving force of the project. However, we sense a reluctance on the part of the committee to transfer a “hand over” of the project, to local community residents. (DCBDP June 17, 2003)

Some ‘emergency’ research was conducted amongst the remaining participants in an attempt to name and define our dilemmas in more productive ways. While this affirmed a great deal of enthusiasm toward the goals of the project – quoting terms like *excitement, good will, challenge, learning, collaboration and innovation* – it also made concrete the following major concerns:

Practically, all respondents identified the following two issues:

a) The difficulties in overcoming personality clashes and the dynamics of differing agendas.

b) Disparate understandings of philosophies, goals, processes, roles and responsibilities. These have led to a lack of agreement, difficulties in achieving consensus on issues, a high turnover of participants...and a lack of clarity in regards to aspects of the project [resulting in] A high level of stress, ongoing tensions and exhaustion caused by all of the above. (DCBDP September 2003, p12)

A specially convened follow-up workshop represented the first time since commencement of the Project that the members of the Committee consciously set aside time to discuss the conceptual issues of ‘community’ and ‘development’. The primary point of contention, we began to realise, was the tension between those people whose emphasis was primarily oriented towards **ACTION**, and those who emphasised **PROCESS**. While everyone agreed that community development should be imbued with a ‘*bottom up*’ dynamic and intention, a number of people felt that there had been *too much process at the expense of any action* – thus, they argued, the committee needed to take authority for deciding what was best for the community. They argued that any activity was better than none, even if it was not strongly ‘owned’, and that in fact such activity could lead to more confidence, profile and ‘grass roots’ work. Everyone agreed *in principle*, but worried about the ‘*slippage*’ they saw occurring, in effect turning this into ‘just another welfare program’ *“I could go in there and run fifty things, but that’s not the point. We’ve done that for the past 30 years! This is supposed to be different.”* (Chairperson of the IEC, a locally elected Councillor). The complexities and dynamics of this dilemma were later expressed by three participants in the form of a role play presented at a community development conference:

Scene 3: ... The Community Building Management Committee meeting

[Characters: 1/ The chairperson, a local Councillor. 2/ A community member. 3/ The Community Building Project Worker].

Community person: “Well I agree with the letter. I’ve been coming for six months and **nothing** is happening. I’ve been trying to tell you but nobody is listening. There is too much talk and not enough action. We have to make progress. Kick goals. Help the needy. Make a difference. Get some change. Achieve some real tangible and concrete outcomes!”

Project worker: “But we also need to be well-planned, and principled. We must develop community ownership and allow them to do their own things at their own pace. We cannot just rush in and start doing things.”

Community person: “Yes but... there are already interested people who can do things and with projects ready to go. We are just procrastinating ... pushing paper!”

Project worker: “But we have been doing a huge amount of things - look at all these!”

[Pins-up sheets of butchers paper with large numbers of activities, including consultations with 300 people, development of policies and community visions, employing staff, developing government submissions, public events, speaking to all local services, video making, developing proposals, *holding forums* and projects around community aspirations, etc. etc. etc.]

Community person: [frustrated] “But those are just **talking** things, there’s no outcomes, no real progress...”

Chairperson: [cuts in]: “There must be some way to resolve this. We all understand the need for planning **AND** action. Surely there is something we can do that is small, contained, and visible: something that meets the needs of both the process people **AND** the action people. After all, how hard can it be?”

[All three contemplate the question]

Community person (tentatively): “There is one idea I’ve had. How about planting trees in the vacant block, near the housing commission flats? Trees are cheap. It is a small block and the local people have complained about it being an eyesore for years.”

The Chair and Project worker enthusiastically support the proposal, but then reservations arise: “Where on the block? What kind of trees? And who will plant and maintain them? **Who will pay for them?** What about Council priorities **towards other public spaces and local communities** – it will look like queue-jumping. There are issues of public liability to look into. There is also a drought on and nobody is planting until next Autumn.”

Community person [interrupts]: “We need to finish soon, I have to pick up my kids. Maybe we can discuss it next time at the next meeting **in a month from now?**”

Before departing, the three characters agree to do further research and consultations and then report back at the next meeting. (Nabben, Crossley & Bruen 2004, p11)

A brief pause for analysis

I now want to interrupt the flow of this chronological description in order to step ‘outside’ the immediate realities to gain some theoretical distance for (intermediate) analysis. By this stage of the case study, many questions are becoming ‘ripe’ for exploration, namely: How can the discrepancy between the rhetoric of development and its implementation be understood? Is this unique to this project, or is it characteristic of the process itself? What is being done to make this ‘demonstration’ project capable of achieving its (presumably) primary goal of revealing how to do community building? What is happening at this time at the level of other critically important actors, such as the State Government? Returning to the earlier raised themes in this thesis, how can the concepts of dialectical change, contradiction, interpretivism and resistance to imposition be brought to bare as analytical frames? As Olivier de Sardan argues,

...the discrepancy between expected or desired attitudes and the ‘real’ attitudes of ‘target populations’ is an experience – often traumatizing and usually painful – to which, I think, all development practitioners have been subjected, to various degrees. The problem lies less in the discrepancy itself (which is unavoidable as we shall see) than in the way in which interveners react to it: how they adapt (or fail to adapt), how they integrate (or fail to integrate) it, how they explain (or fail to explain) it. (2005, p68)

The dilemmas from the case-study bring to light the operating frame of an uncritically accepted populist notion of community development. In a scene repeated throughout all the above historical case examples, the people in the project location did not rush to gratefully receive the opportunities that the officials thought they were providing them. What is instead observed is a vastly complex system experiencing a dynamic interplay of rationalities between actors who belong to different cultures. As inferred above, the two most significant groups that have been placed in relation to each other through this project (and many others simultaneously occurring in the location) are, firstly, the people who live in the experience of the community, and, secondly, those ‘outsiders’ who seek change towards some goal. Both groups are bound to respective constraints, strategies they can employ, and room for manoeuvre. In this interplay, the community people are active agents in dialectically transforming the ‘opportunities’ offered to them: through interpreting, decoding and reconstructing according to their own logics. Let us recall that the project is principally about a highly unequal struggle for resources and power by people who have hitherto been losers in the distribution of both - in many cases for decades. Logically, the tactics they have available to them as this struggle is played-out include compromise, bargaining, conflict, retreat, selective adoption, side-tracking, subversion and (as seems to have been the case in this project) ignoring or withdrawal.

When these local dynamics are analysed according to a ‘holistic’ frame, it can be perceived that multiple ‘levels’ of power struggle and interpenetration are ‘structuring’ (Giddens 1984) at all times.

Action at the political-economic level – that is production, distribution and reproduction - is increasingly moving to the international level. Those people in the project location who are in paid employment are increasingly inserted in a context of international competition. There are few opportunities for alternative action in the form of, for example, worker cooperatives, critical intellectuals or base groups. Those ‘socially excluded’ on ‘welfare’ find themselves marginalised by a public sector that is both increasingly withdrawn and interventionist. At the institutional level, organisations like Council, schools, the Community Health Centre, and ‘even’ the Office for Community Building have rules, orientations and ‘customer’ relationships that are dominated by the principle of profit – yet contradictorily these are increasingly masked by a rhetoric of care and empowerment. At the level of the everyday acting / life world people increasingly are positioned as acquisitive actors, and grow to subconsciously see themselves as such – thus increasingly retreating into the private sphere (Boulet 1985).

However, despite this, the case study has so far revealed not only external constraints, but that the ‘subjects’ have great capacity for autonomy, innovation and resistance. The question for this thesis, and the ‘demonstration’ project, is how can we learn from this? As the entire participatory action research tradition advocates, it is only at the point of attempted change, and its sometimes surprising counter-reaction, that we can learn about the nature of the system we are changing, or “[t]he point of intersection is the best vantage point from which one may understand correctly ongoing changes.” (Olivier de Sardan 2005, p53)

To return to the case study, it appears by this stage that the people in the community – at least those who had heard about the community building project – had sized-up its potential more accurately than those who were promoting it: determining, firstly, that the resources were minimal, and, secondly, that there was little to be gained. To explore whether this transpires, I will now return to the chronological case study.

An Attempt to Restructure the Committee and tie its roles to discrete project functions

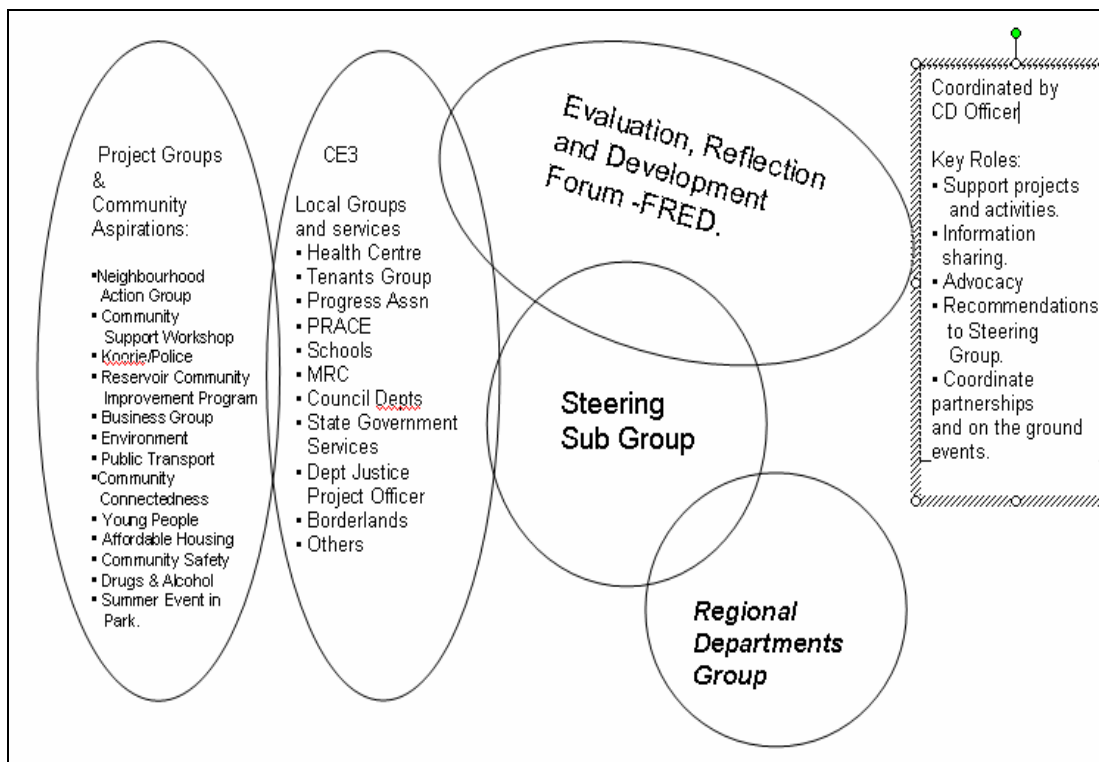
Following a Stage 1 Review which commented,

It seems appropriate to suggest that the Committee adopt a more reflective and ‘steering’ role, rather than being involved (embroiled?) in the daily stuff of organising meetings within the various prongs of the overall Project. Is the Committee, in its current form, appropriate for the next two stages of the Project? (DCBDP September 2003, p25)

an attempt was made to reinvigorate the (still ‘Interim’) Committee at the beginning of 2004, transform it into an inviting forum for potential new members, enable decisions to be made by those functionally relevant to their execution and allow learning to continue – after all, the project was to be

a ‘demonstration’ project! It was decided to split the Committee into three functional groups: a *Project Steering Group* would take responsibility for steering and being responsible for the overall implementation of the project and for its accountability; a *‘Coordination Group’* (or CE3) would focus on the practical issues of running a range of initiatives in and with the communities and for coordinating the several processes involving a plethora of local agencies; a third group, the *‘Forum for Reflection, Evaluation and Development’* (or *FRED*), would “...meet and reflect on project progress and emerging issues with a view to learning, continuous improvement and longer term *Project Sustainability*.” (DCBDP January 23, 2004 p10; see Figure below).

