

The role of planning in community building

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ABBREVIATIONS

DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, NSW Government
DUAP	(former) Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, NSW Government
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
NIMBY	Not in my back yard (colloquial)
NSW	New South Wales
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute (United Kingdom)
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the contribution of practising planners, working in town or urban planning departments, to social wellbeing. It is concerned with what planners do, how they conceptualise the application of town or urban planning practice to social issues, and what they think about their role in achieving social outcomes in a place.

The general question is initially addressed through an introductory story and then via a content analysis of recent regional strategic plans. This is followed by a review of town planning literature on social issues, particularly literature concerned with small areas such as villages and neighbourhoods and which treat urban areas as a series of villages or neighbourhoods. The work is further advanced by a discourse analysis of the use of the word community, as a noun and as an adjective, in a series of planning reports. Recent literature on community development, community consultation and sustainability principles is also reviewed for its contribution to the way in which planners address social issues.

On the basis of findings from this work, five research propositions are developed. These are explored through a survey of practising planners. The research propositions are explored in a number of questions so as to search for consistency and establish the reliability of the results. The same questionnaire is also administered to a class of fourth year student planners as a control. Four of the five research propositions are demonstrated by the survey results.

The results suggest that practising planners have a knowledge and skill shortfall in the area of applying planning practice to achieving social outcomes. However, the results also demonstrate that most planners think that community building is part of their role, they have a realistic appreciation of their skills and are open to new ideas and learning opportunities. The concluding section of the thesis makes a series of suggestions for responding to the shortfall and developing planners' knowledge and skills relevant to community building.

INTRODUCTORY STORY

One of the advantages of writing a thesis late in a working life is the opportunity to observe its antecedents. This thesis is about the role of planning in community building or in social sustainability (depending on your preference for jargon), and it would be easy to see it as arising from a series of experiences I had in the 1990s. But on reflection, my first encounter with the question happened shortly after I finished my final examinations in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1966.

A number of us were sitting in the Union coffee shop facing the future. We supposed we would have to get jobs. We were already mourning our student days. A passing member of Academic staff suggested that we consider doing the town planning postgraduate qualification. His suggestion, he said, was in the interests of the planning profession whose current student body came from geography and economics and didn't seem to have a clue about social issues. It was time their ranks were swelled by some sociology graduates who understood about social structures and social systems. He thought we had a lot to offer.

We continued to drink our coffees. The thought of embarking on a career characterised by a life time of endeavouring to enlighten the men (for they were mostly men and we were mostly women) who draw lines on a map moved us not one jot. Perhaps if we had realised that that was what we were facing anyway, some of us might have followed up this suggestion, but as it happens none of us did. We moved out into the workforce to discover that sociology was slightly suss, that we were wrong gender, and, that (on both counts) a career of enlightening the uninitiated was in fact exactly what we had been set up to do.

But I thought no more about it for a long time although I encountered plenty of men drawing lines - for roads, for zones, and for organisational structures in which the lines, both vertical and horizontal, also accomplished demarcations between people. It was only when I joined a small planning consultancy specialising in planning for ecologically sustainable development (ESD) that I consciously re-encountered the issue. My colleagues were consulting to several developers wanting to build large developments in urban areas as well as on greenfield sites. These developers wanted to present their ESD credentials. The question

was, what were the social dimensions of ecologically sustainable development in an inner city development.

My colleagues were clear about waste management, pollution control and solar benefits, they understood design, privacy and surveillance. What else could there be and what was I talking about? Did I mean that the kitchens in each unit should accommodate Asian cooking styles, or that the meeting room for residents should have an outlook and be part of commercially viable space? Or was it an issue about cultural differences in open space requirements? Would the anticipated populations, drawn predominantly from Asian countries in some cases and from the UK in others, have different requirements for private and public open space? In any event, it was clear that my question related to buildings and physical things and couldn't easily be answered.

The issue having been raised, I discovered that social issues were well and truly on the back burner in most planning departments. For example, social issues are listed for inclusion in Environmental Impact Statements¹(EIS), but typically social impacts would be addressed at the eleventh hour and none of any significance would be found. When, as a consultant, I identified social impacts arising from mining a valley (wide swales of subsidence would ripple across the landscape and some homes would have to be demolished and rebuilt) I encountered disbelief among the writers of the rest of the document and rage on the part of my client who sought to have me change my report. He told me that demolition of homes was what was to be expected (by the homeowners) and they'd be better off with a new home.

In an impact assessment on the reduction of the forestry industry in a rural area in NSW, the Reference Committee for the project (which contained economists and geographers but no sociologist) commissioned the social impact assessment when the other parts of the assessment was almost completed. When I presented a report based on a diverse range of assessment methodologies I again encountered rage, except on the part of one community representative who almost wept as he spoke in support of the social impact assessment I presented. His was a lone voice. He was soon drowned out. Sitting in the ESD firm, I had a look at

¹ The NSW Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (as amended) requires impact assessments to take account of social impacts Section 79C(b).

other EISs, for example those for the Eastern Distributor and for the development of a Casino on the Pyrmont/Ultimo site², and found that these were not unusual experiences.

As a consultant it became all too clear that social impact assessments attract small consulting fees and short timeframes for their completion and so, generally, they result in small documents. The people assessing these documents generally do not include social specialists, so it is potluck whether the impact assessment is seen as credible. The proponents for social issues in planning assessments usually have to battle the vested interests of other professions and groups for legitimacy and then for dollars to respond to them. But social dollars are sitting in other departments – health, social welfare, ageing and disability departments not in planning departments.

I also discovered in my travels as a consultant that there were no sociologists in the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP) which was renamed PlanningNSW in 2001³⁴. That Department did not have a social impact assessment unit, nor a social plan of its own. The Department had a Sustainability Unit and a Sustainability Advisory Committee but these bodies did not contain sociologists and were not looking at social sustainability issues⁵. The Department's 'Living Centre' teams, charged with developing regional strategies which integrate economic, social and environmental issues, had real difficulty integrating social aspects of sustainability into their projects, and in some cases gave up trying to do so at all⁶.

² Both in Sydney

³ Personal communication from the Department Head in January 2001. PlanningNSW is the NSW Government's state planning department.

⁴ Since this thesis was prepared PlanningNSW has been amalgamated into the NSW Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) and a change in the focus of the department has occurred. For example one of the aims of PlanningNSW was to achieve vibrant liveable communities, whereas the Goal of DIPNR, according to their website in 2004, is, inter alia, to improve the quality of life for the NSW community through better land use (www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au). My research was concluded before this amalgamation and does not take it into account. For this reason I have retained the name PlanningNSW when referring to the pre-amalgamated department. As far as I am aware, DIPNR also does not have a social impact assessment unit nor a social plan of its own.

⁵ Bruce Taper, Director Sustainability Unit, PlanningNSW, personal communication, January 2002

⁶ Unpublished formative evaluation reports on the Living Centres projects prepared for PlanningNSW by Alison Ziller

And I also know from my years as an employee in local government, and as a consultant, that local councils in NSW have Social Plans but are not required to implement them (NSW Department of Local Government 2002:24)⁷ and if they have Section 94 Plans (for developer contributions) these need not include contributions for social facilities and may not be used for non-physical items (except for salaries for limited term planning exercises and for road maintenance where the development imposes excessive wear and tear – thus demonstrating the point again).

Flailing around in the mire of incredulity I asked a friend of mine, a town planner, why planners didn't facilitate the establishment of social and civic infrastructure in new estates. I had to explain what I meant – at the time I meant things like precinct committees, or mutual support organisations or committees to manage the local community centre or local progress associations, car pools, babysitting clubs and so on. That, I was told with immediate disapproval, was social engineering.

After starting the research for this thesis, I felt sure that the bias in the focus of planning must be obvious to everyone and not just me. I began to fear that the more I interviewed people for my research, the more the obvious gap would smite the profession as if it were collectively on the road to Damascus and I would be done out of my topic. But no, recently I received the following email:

'Basically I am the social conscience on the Infrastructure Planning Council. We have just released our interim report and are now trying to add detail and pull some threads together in our four areas of concern - water, communications, transport and energy. As a human geographer I have found myself in the role of raising questions of space and social impacts at our various meetings. One of the other members of the Council -... - is a professional recycler and there are others in the group who are into sustainability in a big way. So too is the premier so this angle is getting a good run and will be one of the key principles that will underlay our final report and the criteria we put forward as means to assess infrastructure decisions. However, I am concerned to get a social equivalent of the human impact of infrastructure with KPIs that have some

⁷ Unlike most other kinds of plans, councils' Social Plans are recommendations rather than commitments. Each Council 'must decide annually which of the actions recommended in their social/community plan will be carried out'.

meaning, some connection to social wellbeing, employment creation and community building. And it is at this point that I hit a wall.