Figure 29: Darebin Community Building Project Governance



(ibid p11)

These ambitious plans were not to be fully realised however, as the impetus for decision-making defaulted towards paid project staff and/or State Government or Council officers, who increasingly met in-situ to deal with pressing issues. This shift can be traced to many coincidental and mutually reinforcing events: the Committee were numerically and emotionally diminished if not exhausted; only eighteen months of funding remained and ‘outcomes’ appeared increasingly urgent; community governance appeared highly problematic; several staff who, by this time, had been employed in the project (including a new Lead Agency worker and contract evaluator) were able to support each without the need to refer to the committee; the quantity and complexity of activities was increasing and, thus, it was becoming more difficult for those of us not daily ‘on the ground’ to keep abreast of

the exponentially increasing project activities. The time for talking and reflexivity had apparently passed. My direct involvement from this point on significantly reduced, as there were few *open* forums to participate in and – as we shall see later – the planned evaluative activities where I was to be involved in, through ‘*FRED*’, never gained momentum.

Stage Two: Getting on with projects

In Stage Two, the Community Building Demonstration Project ‘*morphed*’ from being an attempted discrete entity to becoming - instead - a collection of more-or-less related projects. Some of these were identified as ‘*community building*’ projects, but many reflected the complex reality of multiple ‘*community activities*’ that already existed and would, in fact, outlive the Demonstration Project – thus, there evolved many dynamic ‘*working arrangements*’ across ‘*territories*’ with existing organisations and groups. The shift occurring in the course of Stage Two was reflected in in project documentation through the increased use of language like “*partnership formation, collaboration, new working relationships, active linking, complementary, whole-of-community, and working practices*” (DCBDP, March 2004). The programs – existing or newly emerging - were each multi-faceted, with their own participants, history, context, objectives and resources: examples included the Preston Islamic School’s Harmony Day Celebration; Mission Australia’s Oral History Project with older residents; Preston Regional Adult and Community Education’s Creative Writing Project; Northlands Secondary College’s National Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islanders Day Observance Week Committee; and the Tenants Association’s project ‘Alleviating Anti-Social Activities in Housing Estates’.

Presenting – let alone analysing - all of these projects would clearly go beyond the constraints of this thesis; I will, instead, provide a brief overview of the second stage of the project, followed by a more detailed analysis of several specific ‘sub- or associated projects’. This will then lead to an analysis of the final and Third Stage of the Community Building Demonstration Project, a phase nominally dedicated to *project and process sustainability*.

As mentioned before, five “*key community aspirations*” gleaned from consultations with the community became the policy and (however putatively) strategic framework for the project. The key community aspirations were described as:

- *The need for greater social connectedness:*
 - *the need to combat an array of issues such as loneliness, social isolation, lack of community connectedness, cultural/ generational differences, and so on, through*

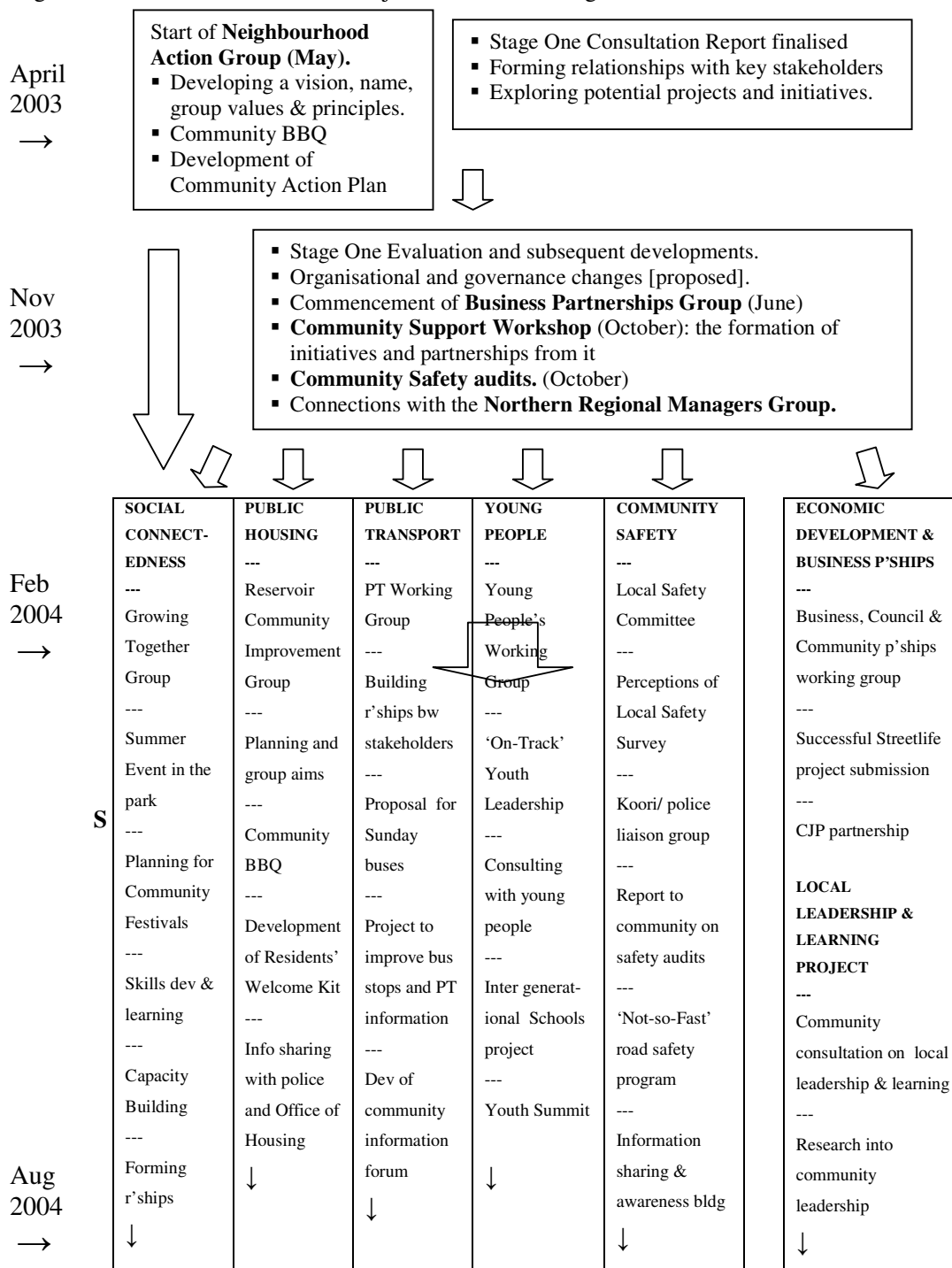
- *opportunities for getting people involved locally, meeting others, bridging gaps, developing friendships, encouraging participation, providing recreational opportunities, so that*
- *people can work together, build self-esteem, develop community leaders and mentors, empower themselves, help each other, be more friendly and get along.*
- *More **affordable housing & public housing** in general; the need for more housing for older people, singles and emergency tenants; the need for improved maintenance and a greater diversity of tenants in the public housing estates.*
- *The need for improved **public transport** especially the need for services on Sundays, more services late at night and more bus shelters.*
- *Concerns about **community and neighbourhood safety** in particular around road safety, street lighting, domestic violence and drug and alcohol related issues.*
- ***Young people** and their desire for more recreational and sporting facilities, a community ‘drop-in’ centre, to cater to the recreational and support needs and enhance the skills development of young people. (DCBDP October 2004, p4)*

Two themes were later added that did not directly arise from the committee, but were a result of the continued intervention and ‘interference’ in 2003 by the State Government representative on the IEC:

- ***Local Economic Development / Business Partnerships** - which, according to the OCB (now restructured into the Department for Victorian Communities) would engage ‘social entrepreneurs’ and business leaders in the ‘business’ of Community Building; and*
- ***Local Leadership and Learning** – which was to provide training to existing volunteer participants, but also recruit and train a cadre of - presumably dormant - citizens and community leaders (ibid).*

A graphic overview of the project is shown in the following table.

Figure 30: Broad Outline of Main Project Initiatives in Stage One and Two



I will now briefly summarise some activities in four of the above 'Aspirations' – those somewhat 'archetypal' for the orientations of the Demonstration Project but also for certain traditions within the various 'waves' of community development / building / organisation / strengthening. The four

'aspirations' I have chosen are *Improved Public Housing, Community Safety, Young People, and Social Connectedness*.

Improved Public Housing

The Lead Agency worker initiated the '*Reservoir Community Improvement Group*' (RCIG), which mainly consisted of the local police sergeant, the Office of Housing Area Manager, an Office of Housing Project Officer, a Council representative and several volunteer members of the Tenants' Group from the housing estate. This group achieved positive information sharing, the building of trust between stakeholders and an improved understanding amongst residents of the bureaucratic processes within the public housing administration of the State Government (in short, at the lived-experience level). The group was successful in exposing and challenging some of the deeply entrenched social relations of indifference, suspicion and mistrust which had existed for a long time between the Office of Housing and residents. The RCIG also participated in project activities including a 'meet-and-greet' barbeque on the estate, a 'Welcome Kit' for new residents (yet to happen), and linking with Council road safety programs in the adjoining residential streets.

The Group also had to face criticism from residents for a lack of concrete 'functional' improvements, such as repairs of broken letter boxes and fences. The evaluation report later concluded that,

Many older-term residents seem to have little faith in getting responses to their concerns from government and they ...feel that participation in community-based initiatives often fails to achieve the objectives that they are focusing on – that 'no-one listens and nothing gets done anyway'. (DCBDP October 2004, p39)

The Departmental Manager, it transpired, had been given *responsibility* for responding 'entrepreneurially', but no corresponding authority, resources or systemic support (at the 'institutional level'). (See appendix 2 for the promotional brochure produced for this activity).

Community Safety

A number of key concerns about safety had been raised in various consultations over many years. These concerns included domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, syringes, graffiti, traffic and street lighting. The Darebin Local Safety Committee (DLSC) was an existing Council-Police initiative that - over many years - had been involved in activities like safety audits, improved amenity in 'danger spots', design of public space, syringe disposal kits, traffic amelioration and a Community Safety Month. Two residents from the project location were invited to join this committee. Once again, this led to the building of face-to-face relationships and to some increased government activities in the

location, but resources proved too limited to tackle major issues of community concern in any substantive way.

A Koori-Police Liaison Project (KPLP), was initiated by the community building project's Department of Justice 'Lead Agency' worker, in consultation with a local Aboriginal worker. The aim was to improve the relationships between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people living in Reservoir and the wider Darebin area, which had been historically problematic. The main activities included cultural training for Reservoir police, engagement of police and ATSI people in social activities and information sharing. This improved the cultural knowledge - and thus practices - of police officers which, according to the evaluation report "...has been balanced by Koori awareness of the difficult situation police often find themselves in and the problems that they face in addressing them in appropriate ways" (DCBDP October 2004, p47). (See appendix 3 for the promotional brochure produced for this activity).

Young People

The improvement of amenities and opportunities for the 'categorical' group of "young people" was also delineated as a Community Building aspiration, and, in this case, a half-time Community Building Project-worker was employed. The case for young people being a very significant group in community development is well documented elsewhere (Nitzberg 2005; Onyx et al. 2005; Williamson 1995; Villaruel 2003), however it is worth further elaborating a few of these discussions here. Given restricted mobility, young people are very tied to 'place' (UNESCO-MOST) and potentially have time for extra-curricular activities – thus, at the level of the 'life-world', they can be perceived as less comprehensively entangled in the 'structures' of accumulative capitalism. Further, young people may be relatively open to experimenting with personal-social roles, as well as the social norms most others take for granted. As a final observation, while young people are deeply entrenched in the public-institutional level – particularly through education, training or social security – they experience at a day-to-day level the intersection of states and markets, with all the imposition and opportunity this brings.

The community youth-worker, however, struck a range of difficulties in acting in this *community aspiration*, resulting in it being perceived by most stakeholders as the area where least progress was made. One obstacle was the sheer number and range of human-service providers that already had some responsibility for young people in the local area, ranging from 'specialist' intensive systems like Centrelink, homeless services, and Council Youth Services, to generalist services like schools and volunteer run sports clubs. As discussed in the Pentland model (2002), many such agencies identify that they have a role in community development – however well or poorly explicated. In this complicated environment it was impossible for the project worker to try and run stand-alone activities

with young people – besides which, the worker had no profile, contacts, role, relationships or credibility with young people, nor the years necessary to build this up. Thus the worker had little choice other than to identify the multitude of stakeholders, map their responsibilities (and existing extensive networks) and attempt to bring them together so they might plan ‘joined up’ collaborations around ‘community building’. In which case, according to the evaluation report, “...*much time was spent at initial meetings trying to prove the worth of bringing a range of services together, and for this process not to be dismissed as a waste of time or another talk fest*” (DCBDP October 2004, p49).