I am no expert in all of this but I would love to talk to someone who is and to access any reading that deals with these kinds of issues. I am aware of the social capital stuff and am researching cultural capital in regional centres. But that still does not give me or the Council what we are after.⁸

By contrast, I have been struck repeatedly by the empty utopianism of planning-speak.

In Australia, planning departments in state and local governments frequently refer to the triple bottom line. By this they mean that their planning work, and its outcomes, should be measured against a yardstick with three elements. The yardstick is usually sustainability and the three elements are economic, environmental and social sustainability. Planning documents frequently say things like this:

'The primary goal of the Draft Structural Master Plan for the Green Square area is to establish an environmentally sustainable suburb which supports the wellbeing of present and future communities as well as providing a complex urban environment for rich interaction.'(Stanisic-Turner 1997:1)

'The four key regional goals for the Central Coast are consistent with the principle of ecologically sustainable development. ESD is both a process and an outcome that integrates environmental protection, social equity and economic opportunities within a political decision-making framework' and 'Communities become more livable and sustainable by integrating biophysical needs with the social and economic imperatives that characterise a civilised society.' (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1999b:8 and 9)

'Our purpose is to plan for a sustainable future – for a better environment, jobs and liveable communities' (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 2000:1)

⁸ Email to Alison Ziller received in March 2002

It cannot be said that planners as a profession are unfamiliar with social objectives or desired social outcomes, nor that planners, and town or urban planners in particular, have made a public, documented or well debated decision to concentrate on economic and, recently, environmental outcomes to the exclusion of social outcomes. So what could account for the gap between the stated goals and the actual practice?

This thesis sets out to demonstrate and explore this gap, and to discuss what the disjuncture between the stated goals and the actual focus of planning means for the profession of planning as well as its clients.

* * *

This introductory story describes how my research interest grew out of my work experience and early student days.

1: THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This thesis has its origins in repeated experience, the repeated experience of disappointment. I have this experience whenever I read the aims and claims for social outcomes in planning documents and policies and then look at their content. I have this experience when I read social impact assessments relating to development applications for major projects and when I listen to planners talking about the quality of life which their plans will deliver.

My disappointment comes from the limited range and role that planning professionals accord their work when it comes to social outcomes. The positioning of the planning professional in regard to the society in which she is working seems to me to be one of limiting and reducing the stated relationship between what is planned in terms of land use and built as a result of these plans, and the impacts of these decisions on the health, education outcomes, crime rates etc in that society.

On the one hand the spectre of social engineering and overweening Modernism has encouraged planners to pull back from 'we know best' planning and adopt a listening mode in community consultations with diverse groups (Gans 1968, Goodman 1972, Friedmann 1998, Forester 1998, Young 1990 and others). All to the good. But on the other hand, planners' use of social impact assessment is minimal (Burdge 2002).

There is a curious paradox in place. While evidence of negative social effects from planning decisions is all too readily available (Young and Willmott 1957, Gans 1991, Goodman 1972, Brownill 1990, Sandercock 2000, Ziller 2002 to cite a few), even at their best, planning documents make limited reference to social outcomes and generally those that are mentioned are from a limited list of potential impact areas (such as health, access, recreation and leisure) and relate to a limited geographic area.

On the one hand there is extensive discussion about how to hear about the different needs of different groups, and how to avoid universal remedies which have unequal results (Douglas and Friedmann 1998:34), on the other hand, the planning content of planning options to respond to inequality and difference at the level of a society is scarcely addressed (Heikkila 2001) much less in any detail or with a body of practice to refine

that detail. Utopian ideals are ubiquitous (Bohl 2000, Murcott 1997), but their content seems to evaporate as one steps down from vision to mission to actual goals, objectives and actions.

This thesis is concerned with the juxtaposition of planners' knowledge that many planning decisions have adverse local social impacts and an apparent reluctance to focus on societal impacts (Burdge 1994:8 and 2002) or on an active role in social wellbeing (Evans 1994, Talen 2000). This juxtaposition is particularly arresting given the origins of planning, not city building (long the domain of architecture) but planning, which grew out of nineteenth century concerns about the health and welfare impacts of slums. Largely a concern about those-less-fortunate-than-ourselves others, this was nonetheless the basis for the emergence of a new profession (Hall 1996).