It was thus extremely difficult for the community youth-worker to gain access to young people, to obtain their participation, to build collective action, or, indeed, to generate a shared understanding of ‘needs’ in the local areas. A major – and instructive – part of the difficulty was probably that ‘young people’ were designated for ‘treatment’ at the research stage of the project by *older people* who were concerned *for* and *about* young people – in fact, this age group was noticeably absent throughout all stages of the project. It appears that processes for identifying and engaging categorical groups need time and investment of organisational and other resources. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the parallel-run Community Building Demonstration Projects had similar experiences with identifying and engaging young people as a ‘*target group*’. (See appendix 4 for the brochure produced to promote this activity).

Social Connectedness

At this point I will offer a more detailed description of the formation and development of the *Growing Together Group*. A closer examination of this group offers one of the few examples of grass-roots organising within the context of the Demonstration Project – and thus will help to illuminate the ‘black box’ of indigenous participation / self-determination that is usually beyond the perception and conception of most government planners and policy makers - who often rather flippantly invoke ‘the grass roots’ as a source of social change.

The *Growing Together Group* (GTG) commenced its existence (in the course of 2003) as the intended Neighbourhood Action Groups, which originally were mooted to take over the governance of the processes within the Demonstration Project. The initially two groups (given the two locations) were soon combined into one, partly because the participants themselves did not see a clear demarcation between the Northern and Southern project areas, but also because of insufficient numbers. This group of twelve to sixteen people were to meet regularly over the next two years in order to experiment with collective action for ‘building’ their community.

The earliest questions for the fledgling *Neighbourhood Action Group* were to define their identity, purpose and *modus operandi* – as these were ostensibly a ‘blank slate’ to be determined at their

discretion. Some clues were given by the preconceived title of *Neighbourhood Action Group*, as were community development worker's dutifully provided list of *Key Community Aspirations: Public Transport, Young People, Community Safety, Affordable Housing and, Community Connectedness*, to which were later added the (OCB imposed) aspirations of *Local Economic Development / Business Partnerships*, and *Local Leadership and Learning*. The members easily reached consensus that 'community connectedness' was the aspiration of most importance to them – they wanted to build harmony and to improve people's perception of the neighbourhood(s).

Participants intuitively interpreted their involvement in the group as a chance to build social networks with each other and the community and, in doing so, achieve something useful. While they hoped to provide practical help to some local residents, they had no ambitions or grand designs for social transformation. This contradicted the semi-articulated expectation amongst the members of the IEC that the poor would act as a source of resistance and political consciousness – a tendency that has been commented on by Gruffydd Jones,

Objectively, it is precisely those who suffer most, whose circumstances are most undermined by the structures of globalization, that most need the transformation of globalization and the creation of a more just social and world order. Yet one of the most profound contradictions of contemporary world politics is the fact that the worst conditions of suffering created by a particular social order, do not necessarily generate a response of collective, organised, political struggle to transform that order. (2005, p68)

In effect, the 'warm breath' of everyday life appeared to be at the heart of people's interests, such as place, identity, agency and collectivity - ideas I have dealt with more conceptually above. This is consistent with the theory that, if we are to work together to 'name' and recreate our world, we must seek a way to address each other not as objects or market-actors, but as respect-able, whole, worthy human beings who are capable of "... rediscovering their own culturally specific, alternative definitions of 'a good life', feasible in their own local spaces." (Esteva & Prakash 1997, p285).

The Neighbourhood Action Group soon set about deciding on a set of guidelines for meetings, including chairing, sharing ideas, listening, decision-making and resolving conflict. The backgrounds, experiences and expectations of the participants also influenced how the group would operate. Most were over retirement age, received pensions and lived in 'Ministry' (or public) housing. They typically had lived in the area for decades, some since the 1970s, and had 'gotten by' on low incomes. Most participants were women, many single parents and some talked openly about their history of surviving domestic violence. Four of the members were Italians – two couples – all with poor English skills. Several people experienced chronic health problems with one needing an electric buggy for mobility. The majority of the members did not own a car nor did they have driver's licences, so they walked, shared a lift, or used public transport to attend the group meetings and to get around during the day. One younger male member was a Minister of a local church who had been brought up in the area and had chosen to return in order to work in his home community – through his many years of practical

action he had established credibility and relationships with a wide cross-section of people, as well as extensive knowledge of the culture of the area.

Figure 31: Members of the Neighbourhood Action Group



(Growing Together Group, May 2004, p1)

Most participants had a relatively large amount of time on their hands and they used this to be involved in various groups and activities at the Darebin Community Health Centre. For example, four of the Growing Together Group members had been involved in running the local Food Cooperative for many years – which required a weekly 4:00 a.m. trip to the wholesale markets to shop for fruit and vegetables, which are then sold at no mark-up to Cooperative members.

An important activity of the NAG Group was creating and maintaining strong positive relationships. Despite many instances where conflicts arose, or where feelings were hurt for one reason or another, participants managed to keep good relations with one another over the ensuing years. While several people left in the early stages, membership remained mostly stable – occasionally leading to criticisms that it was ‘exclusive’ and inaccessible to others who were not already members.

The first priority chosen by the fledgling group was to run a ‘*real*’ activity – something that was concrete, uncomplicated, and brought people together in the public sphere to celebrate their collective character. Thus, a Community Barbecue was organised and attended by three hundred people two months later. Activities including free food, games, prizes, face painting for children, a small flea market, a local choir and a live band. This gave the Group a great deal of self confidence and sense of achievement, but it also resulted in exhaustion, as they discovered the unexpected amount of detailed work that was required to run an event of this scale – including hiring equipment, marketing, insurance, food, hygiene, and liaison with multiple stakeholders.

Following this successful experiment, the growing confidence of the group led them into a period of planning their goals and strategies towards Community Connectedness, as well as the other aspirations of Transport, Housing, Youth and Safety. At about this time the decision was made to change their name into the *Growing Together Group*, their vision being:

- *This community will be beautiful and vibrant, everyone will feel special and happier, and a lot of togetherness.*
 - *No more sadness.*
 - *We hope to be able to walk down our streets at night and to still have our groups going with everyone and more in it.*
 - *To be a great place, a place of choice for people to live.*
- (Growing Together Group 2004 p4)

Participants were also asked for their opinions about what the group ‘was about’, with their answers including:

- *Other groups, like some at the Darebin Community Health Centre, are organised by professionals, the NAG will be the community helping itself.*
 - *It is about “bringing the community together in harmony” through more compassion for immigrants and refugees, overcoming intolerance and prejudices against others and the area, taking responsibility for the C (sic), changing mind-sets.*
 - *Learning as we go along.*
 - *Make friends and new contacts – ‘let our guard down a bit’.*
- (DCBDP August 11, 2003)

The Growing Together Group then set about planning and running three other public events: a *Summer Event in the Park* and two *Neighbourhood Markets*.

Image 32: A food stall at the Neighbourhood Market



The goals of these activities included, “...to create opportunities for youth – to be able to show off their talents; for Aboriginal groups – to come together as one; for multi-cultural groups – to show that there is more than one culture.” (Action plan May 2004, p 7). The final Neighbourhood Market involved forty five people as planners and was attended by a large number of community groups and residents. The following photos give a pictorial representation of this event:

When the Growing Together Group discussed the question, “[w]hy do you keep coming back to this group? What makes it work?” they answered:

- *The group is part of many people’s hopes and visions for the community and it works because we are all here for the same reasons – community building. Everyone else wants to do what you want to do. Everyone is thinking about the same things.*
- *There is a sense that people feel free to express themselves: they can have a say and they are listened to within a comfortable setting.*
- *There are conflicting needs as everyone is balancing their own personal responsibilities and commitments. (GTG Discussion from meeting 150604)*

Image 33: Children’s activity at the Neighbourhood Market



Image 34: Police-community liaison at the Market day



Image 35: The three key project workers take a well-earned break



The attached CD has enlightening footage of the Community Barbeque that was gathered and compiled by the project evaluation team. This provides the viewer with a qualitative insight into the people and experiences that help form the relationships called ‘community’ (see attached CD file “Community BBQ”).

What can be learned from this?

The Growing Together Group developed at their own pace and time, and in ways that were appropriate to them. The ordinariness of the process and of the substance of the group’s activities is instructional, as this apparently everyday, human communion is reflective of the holistic community development approach proposed by Ife (2002) and which includes the suggestive notions and concepts of *Gemeinschaft*, Obligations, Culture, Locality-based, Subjective, Identity and Belonging, Human Scale, Development from Below, The Wisdom of the Oppressed, Alternative Development, Diversity, Structural Disadvantage, and Empowerment – all notions which would apply to the communities central to the Demonstration Project and to the here briefly illustrated processes within the GTG more particularly. Small scale, face-to-face interactions as aimed for and demonstrated here buck the global trends towards individualism and alienation from moral codes and the dis-appropriation of communal rights of people to their commons. On the other hand, they would not figure much within the grand schemes suggested by other approaches to community building / development / organisation I have briefly discussed or referred to in previous chapters...

This raises the question as to whether this apparently ineffectual ‘*start where the people are*’ approach is sufficient to challenge the above elucidated issues facing the earth - global capitalism, environmental destruction, and so on - or even to have a degree of impact on the ‘local’ issues facing people in the City of Darebin in the Northern part of Melbourne’s metropolitan region. For the individuals taking part in the GTG, it is likely to have been a significant experience. For others, who

participated in the events organised or initiated by the group, it may have been part of a day's work, or part of a commitment to community, or just 'something to do of a day' when there were no other 'major events' or sport on TV beckoning and competing for their attention and attendance. Yet, for those who attended the community events, they may equally have experienced an entertaining morning that challenged some of the assumptions and myths about their local community, and contributed to the feeling that it may be a place of potential and opportunity from which to mount a 'campaign' to reclaim some of what is being lost. Connections may have been made between people that, in the future, will lead to other outcomes. As stated in my vignette at the start of this thesis, this small story about the GTG feels to me like an anti-climax, given all the rhetoric, hype, struggles and expectations attached to the Demonstration Project. On the other hand, as stated before, this begs the question of whether there is anywhere to start a community process other than where 'the people' (or we ourselves) are.

The next challenges to be faced by the *Growing Together Group* – as for all other initiatives started or supported by the Community Building Demonstration Project - were those of "sustainability" – or how to respond to the imminent cessation of financial support, advice and external facilitation. I will discuss these challenges and opportunities after first addressing the two state 'imposed' aspirations that have not yet been discussed above: *Economic Development / Business Partnerships, and Local Leadership & Learning*.

Government Imposed Aspirations – Economic Development & Business Partnerships

As I discussed above, the 'aspiration' of *Economic Development & Business Partnerships* was injected by the government (and relatively positively adopted by the project committee) who believed it would aid the 'social planning' (Rothman 1970) agenda of 'joining up' government services and engaging private partners,

A key requirement of community building is partnerships. By 'partnerships', the Government means new approaches to the relationship between a broad cross section of community, government, business and the philanthropic sector to work on goals and outcomes that are shared. (OCB February 2002)

There was a belief that, somehow, business would be motivated to support the project, perhaps buoyed by favourable economic conditions and the existence of very reasonable tax rates.

The government's way of achieving this agenda was to 'encourage' the Darebin Project to form a *Business Partnerships Group* to undertake a short-term strategic planning exercise, with additional support from government-paid and appointed consultants. The initiating and organising of this was to

become an additional responsibility of the project team (and the by-now redundant 'Interim Establishment Committee'), with all potential shortcomings also presumably reflecting on them. In any case, a meeting was attended by several local business owners, staff from Darebin Council's Economic Development Unit, relevant State Government departments, several NGOs, and a few residents who had been regular attendees at the Community Building meetings. They identified a number of potential projects that were already on the agenda of Council and other organisations (such as Northland Secondary College) – mainly based on existing government funding opportunities, such as "Koori Youth Education and Training Opportunities", "Community Jobs Program", and Gateway Youth Services (a Northlands – Council – business - philanthropic partnership). However, after identifying and discussing these possibilities, the meeting ended and the group was never to be reconvened. Individual contact was kept by Council and the CB Project workers with those who wanted to attract resources to achieve the projects identified.

Council staff and Community Building project officers subsequently submitted a proposal to the State Government for a '*StreetLife*' program in a dilapidated shopping strip in the project location (which incidentally had been identified as a major concern in project consultations with local residents). StreetLife offered money and a planning framework through which to 'renew' these kinds of shopping strips. A later submission was also made to the '*Community Jobs Program*' which provides funding to give local unemployed people jobs community renewal activities. Both submissions were successful and brought significant resources and employment into the location, thus achieving some of the economic and other objectives. However it appeared that the rather poorly articulated hope for 'business partnerships' was unrealisable – perhaps demonstrating that the business 'community' is equally capable of resisting the imposts of various government planners. A critical analysis of what local economic development might mean in theory and practice was neither considered nor undertaken, thus the possibilities for this fundamentally important concept remain deeply silenced.

Local Leadership and Learning

The second initiative 'imposed' by the State Government was a '*Local Leadership and Learning*' project, which intended to train local people in 'leadership' skills. Again, a reference group was formed, with membership overlapping with many of the other groups in the Demonstration Project, plus several staff representatives of local or regional educational services or agencies. The concept of leadership and learning was intuitively well received by all those present but, like similar '*spray on*' phrases, proved problematic to theorise and operationalise: *Did 'leadership' mean a formal authoritarian sense, or collaborative participation in activities? Do people learn 'leadership' through formal study only? If so, who should be selected for such training, and who should be excluded? In what form should such training be provided in order to be relevant to the wide range of experiences and needs of proposed participants? Could the various forms of indigenous leadership be validated*

and strengthened? What were these? At the time of writing this thesis, the ‘actions’ in this aspiration had involved research, consultation with other providers and conducting a local forum, but little progress with achieving the original (albeit ambivalent) goals.

Given that these ‘aspirations’ were infused into the project by State Government officials, their execution also reveals the dynamics aspects of imposition. The great distance between the state and the local meant that central planning was done with virtually no understanding of local processes or judgement about the possibility of local action. The officials consistently delivered confused and confusing rhetorical imposts as if they were uncontested and patently self-evident. I do not pretend that the project team was not guilty of major misjudgements of local possibilities, or of uncritically adopting concepts – yet these ‘adventures’ had the effect of significantly destabilising a project that was already fragile and over-stretched. Overall the scenario demonstrates a need to privilege state-local relations that are respectful, sensitive and sympathetic. Such an approach was theoretically possible – even obliged - given the deference to ‘partnership’, ‘listening’ and ‘bottom up’.

Before I conclude this section I would now like to further analyse the question of how one of the key objectives ascribed to the project – government reform or ‘joining up’ – occurred in practice.

(See appendix 5 for the brochure produced to promote this activity).

Joined-up Government in practice

As discussed several times above, one of the pre-eminent expectations dictated to the project by the State was to reform the way government works. To reiterate the early statements of goals by the government – as quoted earlier in the Minister for Victorian Communities’ message in 2002:

Community building lies at the heart of our approach to government in Victoria. It is about harnessing the energy of communities so that they can shape their own futures. It is about fostering new and lasting partnerships between communities, government, business and other sectors. And it is about changing the way Government works, to better understand and respond to the needs and aspirations of Victorian communities.
(Thwaites 2002)

This case study provides a valuable opportunity to examine and inform practice at the interface between the institutional level and the ‘everyday life world’ (Boulet 1985) or, from another perspective, to provide some empirical evidence of how Considine’s (2001) *‘Enterprising States’* might work in practice.

I have explained above the various mechanisms the Government used to enact the ‘joined-up’ agenda, such as the Lead Agency Worker, the Regional Managers Group (RMG), and various policies,

protocols and interdepartmental committees. The Darebin Project, for its part, responded to the government goals and mechanisms by ‘choosing’ as one of its own main aims “[g]overnment-community cooperation and partnerships” (DCBDP March 2002, p13) which it hoped to enact through: “*new collaborative multi-sector partnerships*” [amongst] “*government agencies, business and government*”; “*agreed protocols around open communication*”; and “*client service charters*” (ibid).

A large amount of Demonstration Project resources were expended on attempting these goals – yet an examination of the project suggests that the outcomes were minor at best. While the RMG worked hard on awareness and relationships, it lacked systems and resources – despite senior staff meeting for over two years the RMG was unable to glean any directives from the community, establish any partnerships, or create any community based arrangements. As already discussed, the same fate befell the Business Partnerships and Local Leadership initiatives. There is little evidence that any government departments have made any significant changes in their relationships with each other.

The Government’s conceptual and strategic clarification of partnerships was itself highly under-theorised. While the government stated its intention to “*support the community’s aspirations and goals*” (ibid) through “*long term, cooperative partnerships at the local level*” (DCBDP Jan 2003), this was not accompanied by any definition of what a ‘partner’ is, or the various strategic models that ‘partnership’ may take. At various times ‘partners’ were assumed to be disadvantaged people (the poorest of the poor), businesses, government departments, officials, levels of government, NGOs, volunteers, and human service organisations “[b]y ‘partnerships’, the Government means new approaches to the relationship between a broad cross section of community, government, business and the philanthropic sectors to work on shared goals and outcomes” (OCB February 2002). This also extended to the macro-bureaucratic level, as shown in the Lead Agency Worker’s position description:

The Demonstration Projects will involve partnerships between State Government, Local Governments and communities. The changes in the relationship between the community and State Government that result from the Demonstration Projects, are expected to be built into the way the two work together in the future.” (Department of Justice June 2002).

These discourses uncritically implied that any two parties meeting were ‘partners’, leaving insufficient pragmatic attention to the different nature and level of partnerships, power differentials – and the resources required (VicHealth, date unstated). These under-theorised expectations led to attempts to engage a host of people at all levels – creating massive strains and dispersal of energy – while failing to achieve the hoped-for dramatic changes in government administration. However the case study revealed that some ‘enterprise’ did occur at the level of the everyday life-world of people, facilitators and officials – although this would typically be beyond the gaze of central government planners. I will now briefly explicate what turned out to be an organic, situational and fragile process through the example of one of the chosen Community Aspirations: *Public Transport*.

How joining-up ‘really’ happened – Public Transport

When the government asked what it could do to improve the community, the single clearest request from the people of East Preston and East Reservoir was ‘improve bus services’. This single issue was perhaps the most consistently raised at the various initial community consultations – putatively to *identify* needs so they could be *acted on*. It is also probable this *functional* activity was named by the people because it was discrete, quantifiable and – presumably – achievable, given the willing support of the State Government. The Lead Agency worker thus decided to prioritise this issue explaining, “*the community needed tangibles, and there was not much else to show.*” (interview May 9th 2005). She coincidentally met the Department of Infrastructure (DoI) representative on the Regional Managers Group, and they decided to call a meeting of a *Transport Working Group* consisting of DoI, The City of Darebin, all three local bus companies, a representative of the Northland shopping complex, and Metlink (a government authority that organises services, tickets and fares across the public transport network). As could be imagined, the various officials had differing priorities, expertise, political interests, and institutional constraints. However most had become attuned to the joined-up rhetoric coming from the government – thus perhaps explaining their attendance in the first place. The meetings of the Working Group eventually taught Lead Agency worker enough for her to formulate a written proposal for improved public transport, which was then presented to a specially convened meeting of senior managers of the Department of Infrastructure. For their part, the officials made the apparently small concession of agreeing to seek extra funding through the State Estimates Review Committee – a body through which all departments bid annually for their budget.

The process described to this stage was primarily one of tenacity, individual initiative, political nous, and mind-numbing bureaucratic manoeuvring. Principally facilitated by the lead agency worker, she used her discretion to identify potential collaborators, build trust, and create teams of supporters. One such person was a senior DoI official who had earlier attended one of the community workshops – and had since become a community building disciple, having met some of the local people, heard their stories, and developed a sense of efficacy towards their interests. Without his concerted efforts, *over and above* his normal responsibilities (and at some personal cost) the proposal would never have progressed through the vast administrative machinery.

Many months later, the budget bid was unsuccessful in the Estimates Review Committee. The rationale given was an overall reduction in budgets, and a priority need in the expanding (and politically volatile) suburbs of the outer urban fringe. This major setback was regarded by community people as proof of government deception and antipathy. The Lead Agency worker organised several forums for reporting-back outcomes to people in the community, at which there was strong disappointment and a good deal of cynicism from those who rightly felt the Community Building Project had been unable to deliver on their one concrete request. For a short time there was some talk

of direct protest at the office of the local member, but this never eventuated. There was, however, one more twist in the tale.

A Darebin Council audit of bus stops (done by a student on placement) led to identifying a number of bus stops that were sub-standard. A submission to the government for \$75,000 worth of upgrades was successful, to which the Council also contributed \$75,000. A subsequent submission for \$25,000 for an ‘older travellers buddy program’ was also successful. Finally, in 2006 the budget bid to the Estimates Review Committee will be re-submitted. Below is a picture of the new, state-of-the-art bus shelters.

Image 36: The new public bus shelters



These modest outcomes were partly attributable to macro policy - which at least brought the state workers to the table. However they were significantly due to informal relationships between people, and their values which were often enacted despite their formal job descriptions or bureaucratic incentives. The small amounts of progress required sophisticated effort over a sustained period of time, and ‘drained’ significant resources from the Demonstration Project. Unfortunately the ideals of responsiveness to bottom-up initiative are insignificant as compared to the arcane and power-laden nature of government machinery.

All these improvements sit predominantly in the ‘functional’ realm of community development (that is, facilities, not territorial or based on groups of like-interested people), making sustainability problematic. A focus of activity in this dimension also challenges Ife’s (2002) assertions that the welfare state is at the brink of imminent political and environmental collapse, and his recommendations that community can only survive from disassociating itself from the state.

This version of how government ‘reform’ actually happens in practice may not be consistent with what appears in the managers’ manuals, but it has at least added some reality to the optimistic and unexplicated oratory that abounds throughout the public sector – it might also point to some useful ideas about how to make it work better in future.

The Third and 'Final' Stage: Sustainability

As the Demonstration project moved into its third and final year, the realisation became more acute that funding could soon cease. Over the next few months the project was to do a major reversal as it moved from (finally) having workers employed and conducting a variety of projects, to winding-back operations in anticipation of imminent withdrawal. While talk of 'sustainability' had been present since project inception (the final 'stage' of Henderson's 1980 model), it had always seemed too distant to warrant any serious attention. Put simply, stakeholders had been so busy trying to get things to 'work', that little consideration had been given to dismantling it. The primary assumptions amongst most supporters were that a) more money would become available, in some form, from the state, or b) the project would be so effective that more money would not be necessary. There were many logical reasons for accepting the first belief: a Labor government was in power; the resources were relatively miniscule, while the entrenched issues in the area were said to be a high priority; it had been hailed by the government as a 'flagship' program; community development was held in high regard by many Labor supporters (and presumably the government); little impact had been made on the social 'problems' targeted by the scheme – or had arguably gotten worse; and no alternative social programs had presented themselves to the government or the electorate.

At this stage of the project, the official word from the government was that a decision was yet to be made about the continuation of the Project(s), however unofficially the rumour was that funding would not be continued. It appeared the government officials were unhappy with the project(s) - although no such statement was ever officially made. In any case, it *was* clear the project(s) had not been the stellar revelation that many of us had hoped for. There were assorted signals from the state that the concept of '*Community Building*' was to be replaced – in the true tradition of doublespeak - by another rhetoric of '*Community Strengthening*', presumably resulting from a 'finding' of a (never released) intermediate evaluation, halfway through the lifetime of the eleven Community Building Demonstration projects.