Despite this origin, and the fact that the founding figures in planning were not architects, but well meaning entrepreneurs and proselytisers (Hall 1996), planning developed as a sub-branch of architecture and without much in the way of a sociological epistemology. What planners do in their profession has big impacts on society. But it seems that planners' approach to identifying, examining and reflecting on these social impacts is simplistic and narrowly focussed. In regard to the social outcomes of planning, there seems to be a gap between a breadth of vision for the role of planning and a narrowness in the application of planning tools or initiatives. This thesis asks how this gap could have occurred and what is keeping it there.

Specifically, this thesis examines two broad propositions:

- 1 The first proposition is that a number of much used but little examined beliefs, a prevailing professional self image, a set of professional boundaries and a comfort zone, the impact of related professions and a continuing set of political realities have operated concurrently to sanction, and possibly obscure, the gap between stated aims and actual practice by practising planners – at least in NSW.
- 2 The second proposition is that this has resulted in a situation in which a century of aspirations to 'make a difference' to social wellbeing through planning is not matched by a professional body of work about how to do this.

The early chapters of this thesis examine the evidence for these two broad propositions in some NSW planning documents and relevant literature. From this examination more specific propositions are developed which are explored through the responses of 135 planners, practising mainly in eastern states of Australia, and 28 fourth year planning students⁹, to a survey about the role of planning in community building.

Finally, this dissertation examines whether the present position can be sustained by planners in the twenty first century, and, concluding that it cannot, suggests ways in which planners, and planning faculties in educational institutions, might address the barriers and achieve a better integration of their well established goals with their professional practice.

⁹ At the University of New South Wales in 2002. These students had completed a year's work experience, mostly in the planning department of a local government authority.

2: OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

I approached my topic by looking, in a number of areas, for clues to explain the gap. I examined planning documents to see if I had misunderstood the scope and intentions of practising planners. I read planning literature on social issues in planning and went looking in related areas of sociology, especially for key works in the last century and recent relevant research. I utilised opportunities in my consulting work to ask practising planners what they understood to be the role of planning in relation to social wellbeing or other social outcomes and through those opportunities ran two pilots for a subsequent survey of 135 practising planners and 28 student planners.

As a process, this investigation was not linear. While I examined some NSW planning documents relatively early in this journey, I also returned to examining the specifics of some other NSW planning documents towards the end. I focussed and then re-focussed on the academic literature in between consulting assignments and periods of concentrating on getting my survey developed and administered. I asked and then re-asked (in interviews and informal conversations) colleagues who are planners about their views, so as to discover whether there were changes during the life of this research (1997-2002). I also read newspapers - local newspapers, the Sydney Morning Herald and The Guardian online, following current and proposed planning policy, disputed planning decisions, allegations of corrupt planning practice and what was being reported in the arenas of greenfield and urban regeneration, the latter particularly in the UK.

While these areas of investigation were frequently concurrent, I describe them in more detail below under headings relating to the type of inquiry.

PLANNING LITERATURE AND PLANNING DOCUMENTS

I begin by defining some terms. The researcher can find some kinds of publications about planning in an academic library and other kinds seem to exist only on the shelves of planning departments at various levels of

government. The former kind can be tracked through catalogue systems and the latter seem to require detective skills, word of mouth, local knowledge and the identification of a public servant who has survived enough recent restructures to be able to tell you that a document originally produced for a now defunct planning office might just be located in the soon-to-be-de-acquisitioned library of a soon-to-be-restructured-again regional office.

To differentiate the former from the latter, I have called the former planning theory or planning literature and the latter, the works of planning practitioners, I refer to as planning documents¹⁰. I recognise that planning theorists may also sometimes function as planning practitioners and vice versa. However, my consulting experience suggests that full time practising planners generally read but few works of planning theory once they have graduated, whereas planning academics/theorists read both works that relate to the theory of planning and the products of practising planners, namely: strategic plans, structure plans, master plans, regional plans, local plans, etc, various visions and reports, and documents emanating from planning agencies and which are entitled planning policy. In this thesis I am interested in the use of the word community in both planning literature and planning documents.

NOMENCLATURE

Another important methodological issue was what to call what I am talking about. I began by talking to interviewees and respondents about the role of planning in community building. I did this because community building has a meaning that is differentiated from 'community development' as the latter is conventionally understood. Community building as a concept was initiated in Nebraska and has been widely adopted in the United States. According to a recent review, community building operates around seven themes.

'Today's community building needs to be:

(1) Focused around specific improvement initiatives in a manner that reinforces values and builds social and human capital...