All this left the Project with many fundamental challenges: what should happen in the final year; and what would such an ending mean for the credibility or viability of community development? It may have been possible to continue some of the current project *if* the anticipated handover to self-governance had occurred as anticipated, or *if* any autonomous, community-based groups had formed to take over project management - however almost all activities were highly dependent on externally-funded project staff. To complicate matters more, a wide range of activities were partially developed and further commitments had been made - perhaps unwisely - to residents, community groups, and other stakeholders. The looming termination raised many ethical and moral dilemmas both for project

staff and community participants: What did it mean to people who had observed the project coming and going with no substantial change in their circumstances? What consequences were there for successful (and some unsuccessful) initiatives that may not continue? How could feelings of abandonment and disillusionment be mitigated? Could termination be turned into a positive for people? How were the facilitators to manage their various roles of explaining, consoling, grieving, cajoling or fighting? Indeed, what does “sustainability” mean for a Project that is framed, initiated, funded and ‘actively shaped’ (a term used by the DVC representative) from *outside* the community? These questions became increasingly urgent as the final months passed.

Some stakeholders also thought that the project had proved a failure, and thus did not deserve further resources. Such conclusions were supported by the fact that there had been no popular movement, no transformation of poverty, little ‘joining-up’, and no integrated social / economic / environmental change, facts that left many protagonists feeling vindicated, and supporters feeling confused, embarrassed, and defeated (feelings that, I imagine, were similar for those who had once promoted the TVA, the AAP, the War on Poverty, settlement houses, or any of the assorted ‘Third World’ development projects). The very epistemology of participatory action research - or collaboration in an ethic of care, to solve mutual problems - had been systematically submerged by a culture of positivist individualism (and the various power-interests that coincide with this).

The original goal to “[c]reate ways for different groups in the community to strengthen their collaborative power and develop more opportunities for social action” (DCBDP March 15 2002) had only begun to be understood in practice. The expectations of achieving these goals in a three-year timeline were clearly untenable, particularly given the delays at commencement, the ‘interventions’ by State Government and its representatives on the project, the inability of or unwillingness by the State to strategically support the Demonstration Project, and the ‘common sense’ awareness that grass-roots organising and local self-determination (however limited anyway!) cannot be conjured in one year. Many people at the local level began to feel that an original timeframe of five years would have been more appropriate and realistic – although this was probably interpreted by the state as an unwelcome attempt to ‘capture’ resources

Evaluating the project

The various state officials *were unwilling to critically investigate what the Project(s) had “demonstrated”* despite earlier commitments and, more hypocritically, demands that the local projects undertake extensive **self-evaluations**, while the Department for Victorian Communities was never able to evaluate itself, or develop a process for comparing specific ‘demonstration’ outcomes with overall goals inherent in the Community Building initiative (DVC July 2004). Indeed, no

independent evaluation was ever forthcoming from the state, no comprehensive, transparent report was ever made public at the conclusion of the funding period- despite \$500,000 at one point being 'allocated' to an evaluator. A 16 page final evaluation was submitted to the DVC by the project – which tried to do some of the descriptive and analytical work that has been done in this thesis. However it was unclear who the audience was, what it would be used for, or if any recommendations ever resulted. The only accounts to arise from the eleven demonstration projects, to my knowledge, were several critical appraisals presented at Conferences and published in journals (Mowbray 2004; Murphy & Gauchi 2002; West 2004; West, Wiseman and Bertone, date unstated).

This leaves the question as to what some of the key stakeholders themselves thought about the projects. Fortunately as part of this thesis I had the opportunity to interview several people. In this next section I provide qualitative comments about the project from the perspective of different stakeholders' 'locations', based on their institutional arrangements, responsibilities and relationships to other project stakeholders: namely a senior manager and middle manager in the Department of Victorian Communities; an elected Councillor and executive manager at Darebin Council; and a middle level project officer in the 'Lead Agency' role.

The Department for Victorian Communities

A senior executive within the DVC said, in April 2004, that some 'positives' he identified from the projects were,

...there have been some inputs and some outputs, for example numbers of people attending activities – youth, multicultural, and so on. However the outcomes are unknown: things like is the community stronger? Do people turn to neighbours? Is there civic engagement? Trust in institutions? Belonging?

However he thought it too early to determine the outcomes of the project within Darebin or any other of the CBDPs, or indeed in any of the government's broader Community Building strategies,

Of the other projects we have run, it is too early to tell. The outcomes we are looking for are intergenerational, so it will be at least 5 years or more before you start to get any indication. The timeframe is unclear. But we are building in learning all the time...

This begs the question of why the strategy would be run for three years and not evaluated. He claimed a number of in-situ strategies such as baseline data, the funding of a Community Building Resource Service, and the engagement of a professor of public policy in the DVC for two days per week who will be "learning alongside as we go." He later reiterated, "We are building in learning not evaluation..." In terms of the continued existence or future evolution of the Community Building Demonstration Projects, he said "We are not sure. We are unclear over the next steps."

A mid-level manager within the DVC, who had responsibility for parts of the Darebin project, made the following comments when exploring what the project was supposed to achieve, and how this might be evaluated (in November 2004, about two-thirds of the way through project),

... Darebin is a good example where we will set up...a resident action group, and they will be able to control it - which actually the community said itself - is a fantastic outcome from a three-year project (laughs). But whether the reality of that is how it will end up - it might end up with a very strong social network of community residents, you know involved in community activities that has never occurred, in the sense of those who were more disengaged

The respondent then searches around the problem privileging both outcomes *and* processes,

You know it's about, it's about community outcomes and processes as much as it's about measuring, you know whether people are more socially connected, you know less isolated, have more opportunity for decision-making, have better access to transport, and so forth, so...in Darebin you could measure the process social outcomes, you know different milestones, as you could measure the partnership development work, as you could measure some of the skills and other, um aspects that benefit individuals and groups. Um as you could measure any new investment or initiatives that were occurring, you know, as a result of the project's work, so.... But I think it is very hard to do that in a process that is about a developmental process unless you've got objective, um, sort of milestones that you set....to measure against.

But that's a whole set of, you know.... And, in Victoria we're not very sophisticated, or in Australia really, at having local measures for community strengthening work

There is then a statement that such measures may be possible in future,

I think that's part of what this department is trying to do. Is to establish a set of indicators that can be used locally, and try and build through the grant process, um some planning capacity in funding grants, for community partners to start to do some of that planning work using those indicators. (interview April 28th 2004)

These reflections provide a rare insight into the willingness to search for understandings, and thus possibilities for collaborative co-investigation, that often remains deeply hidden behind the bravura and masked power-interests of the DVC (including the electoral interests of the Minister/s). This begs the question of how we can start a dialogue with the department or state officials. Indeed, the DVC had recently adopted a rule that only the top executive staff were allowed to give interviews.

Local government

An elected Councillor and an executive manager at the City of Darebin were able to offer different perceptions and insights, from their perspectives, into the Community Building Project. A primary

outcome, to them, was that local government was growing in its ability to balance financial-engineering considerations with the qualitative:

The 1980s battle over CD had been fought and won, and CD is a legitimate part of their [Council's] role. Since the 1980s era of CCT where 'if you can't measure it, it doesn't exist', local government has realised there is more to it than that. (interview December 10th 2004)

The respondents commented that the predicament of governing a community that was “*not equal*” and with “*pockets of disadvantage*” had been troubling them for some time, “[*a Councilor sees and/or lives in a depressed area...[he or she] wants to do something... but what?*” According to the respondents, the Community Building Demonstration Project had provided an important learning opportunity for themselves and the broader organisation to begin responding to, and thus learning about, these issues. While Darebin Council had always been “*a Labor Council which is socially progressive*” through involvement with the project, “*Council's thinking had progressed significantly. ...Council learned that this is not a quick fix. Local government is learning about poverty*” including programmatic questions of “*...steps, time, length...*” As a result, Council is now looking at “*precinct-based planning in eight precincts*”. (interview December 10th 2004)

The senior manager of Council felt it was “*too early to tell yet what has been achieved – as we are only getting started,*” and there remains, “*...challenges [internally for Council] in doing this in future*” such as

- “*an ongoing struggle to make it a priority.*”;
- “*fighting for resources*”;
- “*maintaining interest and enthusiasm from across Council given other pressures*” and;
- “*gaining support.*” (ibid)

This helps to show the magnitude of the challenges faced by Council if it is to begin to understand ‘sustainability’. Part of the solution was that, “[*t]o capture and articulate [such a project] is important. We are doing some of this, but need to work on it.*” However both respondents were enthusiastic that this was possible because they had experienced it at a personal level, “[*through] personal involvement we will pass on the lessons to senior managers regarding ‘place based’ [while the Councilor] will pass it on at a political level*”

Both respondents also felt that there had been significant achievements, although with reservations,

“[t]he essence of Community Building Demonstration Project needs to continue for 3 more years, then we could ask the real questions about what has been achieved. It is too early to tell yet, we are only getting started” (senior manager).

Further,

If this project was compared to the Olympic diving, we would say the degree of difficulty is high. It has been a constant job for Council just telling the stakeholders to be realistic.

If the score-card for this project is more in the good than the bad, we've done well. [draws a table with ticks against 'good' and 'bad'].

The project achievements they identified included visible services; *“getting people together, people that never come out”*; public events; changes in transport infrastructure, and, *“[c]elebrating community pride – the perceptions have changed, and this is important. People are now more likely to connect with where they live [whereas before] people are always talking down their area.”*

The Council-based stakeholders were far more willing than the DVC staff to critique the project, and ‘name’ some of the difficulties. In terms of the State Government handling of the project, they felt, *“[t]he government didn’t think this through. They are now getting it”* and, *“[t]hey wanted to dud a safe Labor seat.”* They also commented that, *“State Government hasn’t worked well re attached to project.”* And finally *“[w]ith a proper relationship at the start we could have got on with what we knew needed to happen...instead we were battling with the state bureaucracy.”* (ibid)

In terms of the community’s experience of the project, these respondents also were willing to share their concerns, *“The community expectation was to deal with these problems,”* more specifically, *“[t]hey had expectations – so they met with government and said ‘we want this’! Now they are skeptical.”* The respondents were also willing to name the contradiction between the macro political structures and the goals of community development,

We desire measures of poverty [which are] big items, ...[m]eanwhile government policy was reducing public housing – thus concentrating points of poverty. There is a concerted government ‘attack’ on public housing via subsidies, etc. (senior manager).

As another example, *“The people aren’t safe. Big things affect their lives – for example having people with a psychiatric disability living in your street”* (Councillor).

There was however little discussion of why these contradictions had never been expressed or seriously explored between the various stakeholders, in what was, after all, tagged a “demonstration” project. The Councilor mentioned that, at one point, there had been talk of expressing disappointment and difference through direct action, *“... protest, critical mass, collective action,”* but this had never eventuated. Council had also not raised its experiences with other stakeholders, preferring to not challenge the interests, including its own, which were firmly established. The question remains about what had in fact been “demonstrated”: how had dialogue happened, and learning been facilitated?

A manager working *between* the state and the local

A manager who had worked at the middle level between the state and the Council had experienced first-hand the attempts to ‘mesh the machinery’ of state, local and community. His overall perception was of a project poorly conceived and implemented. His concerns included, in summary,

- *[t]he NGOs drifted off;*
- *too much consultation;*
- *5 aspirations were too many;*
- *[p]ersonality difficulties amongst the staff;*
- *[staff] stepping on each other’s territory;*
- *the Project not owned by the whole of Council;*
- *[v]irtually impossible in this time frame;*
- *the Northern Region Managers Group didn’t know why they were there;*
- *the Community Health Centre not being at the table;*
- *unclear partnerships;*
- *inappropriate skills of appointed OCB / DVC staff*
- *key stakeholders having no authority.”*

He felt, however, that there had been “*token outcomes*”, for example with the Koori community, road safety, safety audits, cooperation between police – Council – and housing, and the Kookaburra Club. However, almost because of these successes, and his investment with these local people, he claimed to have, “*Strong fears about the future of the project. The ability to ‘sustain’ is very limited given that local community groups are busy surviving. Community groups are very fragile.*”

Defining sustainability

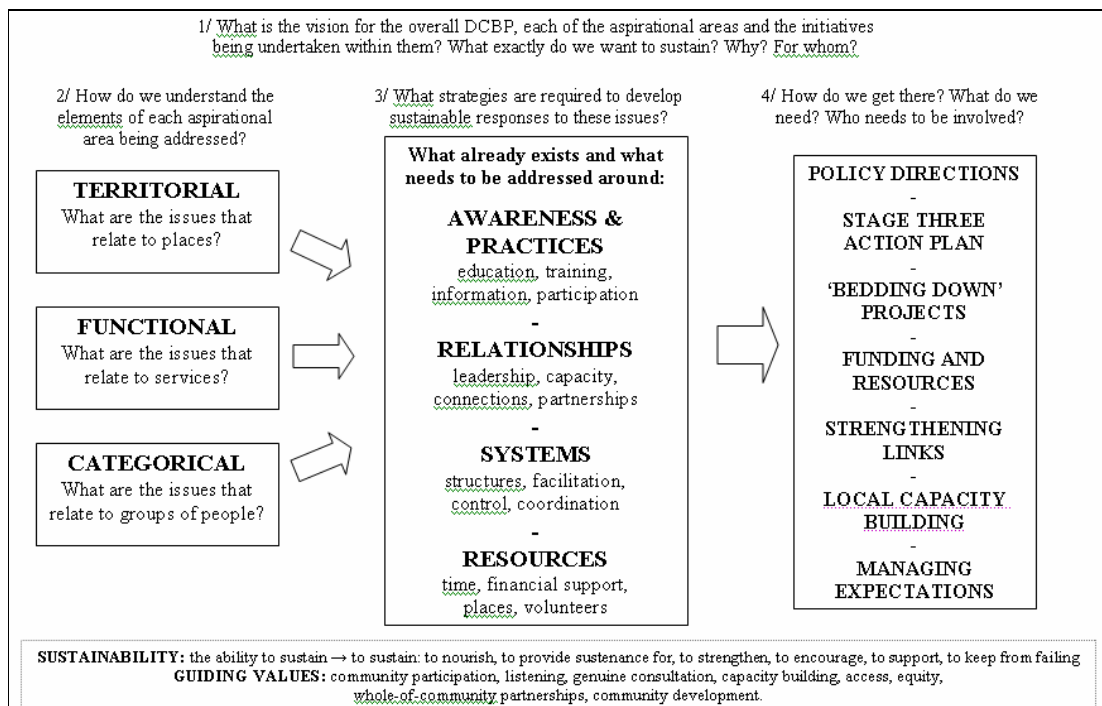
The imminent loss of funding forced stakeholders to focus on aspects of termination: ceasing new activities, developing timelines and processes for withdrawing resources and seeking to identify any aspects of the Project that could remain ‘sustainable’. Thus, ‘**Stage Three – Sustainability**’ was launched, based on a thirty-six page “*Sustainability Plan*” consisting of detailed options for all programs, funding submissions, final reports to government and a final evaluation (DCBDP November 2004).

The initial assumption was that the only means of ‘sustaining’ the project activities was with alternative sources of income, such as trusts, businesses and various government programs which were related to the several ‘aspirations’ as discussed above. However the predicaments of 2004 forced a reassessment of these assumptions, as stakeholders began to juxtapose this against the *raison d’être* of community development: *self-sufficiency*, *self-determination* and **reducing** reliance on external financial inputs which, inevitably, come with various ‘*attached strings*’ that undermine the purposes of the local community group(s). A profoundly important sustainability definition was proposed that privileged the notion of the ‘*ability to sustain*’ and – therefore - as being located in people and their communities – rather than in money and external funding alone. This framework may be one of the most significant insights to arise from the project, and links considerably with the holistic praxis

framework being explored throughout this thesis (incidentally, it was created by the evaluation consultants who were assisting the project). The definition of sustainability proposed five factors as determinants, organised in order of priority as follows:

1. An increasing **awareness** of the nature and value of linking the personal and the collective as a source for (local) sustenance and action;
2. **Practices** that support the everyday life-world of people in their immediate social and ecological environment.
3. **Relationships** between people living locally and across organisational boundaries based on Gemeinschaft qualities of reciprocity, sacrifice, responsibility, commitment and leadership.
4. **Systems**, processes and structures that support community participation and representation that are locally controlled / devolved / place managed.
5. **Resources**, the most important of which are spatial, material, time – such as meeting places - and ‘uneconomic’ resources such as caring, volunteering and child minding. The lowest prioritised – even if necessary - resource is that of funding – with caveats about the loss of autonomy that comes with this. (adapted from DCBDP August 17 2004, p4-7)

Figure 37: Conceptual map of the sustainability plan



(DCBDP November 2004, p11)

While such a model initially sounds self-evident – especially in the case of a program that is coming to the end of its financial support – it is also fundamentally radical: it challenges almost all the

suppositions of a project that relied heavily on paid workers, and was based in a culture of competitive individualism. Just how one creates such awareness, practices, relationships (including sacrifice, commitment and leadership), systems, and resources is a question that lies at the core of the project, and this thesis. This model came rather belatedly in the life of the project, and thus remained largely unanalysed and uncontested, however some attempts were made to use the above framework to review all program and 'aspirational' areas.

Some projects, for example, were assessed as having high levels of *awareness* and *relationships*, but were tackling major and often 'immovable' *systems* that threatened sustainability of certain initiatives (such as the housing group). Other projects and activities, such as the StreetLife Project, the Community Jobs Program and the Safety Committee, had secured some external *resources*, had protocols in place, had developed strong *relationships* between professional workers **and** were making moves to include residents in decision making. Some activities were determined to be unsustainable and were 'handed-over' (or, rather hopefully, left) to other agencies with a similar mandate – for example projects addressing Young People. As well, an information plan was devised to ensure that the community members and other stakeholders were aware of the outcomes of the Project.

The *Growing Together Group*, for example, had achieved much 'sustainability'; it had developed an *awareness* of the need for personal-collective sustenance and activities that can be achieved through the adequate personal-collective process; they had developed strong *Gemeinschaft relationships*; the processes they had created were primarily devolved and managed in 'place'; and they had *resources* in the form of time and meeting spaces. While the participants agreed to continue working, they also felt quite fragile: some were elderly, in poor health, over-exerted, and the group had been unable to attract new, invigorated members. At the time of this report, a worker from the Community Health Service had agreed to give some time to the group, and they had conducted another Community Market.

The City of Darebin also showed some signs of sustainability (that is, being *able to sustain* community development); the participating Councillor and senior staff on the Demonstration Project committee had learned a great deal through their participation and had been effective at advocating the value of focussing resources in suburbs of disadvantage. Of course Council has discretion over the expenditure of millions of dollars of rate money each year. The Demonstration Project accelerated and deepened many Council staffs members' and Councillors' knowledge, skills and willingness to work at the intersections of 'place' and 'disadvantage'. Council itself is likely to restructure its bureaucratic activities into a cross-departmental '*Community Strengthening Group*' that will aim to influence Council's policy towards a place-based, participatory approach to governance, community involvement and consultation. The newly elected Council in 2005 adopted a four-year Council Plan with a Statement of Intent that commits itself to respond to the explicit objective to:

Identify and address locational disadvantage in Darebin through community strengthening programs that identify and respond to pockets of isolation within Darebin's neighbourhoods.

Council was further able to use its experience of conducting the Community Building project to construct a successful application to the State Government for a ***Neighbourhood Renewal*** project in Reservoir East (although the decision by the Department of Human Services to support this may have been influenced by the 'push factor' of Council's loss of Community Building resources; and the 'pull factor' that it had proved itself a compliant and appreciative partner). This multi-million dollar and multi-year project, due to start in 2006, will include the upgrading of parks, a leisure centre, infrastructure, the building of a community hub and associated public housing renewal.

These discourses of sustainability were only beginning to be understood or integrated into the program as it was being gradually dismantled.

A kind-of ending

By mid-to-late 2005 the various employed staff of the project came to the end of their contracts, thus gradually diminishing the number of people 'on the ground', until finally there was no one left. As there was no clear finishing date, the project ended with somewhat of a 'whimper': I never attended a farewell, although I was invited in mid-2005 to some rather expedient discussions about how to respond to an eleventh-hour "Final Review and Evaluation Template Reference Guide" (DVC Unpublished document). I also saw a screening of the almost-final version of the project's DVD, which was designed by Council to promote the successes of the project as well as the philosophy of community building (see attached for the final version of this DVD).

Some of the project staff on termination were relieved that they could finally move-on and put behind them what had been a relatively daunting and exposed experience. Amongst others there was quite a bit of consternation that Council was unwilling to continue their employment, and this made for a rather fractious last few months. Many of us felt somewhat confused about the potential of change through community development.

Amazingly, as the final staff had accepted that they were to be leaving, the State Government 'discovered' an unexpended budget of \$55,000, which Council accepted in order to pursue the following objectives:

Develop a partnership approach involving key Council services, Darebin Community Health, Darebin Business Incubator, Women's Health in the North, Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education; and Communities to implement a Community Micro

Business and Training Project as a 12 month extension of the Community Building Project. The Community Micro Business and Training Program aims to:

i) Engage with community groups and residents to continue running the annual Community Neighbourhood Day. Coordinate community events in partnership with Council eg: Summer Event in the Park. Facilitate community leadership information and training activities. Support opportunities for local people to participate in micro credit initiatives such as those offered by the Women's Enterprise Project auspiced by Women's Health in the North.

ii) Facilitate a multi-agency partnership to approach the Community Support Fund for a three year Community Micro Business Development and Training Program in the target area; and

iii) Develop a long term Community Strengthening Framework for the area to focus whole of government responses to community priorities; and access and equity issues associated with disadvantage.

(City of Darebin September 19 2005, p5)

What impact did this ending – or lack of apparent outcome - have on the community? Among those who were involved, there may be some feeling of cynicism about government initiatives (particularly given the early claims of fundamentally changing ‘community’). However most participants have seen enough government-claimed ‘revolutions’ to realise they have their ebbs and flows. In fact, numbers and levels of people invested in the project was relatively low – of the population of 10,000, very few knew much of the project, or were unable to actively engage. The project could conversely have done harm if its ‘demise’ was interpreted as more evidence that there is no alternative to the global capitalist system – or that we have no agency over the all-conquering ‘structures’ (or that financial resources are more critical to sustainability than awareness, practices, relationships, etcetera).

A final commentary

The data gathered in the interviews show that the various stakeholders perceived the project differently, depending on their position in it – both institutionally (and the various institutional interests), and relationally (their relationships of ‘trust and reciprocity’ with other stakeholders, particularly the people living in the community). Their positioning reflects their evaluations and criticisms: Council wanted to be more respected as a legitimate and principal partner in what it saw as its natural role – planning for its home ‘turf’; the Department for Victorian Communities wanted to better align the instruments of public administration; the middle level workers wanted the ‘joined-up’ mechanisms to be more defined in order to give them clearer authority at the various levels they were acting-in and accountable-to.

All these key players had criticisms of the project, and constructive suggestions to make, but these were not made public. There is, as yet, very little evidence of reflexivity or genuine learning about the nature of the predicaments facing us, or how we might go about asking better questions in order to deal with them. Unfortunately, the 'learning' aspects of the project were characterised by defensiveness and sectoral interests – rather than by a sense of common effort or shared inquiry. This hesitation, or deliberate prevarication, can be understood in relation to the political interests of the various parties: the middle ranking workers wanted to maintain or improve their professional positions within their bureaucracies; Council needed to maintain a positive relationship with the state in order to receive continued funding, such as their later successful submission for Neighbourhood Renewal; senior executive staff in the DVC need to convince the press, the voting public and their Ministers that all is well – given a political culture in which politicians are obliged to have all the answers.

To return to the dichotomy of the 'critical reference group' and 'us', I have to acknowledge their relative silence(ing). The locally elected Councilor came closest to providing a critical voice-of-the-community, given that her political existence depended on their votes. Yet even she was not able to represent their needs, or challenge the silences in the project. Thus the most vulnerable remain excluded from any serious efforts to understand or respond to the political economy of global capitalism as mediated by governments, state and local, and by professionals engaged by them. More broadly, for the community of Melbourne, Victoria or Australia, this prevents a full, open exploration of the predicaments facing us, or ways that we might collectively set about addressing them.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this thesis I aimed to gain a more holistic understanding of the predicaments facing us as individuals, as communities and globally. This led to painting a broad historical picture of Western ‘progress’ based on exploitation and domination over the planet’s people and natural ‘resources’. The structures of this exploitation dramatically *up-scaled* during the period of colonial expansion; in the West, the creation of the enclosure laws and the industrial revolution set the scene for a capitalist means of production that created and creates great ‘*surplus value*’, just as it continues to place us in competitive relations with one another. The most recent manifestation of the increasing breadth and depth of this exploitative system is the domination of four billion people living in the Majority World – achieved through such apparently benevolent devices as ‘aid’, ‘free’ trade, and the World Bank. My research also led me to the conclusion that poverty and inequality has increasingly been produced in Australia through this same process, as people have been systematically exposed to global competition.