¹⁰ Sometimes called 'grey' literature, see also Burrows (2000)

- (2) *Community driven with broad residential involvement...*
 (3) *Comprehensive, strategic and entrepreneurial...*
 (4) *Asset based...all distressed neighborhoods do have a substantial number of assets: the skills and entrepreneurial ideas of local residents, neighborhood businesses, churches and other community institutions...*
 (5) *Tailored to neighborhood scale and conditions...*
 (6) *Collaboratively linked to the broader society to strengthen community institutions and enhance outside opportunities for residents*
 (7) *Consciously challenging institutional barriers and racism...'* (Kingsley et al. 1997:6-8)

This definition of community building comes from the United States and reflects the integration of an entrepreneurial and social capital building approach to community development. This cluster of ideas has largely been adopted by NSW government agencies. For example the NSW Government's Premiers Department has a website called *communitybuildersNSW*¹¹ on which community building is defined as

- *'Improving the abilities of communities to enhance their quality of life*
- *Assisting disadvantaged groups in communities to participate in these processes and obtain their fair share of the benefits'*

There were other advantages to using this term. First because of its association with skilling, entrepreneurship and self help, this term seemed more accessible to planners. Unlike community development which has traditionally involved a community development worker¹² in a long term capacity working in a place, community building conveys the idea of a community managing its development itself i.e. through people volunteering their time rather than through the facilitations of a worker. This seemed more consistent with the role of planning since the planner facilitates the setting of the scene (particularly in the Australian environment of greenfield development) rather than the step by step facilitated development of social networks and activities.

I also used community building because it was a term in use and avoided the word 'social' which has its own sub-meanings, for example of welfare.

¹¹ www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

¹² Not a planner

A number of my survey respondents noted 'social' has low status. For example, they said

'Social stuff is low status, you can't measure it and it's not tangible, it's not seen as important and it's not a priority', and

'Social planning has been the poor cousin of urban planning'

By contrast, my review of planning documents showed that the word community was entirely acceptable, in fact in massive use with no such overtones.

Finally, I wanted to use a term that did not seem too big a leap from current practice. I did not want to distort the responses I received, in discussions, interviews or questionnaires, by any reaction that the topic was about something high flown, impossible, inconceivable, too big or about things which were really to do with the social welfare departments and agencies. My thesis is about the practical things that planners can reasonably do. So I avoided saying that I was talking about social sustainability, for example. Social sustainability, as I discuss in Chapter 7, is not well defined and is largely discussed in idealistic or utopian terms.

Other potential terms were social wellbeing and quality of life. I have avoided referring to quality of life because there is a school of thought engaged in rating various cities against each other according to so called 'quality of life' attributes (ABS 2001, Cummins 1997). I am not addressing in this thesis methodological issues about how one might rank cities according to some variables. Social wellbeing seems, on the other hand, to have a general meaning that is about positive things shared by people in a society or a smaller place like a town. These positive things are frequently taken to be health, low unemployment, low crime rates, leisure opportunities or a sense of inclusion¹³. While these attributes are used in the quality of life literature, social wellbeing as a term has a generalised usage which avoids the ranking frame of reference.

However, although I used the term community building to introduce the questionnaire, as my work progressed I came increasingly to feel that it was out of keeping with the direction my research was taking.

¹³ See particularly the work of the UK Social Exclusion Unit

First, despite the distinctions I made above between community building and community development, recent usage of community building as a term in NSW seems to be closing that gap. This is especially evident on the NSW community builders network hosted by the NSW Premiers Department.

Second, the more I considered planners' usage of the word community, the more I found it to be confined to relatively small geographic spaces and the same was true of the way social issues are presented in social plans for planners' consideration. My review of the way in which ideas about the village have infiltrated planning concepts (Chapter 4) showed that the idea of community tends to be used in regard to smaller rather than larger areas and rarely in referring to a whole society. And this was born out in my discourse analysis of the use of the word in planning documents (Chapter 5).

But as my research progressed I came increasingly to the view that what was being omitted was social issues which relate to societies, that is to social structures and systems of social relations, across nation-states (Giddens 1990:13).

I had begun by being concerned by the focus of planning colleagues on built elements of social infrastructure, their 'list' approach to community building – in effect a view that if the right things are on the list (school, hall, bus stops, railway etc) and they are built 'in time' then social wellbeing will result. I had thought that what was being omitted were the intangibles of social structure: social and civic networks, democratic safeguards and programmatic support relationships, for example.