I showed that community development programs have been constructed as a means to empower people; however, because they are constituted by the powerful, there is a dialectical tension between imposition and resistance. While I presented various models of community development that assume *either-or* dichotomies, I have examined constructions by both Ife and Boulet that maintain a holistic view of the predicaments facing us. I argued that we are not easily located on one side or the other of these predicaments, but are contradictorily implicated in them. This led to the case studies of the Victorian Government’s third-way approach and the subsequent Demonstration Project conducted in the Darebin community.

Imposition and Resistance in the Community Building Demonstration Project

Having completed a description of the Demonstration Project that is ‘thick’, nuanced, and holistic, I will now briefly revisit the main *challenges and opportunities* encountered through the project, in order to provide a final analysis of the dialectics of imposition and resistance in practice. The aspects I look at include:

- Grass roots self-determination
- Local governance
- Working with community people
- Relations between State and Local Government

- The role of community research
- How might Community Building have been?

In these concluding pages, I want to examine not only where this case study demonstrates compromises, problems and colonisation, but also where it might illuminate opportunities for resistance or '*creative relating*'. While the forces that seek to separate us from one-another seem at times overwhelming, this is far from a *fait accompli*, as the project also opened up some new potentialities for strategising, finding niches, negotiating new relationships, discovering willing partners and formulating new programs (Balloch & Taylor 2001).

Grassroots self-determination

Grassroots self-determination is the *sine qua non* of community development – literally meaning '*without which it cannot be*'. The somewhat diluted concessions to '*third-way*' politics of the incumbent Labor government opened new discourses that simultaneously rendered self-determination more possible **and** increased the potential for new forms of regulation, surveillance and invasion. At its most idealistic, government rhetoric promised new forms of social governance that were to transform the ways bureaucracy works with the people. Various mechanisms and policies were implemented to increase user-participation, form partnerships, cut across multiple bureaucratic boundaries and unleash presumably dormant social and economic resources.

The project also demonstrated many concessions to self-determination, or ways this could be better achieved in future. The '*third way*' discourse of the authorities re-involved many people in the subsumed exchange of ideas about place, collectivity, partnership, equity, sustainability, community and development. The discourses 'spoken' at the institutional and every-day 'levels' thus served to somewhat expose and challenge the political-economic structure. Many people at these 'levels' have also been involved in *practices* that both challenge commodified individualism and create forms of *primary sociality*, for example, the Growing Together Group, community consultations, festivals and collaborations between people. Institutions, like NGOs, local government and other levels of government developed some more collaborative relationships between each other and 'down' to grass-roots people. There has also been a challenge to the structure of many *systems*, for example with both local and State Governments undertaking some efforts to reform policies and organisational structures which both respond to and create these 'alternative' discourses and relationships. The official attention to *location* invited the government to deal with questions of place-related disadvantage and simultaneously opened spaces in which people could deal with previous taboos like safety, quality of services and safety. This may result in better housing stock or less greenhouse gases, but is unlikely to lead to consciousness raising about global capitalism. Contradictorily, the financial resources provided to the project enabled much of this activity to take place.

The project also pointed to ways in which '*third-way*' forms of governance could be strategised and engaged with in practice; the very openness and '*unformedness*' of the initiative provides spaces in which '*strategic brokers*' (Craig & Lerner 2002, p16) were able to use their intimate and local knowledge to find opportunities, form links and sometimes create higher levels of working – such as was the case with the Lead Agency worker and local departmental officials. The emphasis on values, trust and collaboration provided emergent opportunities to re-territorialise space. Entrenched institutional cultures were often challenged and sometimes adjusted, as shown by the Council's willingness to focus on place. Further, the rhetoric of self-determination was used to illuminate the contests and power struggles that actually existed – for example the Council's efforts to challenge the OCBs legalistic modus operandi. Some of the project funders and facilitators also discovered that, once community expectations had been raised, it was difficult to dismiss them, which also created opportunities to apply pressure on political officials to become '*learning organisations*' by examining the gap between their theory and practice (Schön 1983).

The case study also showed how the principles of self-determination were seriously undermined by many of the practices of the State Government itself. These included unreasonable time pressures; arbitrary deadlines; sloganising; rigid legal contracts; heavy surveillance and regulation; pre-determining outcomes; imposing aspirations; and providing insecure/yearly funding. The very nature and meaning of '*partnerships*' remained undefined and unevaluated throughout the project. Broader structural processes of the Government similarly added to this imposition, including: using *disadvantage* as the selection criteria for the location; predetermining a funding amount and time-span of three years; and 'defining' Community Building in a way that was both heterogeneous (a catch-all phrase that meant both everything and nothing) AND privileged *government* 'reform' of Rothman's *social planning* variety.

More subtly, the agenda of the officials often infiltrated into processes in a multitude of ways that were difficult to identify or challenge. The OCB/DVC official who was inserted into various decision-making forums was in a prime position to influence outcomes, sometimes through legitimate, formal processes - but often achieved through political manipulation and manoeuvring, often also motivated by fears that the project was failing, missing opportunities or not realising its potential.

Local self-governance

The entire process of local project governance – through, for example, the Interim Establishment Committee - was critical to the functioning of the project, and thus deserves some further examination here. Once again, this demonstrated some forms of good practice while exposing the many constraints that existed. This also challenges us to theorise how local self-governance might be better achieved in the context of an imagined *third-way* political-economy.

The Interim Establishment Committee brought together a variety of stakeholders to talk, share their perspectives, make plans and manage resources; they had a challenging and exciting mandate: to tackle entrenched issues, to be preventative and to deal holistically with the sources of poverty. They also had authorisation to be innovative and unconventional in their approach, thus the strategic ‘elbow room’ to manoeuvre and find strategic spaces for creative change.

In practice, the local self-governance faced many structural, cultural and technical constraints. Government instigators commenced from the assumption that their directive for a ‘whole of community’ committee would automatically lead to the formation of a broad, representative group of people. Moreover, these people were expected to arrive with the interpersonal and other skills to manage a project that was conceptually and operationally very complex – and to have the time and motivation to do so.

What actually occurred was that a small group of ‘temporary’ internees struggled to deal with an endless stream of conceptual-strategic-operational issues. As a result, the main goal of handing-over power to two Neighbourhood Action Groups was not realised and a subsequent attempt to restructure governance led to the project being managed by the project officers and inner-circle executives. This did lead to some useful and informative analysis; the cluster of three strategic imperatives was identified accurately in the Committee Restructure Plan: *coordination and liaison with government; reflection, evaluation and adjustment; steering of the various projects and organisational linkages*. The problem for the committee arose from trying to do all three simultaneously; the plan to create committees with these separate functions, had it occurred, may have solved many of the problems experienced in the project; however, this was not possible given the historical evolution of the project.

The cautious and incremental approach of the Bracks government made these efforts more difficult. The policy changes were largely rhetorical, with little real policy or programmatic substance. The government did little to change the broader public service culture, to alter incentives for bureaucrats, to more holistically ‘join-up’ funding arrangements, or to change the way social services work together. As well, the Office of Community Building was itself in turmoil, providing few opportunities for the Interim Establishment Committee to find allies within the department who might interpret bureaucratic politics, gain concessions, or protect the program from undue influence. To the contrary, departmental officers were often protecting their own careers as the newly forming Department of Victorian Communities abandoned ‘*community building*’ and instead shifted its gaze to ‘*strengthening*’ and continued to include more ‘*target*’ groups in its widening ambit of ‘*disadvantage*’.

Despite “...*depressing evidence on the size of the gap between rhetoric and reality*” (Mayo & Taylor 2001, p44), however, spaces still exist for resistance, adaptation or co-opting. As discussed earlier, VicHealth raised the need to more comprehensively problematise partnerships and, consequently,

define them much more clearly. The same concerns have been raised by many overseas commentators (Balloch & Taylor 2001, Craig & Lerner 2004), providing a basis from which to ask (perhaps) better questions:

- How can the gap be addressed between the power and resources of professionals as compared to community volunteers?
- How can the tension be managed between managerial efficiency and collectivity?
- A project of what nature would progressively engage people in self-governance that is appropriate to their abilities and interests?

It is difficult to imagine answering these questions from within the frame of this case study; towards the end of this chapter I will propose a scenario for community development that may provide some useful clues.

Working with community people

Another aspect of community development that is illuminated by the case study is the question of working with community people; a fundamental assumption throughout the project was that there existed a dormant potential for the formation of '*base groups*' of disadvantaged people in the community. This potential was expected to manifest through simply calling a meeting or offering the time of a community worker. This case study has helped to bring these assumptions to the '*surface*' for more rigorous examination; we now know much more about the barriers and opportunities inherent in this process of enabling base groups in a context where social relations are predominantly individualistic, isolated and divided. People who are excluded and poor, as in the case of the Growing Together Group, also have multiple additional barriers including money, transport and confidence: in many cases they have little experience of either having a voice or being listened to and usually neither. The process for people of unlearning these messages and discovering '*other discourses*' is often slow, gradual and tentative – and we could look to Freire and others for more guidance about this (1972; 1973; 1985; Freire & Macedo 1987; Freire and Shor 1987).

The project also illuminated the dialectical process of change that manifests as two systems meet and interpenetrate: one system is the initiators with their plans, proposals and interests (and rhetoric to mask all of the above); the 'other' is the system of the 'subjects' who supposedly receive these plans cast as either willing collaborators, grateful beneficiaries, or empty vessels. In practice, the local people demonstrated a skilful ability to co-opt, appropriate, ignore, subvert and otherwise transform aspects of the project according to their own interests and world-views. With relative freedom to define themselves outside capitalism, they may have had a great deal to teach about awareness, practices, relationships, systems and resources.

Again, the *third-way* discourse and its somewhat limited manifestations do provide the possibility of strategic manoeuvring. For example, the institutionally sanctioned citizen consultation/research

provides opportunities to countervail the power of professional ‘experts’; likewise, the nature of the research must necessarily move from single issues, such as health or housing, to qualitative life issues that join-up social concerns such as health, education, but also possibly other factors, like the built environment, transport and public space. There are also increased prospects for community activists or ‘*strategic brokers*’ to form ‘partnerships’ with sympathetic people from inside the bureaucracy (and vice versa) – and thus breathing space to communicate and negotiate their differing agendas.

Relations between State and Local Government

The fundamental issue of the ‘Cinderella’ status of local government in devolved programs has yet to be addressed. This is possible, as has been shown in the English context where the ‘Modernising Local Government’ strategy has given powers to Councils to have involvement in pooled local funding. By contrast, the City of Darebin had very little power in inter-governmental relations, a reality which is reflected in the evolution of the Demonstration Project having little sovereignty (or benefiting from *subsidiarity*): Council was largely a compliant, grateful and willing beneficiary of the State’s largesse. The State, for its part, reciprocated by imposing the Project and undertaking very little ‘*partnership*’ activity with Council. To give it some credit, the Bracks Government has acknowledged this inconsistency and begun to discuss the value on an invigorated and independent Local Government sector (Considine 2004); however, there is as yet little evidence that concrete action is being taken to achieve this.

The new structures of *Neighbourhood Renewal* may provide opportunities where these relationships can be further renegotiated; this project itself will last for five years, longer than the three years of the Community Building project. It will also build on some of the lessons and relationships established here. Neighbourhood Renewal will also have a Place Manager, several other ongoing staff, considerable resources for ‘*functional*’ improvements to housing stock and formalised relationships with powerful bureaucracies.

The role of community research

The process of research, consultation, determining needs, and prioritising was fundamental to the Demonstration Project. Up to half of the project duration was spent doing research, the findings of which strongly influenced the outcomes. This represented an opportunity for better theorising in the Community Building Project; the project team did succeed in undertaking a great deal of creative research that engaged people and elicited much local knowledge. A first lesson was that the process proved to be far more resource intensive than originally anticipated – thus undermining people’s confidence in the project as they felt it was moving too slowly. Of more significance was that the research did not lead to community priorities that were agreed, actionable, or discrete; instead we

found ourselves with an extensive wish-list covering an array of issues, many of which were beyond the capacity of the project to address. The resulting process of choosing priorities was thus somewhat arbitrary and ambiguous – leaving the project stakeholders diminished and with few clear actions to work to.

Unlike some of the other practice issues raised in this section, community research has a long history and is widely codified and theorised – as indicated in Chapter 2. Yet, the many practitioners in the Demonstration Project had insufficient experience to access these resources. This gap between knowledge and practice may be attributable to the decimation of community development over recent decades in Victoria and Australia. With a small pool of experienced practitioners available to guide practice or policy, the government was able to present Community Building as if there were no continuities available from the past. If the *third-way* approach is able to be maintained for some time, it may be possible for the sector to regain this knowledge and experience. Research like this case study may help the community sector to be more cautious, selective and strategic in its response to these innovations – in particular to find some sustainability outside the cycles of government funding.

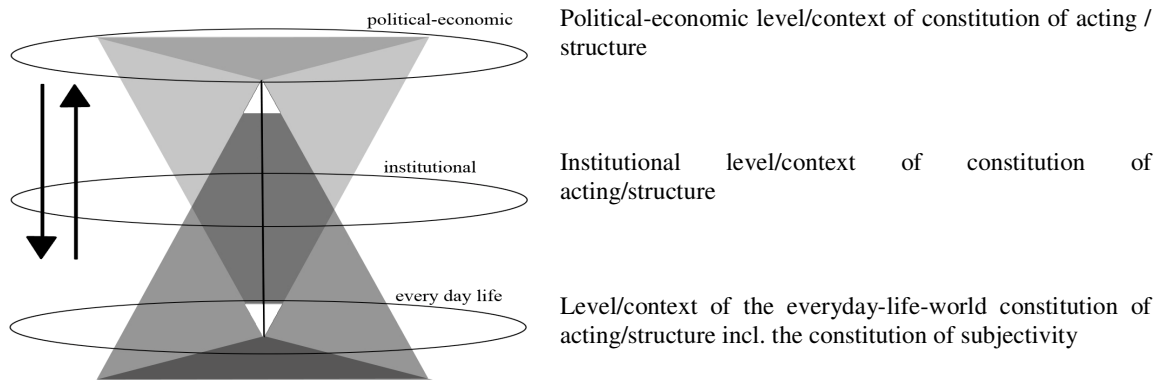
As has been shown in examples of various projects undertaken throughout the case study - from transport, to safety, to youth - the Community Building Project was structured as if it was entering into a vacuum rather than an extremely complex milieu, with many hundreds of services, relationships and histories that had their own well-established networks and cultures. The Project model assumed that it was not only going to engage with these 'inputs', but it would 'magically' act as a catalyst where others had hitherto been unsuccessful (despite it being short-term and comparatively under-resourced).

The relative naivety of research leading into the project was exacerbated by an unsophisticated understanding of the complex that is community; the persistent rhetoric of '*joined-up*' became so dominant that it defined and delimited the parameters of thinking. In practice, most participants conceived of the community as the localised manifestation of the welfare state – and consequently focussed on how to get these arms of the state to work together more efficiently. As I have argued above, the contradictions inherent in *third-way* discourse provides many opportunities for '*working in the spaces between*' (as the title of this thesis suggests). A more holistic vision of community development, however, such as that proposed by Ife (2002, p90; p161), could help to remind us of a far more complex and nuanced reality, including the dimensions of obligations, identity, belonging, subjectivity, human scale, culture and the wisdom of the oppressed, the environmental, spiritual, social, political and economic.

Was the Community Building Demonstration Project people's revolution or state imposition?

While Ife's models provide useful descriptive dimensions, Boulet's *'holographic'* model (discussed above) constitutes a framework for conceptualising strategic action in the Community Building Demonstration Project.

Figure 11: Boulet's levels/contexts of constitution of acting



(Boulet 1985, p247)

The *political-economic level* of global capitalism was not consciously identified by project participants as a key factor; however it is clear that many of their (and our) predicaments were directly attributable to this. The demand to be internationally competitive led to the deregulation of the Australian economy, which was then transferred through the institutional level of the workplace – and subsequent loss of jobs for those living in Preston and Reservoir. This competitive pressure also led to the end of the post WWII welfare state, with impacts transferred through to the people via the 'institutional level' of schooling, welfare, health, and housing to name a few. These pressures continue to increase in intensity and scale today through mechanisms like the World Trade Organisation, various multinational free trade agreements, and global corporations. At the same time these pressures create contradictory forces such global environmental movements, international systems of improving the environment and human rights, and even private multi-billion dollar donations to organisations like the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation. These processes must allow for temporarily undefined 'spaces' to formulate and reformulate 'in between'.

The case study also discussed how various institutions act as intermediaries between the national / global order and the everyday-life-world of the people. Local government is both a vehicle for Compulsory Competitive Tendering **and** a facilitator of local level consultation. It is a level of democracy that people find accessible to both participate in object against. Likewise, local factories have both actively eroded collective bargaining **and** provided training in team processes. Attempts to erode conditions have often led to increased unionisations amongst workers; while tariff cuts have led to manufacturers lobbying for tariff protection.

The everyday-life-world of the people is generally the focus for community development, however much practice and analysis neglects the institutional and political-economic ‘levels’ – and especially the complex **processes** and relationships across these levels. While our cultural-epistemological paradigm is to reduce and divide these to component parts – with predictable causes and effects - strategically, this holistic model suggests that all actions are part of the one interdependent reality. Therefore, not only do macro ‘structures’ matter, but all actions – no matter how apparently inconsequential – both dialectically reproduce the system **and** potentially threaten to change it. The life-world of people in Darebin is ‘part’ of this dynamic – one manifestation of which is our various interactions with institutions of school, work, welfare, family, government, and so on. A second manifestation is our interactions ‘horizontally’ that we have the **agency** to produce through our day-to-day interactions with our relatives, colleagues, neighbours, those from various ‘other’ categorical or territorial groups. A third manifestation is our internal world: our feelings about ourselves, identity, purpose, meaning, and understandings of the ‘good life’. In effect, how I think and how I co-create relationships represent a degree of the agency I have within the system. Thus, for example, the importance of prefiguring the sorts of changes we want to see.

As I have argued above, this is also a reflection of an economic rationalist structure in which we have lost many of the skills of relating, listening, supporting and nurturing; a culture of reciprocal human mutuality that has been systematically replaced with a culture of profit, work, efficiency and quantifiable ‘results’. The idea of community development was constructed in the Demonstration Project as something radical, specialist, marginal and interventionist – thus we launched into major strategies and plans that were often unrealistic and unnecessary. In a different context we might have seen it as an opportunity for people to talk, find common ground and decide what we can do to nurture one another.

It remains to be seen to whether the *third-way* is to be the acceptable face of capitalism, an attempt to impact on poverty, or an opportunity to fundamentally transform relationships in society.

How Community Building might have been

Before finishing this final chapter, I will briefly imagine how the Demonstration Project might have unfolded, in order to create an alternative scenario of what Community Building might have been.

The year is 2001 and the newly elected government has found itself suddenly in power after a radical free-marketeer has been (unexpectedly) dispensed with. The incumbent government acknowledges the nature of the damage of the past and makes some progress in uniting people in awareness of some of the predicaments facing us. This burgeoning awareness resonates with people and their ‘*common*

sense' observations of the world - as demonstrated by their willingness to vote out the former autocrat – despite their intuition hitherto being silenced by 'official' public-economic policy discourses. However, the people still have to face many fears they have for their future security as they struggle to challenge previously taken-for-granted assumptions about their way of life. The government is steadfast yet cautious – they have many enemies and a conservative electorate – but not so cautious that they dare not take risks for fear of losing power. They know they will have to confront some influential interest groups, like the gambling lobby, big business and the media – even sections of the welfare lobby - but green economics has become sufficiently '*mainstream*' that even these traditional adversaries are beginning to recognise that their long-term interests lie in genuine *quadruple bottom line ethics*.

The framework of Ife (2001) is used to inform thinking about the various elements that contribute to the community and development. Gradually people come to know the interconnections between environmental and other concerns more clearly, as well as realising they can all move forward together – Victoria starts to become a world leader in changes to a more sustainable future.

The government identifies Darebin as an area for community building, firstly, because it acknowledges that its own previous policies have undermined that community; secondly, because it believes that the people might have a lot to offer for our predicament; and finally because it knows that, without intervention, the people in Darebin will not get a good start in life – thus reinforcing and already unfair cycle of exclusion. The government's intentions do not start with a *deficit* mentality, or a belief that the local community must '*catch-up*' to the economic position of others in society. Instead, they see their role as supporting people's gradual exploration and discovery of their dignity and interests.

The Government consults with the local Council about how this intervention might be advanced. Eventually, Local and State Governments agree on timelines, basic systems/relationships and initial resources that will be committed for the first five years. The State officials regard themselves as a *subsidiary* to the Local Government, who in turn regard themselves as *subsidiary* to the effort of the people – while simultaneously facing the challenges this raises in the current federalist system. There are no grand announcements or launches – the initiative simply becomes one of many innovations being tried by the State Government in partnership. '*Community development*' gradually infuses more aspects of practice, rather than being seen as a technique or intervention that gets a certain outcome. The practices of stakeholders prefigure community, encourage dialogue and understanding about the fundamental problems facing us and are guided by participatory action research: people dialectically change community dynamics and are simultaneously changed by them.

Four full-time community facilitators are employed, based at Council, on three-year contracts, with an initial mandate to engage with the community and get to know people and organisations in East Preston and East Reservoir on a face-to-face level. Over time, they identify a range of projects with small groups of people, such as a Local Energy Trading Scheme, permaculture practices, dealing directly with local food producers, reduction of energy use, 'slow food', local decision making and restorative justice to deal with local disputes. As the existing evaluation report from Darebin notes,

Making the best of in between spaces, surviving the contradictory loyalties...is both a curse and the potential of community development (and those who use it as a working principle). As a result, the difficulties of the work should not be underestimated. (DCBDP October 2004)

The plethora of human-service organisations finds ways to involve their 'clients' in participatory activities. Local urban planners and others start to experiment with forms of urban design that use low energy as well as 'places' that encourage interaction between people, including those of different ages, those previously isolated in their homes and people doing work not formally regarded as the waged economy – thus the local area begins to attract attention from around the world for its innovative projects, which in turn encourages many people to contribute their 'social capital', and learn from the project in cooperative ventures. A variety of 'experts' become involved, from academics, to artists, environmentalists and social activists. Businesses that base their ideas on 'social entrepreneurship' or sustainable design begin to hear about the innovations in Darebin and make inquiries about how they can link their interests with those of the local project. People first develop awareness and practices, relationship, systems and only then rely on financial resources to sustain their efforts.

Innovations become possible in unforeseen activities like cooperative housing ownership, community financial institutions, land trusts and place-based models of ownership. As personal relationships improve, it has flow-on effects to other unanticipated areas: people begin to feel less vulnerable, public space is reclaimed, a common sense of purpose evolves, people spend more time in their local area and people are more able to care for each other. Rather than forming into enclaves of wealthy and poor, the community becomes more diverse. Local forms of cooperative education evolve and people branch out into forms of local democratic self-rule, which, in turn, forms strong, vigorous local institutions. This is gradually supported by macro-policy change in the fields of industrial relations, taxation, redistribution and social security.

There are inevitable tensions and conflicts as we relearn what we have previously taken for granted as the 'good life'. In fact, learning becomes seen as the predominant goal of the projects. Various forums are given the time and resources to gather data and use this to transparently reflect on their outcomes or set-backs. A key goal of learning and reflection is identifying the conflicts between various interests – especially where conflicts are preventing open dialogue. People find themselves less reliant on

various forms of commodity consumption to meet their needs. Gradually, broader changes occur as new ways to measure non-economic progress are invented. As 'non-economic' work is valued, many more people begin to 'downshift' to less affluent lives and find practical expression of 'work-life balance'. Through connection with people, place, the environment and 'spirituality', people increasingly find ways to question unfairness meted out to the "third world" and all planetary species. Australia begins to question the predominance of markets and thus its role in international free trade agreements. Local, small business has a better chance to thrive, as people get to build relationships with their local traders ...

And so the story went...

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