However, while these things are important, my research increasingly suggested that what really counts in terms of positive social outcomes for any smaller area is not what goes on inside the smaller area but its relative position vis-a-vis other places and the society at large. The relationship between health and relative income inequality within Western nations had been put by Richard Wilkinson in his 1996 publication *Unhealthy Societies, the Afflictions of Inequality* which, when I began my thesis, was still being hotly contested by epidemiologists and in the medical journals. However, by 2001, the relationship between relative income inequality and social exclusion and accepted indicators of social wellbeing – mortality rates, heart attack rates, other health indicators such as depression and obesity, crime rates and educational outcomes

had been established in the academic community (Pahl 2001; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003) and by 2004 even accepted at a political level by the UK Government (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004; Cooper 2004).

Thus in the course of this research I moved from thinking that planners ought to be concerned with, and make provision for, the non-built aspects of social and civic infrastructure in their role as community builders in relatively small places (suburbs for example), to thinking that even if planners were to do so it would not be enough. That is, I moved to being concerned with the role planning currently plays and could play in ameliorating relative social inequality and social exclusion or, conversely, in fostering relative social equality and social inclusion.

While I began this thesis by working with the concept of community building, I have interpreted many of my results and made recommendations not in terms of that role but in terms of the role that planning as a profession could play in achieving social wellbeing through reducing relative social inequality. By social wellbeing I mean relative social equality and its indicators (such as relative income equality, rising life expectancy, low rates of infant mortality, heart attack, and similar health indicators, low crime rates, and strong educational outcomes).

This wider perspective raises questions about the role of planning in systems of social and economic relationships across the state of NSW.

The gaps in planning thinking and practice which I identify in the following chapters relate to the role of planning in broad, state/national geographic areas and in the terms of systems of social relationships that are not bounded by geography. My survey data was collected in a questionnaire headed: The Role of Planning in Community Building. But the results feed into other research and analysis to build my thesis about the broader issue.

CONTENT ANALYSES

I have made two main uses of published planning documents in this thesis. The first use, in terms of chronology, was to examine a number of NSW planning documents and one UK urban renewal document for their use of the word community, both as a noun and as an adjective. I did this in 2000 using documents published recently i.e. in the time period 1997-

2000. Because I wanted to avoid quirks of personal expression I selected planning documents that would have been through a fairly rigorous review of content and meaning by the publishing agency and could be regarded as mainstream and seeking to be uncontested. I also wanted to use documents that were central to planning in NSW, that is not reports of one local council or one consulting firm.

For this reason I selected publications by the NSW Government's State planning agency, then the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP) and now called PlanningNSW. I examined the 1998-9 DUAP annual report, a DUAP Strategic Directions report 2000, a DUAP Affordable Housing background paper 2000, DUAP Area Assistance Scheme Guidelines (2000) (the last of these written by people with social policy background but within the planning department), and a less recent but widely discussed urban regeneration master-planning document for Green Square in Sydney dated 1997. For comparison, I selected a UK Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit report on Neighbourhood Management also dated 2000. At the time the publications of the Social Exclusion Unit were being widely referred to by planners¹⁴.

The process I used to undertake the content analysis was to identify every mention in either the whole document or the major part of the document (depending on its size). I colour coded each mention of community according to whether it was a noun or an adjective. Then using Peter Willmott's definitions and typology (Willmott, 1989:19) and the matrix framework described in Chapter 5, I identified for each use of the word community as a noun, whether a community of territory, interest or attachment was being referred to. I determined this either from an explicit definition in the document or from the context in which the word appeared. The resulting tables (5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.10) show the distribution of actual usage in each of the documents and a clear pattern of use by town planners.

In regard to the use of community as an adjective, I was unable to find an existing typology which would provide a classification of meanings relating to the use of the word by town planners. So I took more of a discourse analysis approach – described in the next section.

¹⁴ For example, at around that time, the then Minister of Planning visited the Social Exclusion Unit while on holiday in the UK

Sometime later, in early 2002, I decided it might be informative to have a look at the distribution of proposed strategies or actions in well regarded strategic plans. The distribution I was interested in related to the triple bottom line¹⁵ and I was particularly interested in the distribution of socially focused strategies or actions in strategic plans as compared with those focused on environmental or economic outcomes. For this analysis I decided that I needed strategic plans rather than traditional land use planning documents such as local or regional environmental plans. There were two reasons for this. First, the planning profession is clearly moving towards strategic planning for local and regional areas. For example the recent Planning Green Paper in the UK, states

'We intend that planning should have a new strategic focus. We will simplify the complex hierarchical system of plans and replace local plans with new Local Development Frameworks. These will connect up with the local Community Strategy and help deliver the policies it contains.' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2001, page 6 para 2.9 accessed June 2003)

and in NSW

'PlanFIRST will change the focus of planning in NSW, so that it better reflects the strategic direction and vision of regions and their communities' (PlanningNSW 2001, accessed June 2003)

and second, it is in strategic plans that actions or strategies (depending on the nomenclature adopted) are most clearly identified according to their strategic purpose.

I selected the plans in question by asking a senior officer at PlanningNSW which regional strategic plans were currently relatively well regarded in the Department¹⁶. This officer nominated: The *Alpine Regional Strategy* (PlanningNSW undated), the *Northern Rivers Regional Strategy* (Northern Rivers Regional Strategy Secretariat 1997), and

¹⁵ For a description of the triple bottom line see page 12.

¹⁶ While this method of selection has its flaws (the department is involved with all regional strategic plans and the officer concerned may have had a vested interest) there were very few strategic plans to choose from at the regional level (perhaps two others) and only one at the local level and the recommended plans met my other criterion of working with documents which had been through a relatively rigorous review of content and could be regarded as mainstream and relatively uncontested – see para 1 of this section.

Shaping Western Sydney (DUAP undated). I also examined *Camden 2025 A Strategic Plan for Camden* (Camden Council 1999) because at the time of writing, this was the only strategic plan for a local council in NSW and it had been given a prominent position in a PlanningNSW Sustainability Conference during 2001.

These plans do not use the same structure or terminology and I was not setting out to undertake an in depth analysis of their contents. For example, I was not setting out to show whether on the basis of a relatively 'hard', or quantifiable, indicator, such as projected expenditure or number of staff allocated, more emphasis was being given to one part of the triple bottom line than another. I eschewed this approach because of the risk of reading more into the content of these plans than is warranted – after all these regional plans are new phenomena, they represent an early stage of inter-government/local government cooperation. All I wanted to do was to look at different levels of *intention* as reflected in different emphases in the lists of actions (occasionally called strategies) in these plans.

So I adopted the simplest approach. I identified all those actions which, in my experience would or might be categorised by planners as social in intention. Because I was looking to see whether social issues were being given less attention than other issues in these plans, I deliberately erred on the side of interpreting an action as being concerned with social issues wherever I believed that a planner would be likely to argue that it was. This resulted in my including a number of actions/strategies which I personally would not have regarded as social initiatives but which I thought, on the basis of both my consulting experience and my research for this thesis, many planners would argue were. Examples of actions falling in this category include actions to prepare heritage plans, set up one stop shops or promote better urban design.

Subsequently, I reviewed these selections on the basis of my definition of social wellbeing. That is, I re-examined the lists of actions in these plans against the criterion that they ought to be regarded as 'social' actions if they would foster or add to relative social equality. I used this criterion to check for omissions from my original selections.

Having identified the social actions or strategies, I worked out what proportion they were of the total number of strategies by simple addition. The results are shown in Chapter 3 in Table 3.1. Because the results

were remarkably consistent across all the regional plans and with the Camden Strategy, I concluded that my method had revealed a real difference of focus and intention between the social actions and the economic and environmental actions contained in these plans.

DISCOURSE AND THEMATIC ANALYSES

I became disenchanted with the word community when I did a discourse analysis of community used as an adjective in planning documents (Chapter 5). This is by no means the first discourse analysis of the word community (Potter and Reicher, 1987), nor am I the first to be disenchanted (Mowbray 1985); however, it does appear that few planners are disenchanted with the word and use it liberally as an adjective.

Potter and Reicher's widely quoted research study is an analysis of how the concept of community was used in different accounts of a riot in Bristol in 1980. In that study both the word community and its synonyms were analysed and categorised and a number of common themes identified as the 'repertoire' of meanings of community. However, they make no particular differentiation between the use of community as a noun and community as an adjective and neither do most other analysts of this term. In general, a level of confusion has reigned as exemplified by a claim by Hillery (1955) that he had found 94 different uses.

I found that town planners' use of community as an adjective is quite different to their use of community as a noun. A discourse analysis approach yielded 9 meanings which could be deduced from the use of the word in context. This required an examination of each use of the word as an adjective to determine what was meant. Frequently more than one meaning was deducible. As a result, I sometimes noted both primary and the secondary meaning of a usage. These meanings and my results are set out in detail in Chapter 5. Adding planners' use of community as an adjective to their use of community as a noun revealed some large areas of unexamined assumptions in the discourse of planning practitioners (discussed in Chapter 5).

I was also interested in the use of community by planners with a more general interest in town and urban land use and development and so I examined several themes in planning history and literature. The first of these is the concept of the village which I trace from late nineteenth

century nostalgia to current NSW planning usage. The village, it turns out, has many elements that can currently be found in town planners' use of community (Chapter 4).

The second theme can be found in planning literature concerned with including the community as a stakeholder in planning processes. In Chapter 6, I examine what this has meant for the outsider status of the social in planning practice.

The third theme is the role that environmental protection and conservation has played in planning practice in NSW since the mid twentieth century. I examine what influence this has had on the place of the social in the repertoire of planning. (Chapter 7)

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS

It is well known that government agency documents are carefully crafted. The expressions used in their plans and policies are often intended not to alarm and there is an art in writing government documents which convey policy intentions, or even requirements, without on the one hand tying the government's hand too much or on the other implying outcomes which are not intended. In fact, a government's true intentions in any given planning matter can often be determined by the unequivocal nature, or otherwise, of its policy statements.

For example, what may (or may not) lie behind an action stated as 'prepare and implement threat abatement, species recovery and pest management strategies...' depends on which strategies they are going to use. Some strategies are pretty ineffectual. An action to 'jointly resource and implement a program to...' is strengthened by the word 'resource' but its modification by 'jointly' suggests an Achilles heel¹⁷. And so on.

So while the lists of actions and strategies in a public planning document represent mainstream and politically acceptable meanings, perhaps they are also the tombstones for many a planner's lost ambitions. I thought that perhaps behind a statement such as '*Undertake local access studies*

¹⁷ Or even an escape hatch.

for *Castle Hill; Blacktown; Penrith and Campbelltown*¹⁸ there was once an abandoned draft prepared by a dedicated planner which said 'institute a capital investment program to purchase a new fleet of accessible buses within the next five years'.

More generally, for a long time I wondered whether planners actually have a really good idea of the contribution that plans and planning tools make to social wellbeing and whether it is simply that the reader cannot discern this for the linguistic fog which shrouds public planning documents. I appreciate that some of this fog is necessary, a plan is only a statement of intention, or at best a commitment, and flexibility to implement is a good thing providing this flexibility is exercised within a framework of sound principles¹⁹. But it does also mean that published documents can often seem frustratingly bland. Not being a town planner by profession I wondered what they really thought and whether behind their well honed political skills they were just waiting for the opportunity to slip in a few really effective strategies from a list of suitable options kept in the bottom drawer.

After reviewing planning documents and literature, I was determined to find out what planners really think and to do so by conducting a survey of planners. For this survey I specified my research propositions more closely. These and the details of the survey method are described in Chapter 7. However, I did the scoping groundwork for the survey by holding a series of exploratory interviews with practising planners in the early part of my research prior to developing and piloting my questionnaire. My interviewees included DUAP staff who were invited to talk to me by the Department Head from the following areas of the Department: the Area Assistance Scheme team, Special Projects, the Sustainability Unit, the Reform Unit, the Land and Housing Supply Team, and Metropolitan Policy and Policy Regulation. I also interviewed senior staff at Landcom²⁰ and four town planning consultants.

My prompt sheet for these explorations contained the following questions:

¹⁸ See the Table re. *Shaping Western Sydney* on page 43

¹⁹ Flexibility to implement is likely to lack credibility in the absence of some guiding principles. For example planFIRST is guided by '*strong principles of community collaboration and sustainability*' (PlanningNSW 2001).

²⁰ Landcom is the NSW Government's land sale and development agency. At the time of commencing this thesis Landcom was part of DUAP, however, in 2002 it became a separate NSW Government agency.

- 1 What do you understand by 'community building'?
- 2 What do you think the role of planning in community building is or might be?
- 3 What are the obstacles? (possible prompts: timing, political interference, developer resistance, cost of prime real estate, too many departments with their own agendas and timetables)
- 4 What community building initiatives could fall within the ambit of planning? (Possible prompts:
 - Timely provision of built social infrastructure
 - Timely provision of basic social programs and services
 - Using developer agreements to build the income stream to support a community facility
 - Banning town fringe and out of town shopping malls
 - Including community facilities in town centre prime sites
 - More attention to social impacts in development decisions
 - Seed funding/start up for civic organisations
 - A good level of affordable housing
 - Making sure that a place to be built or regenerated has a sustainable reason for being
 - What else?)

These informal conversations took their own course but generally covered these topics. Feedback gained was:

THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY BUILDING:

- All but one person thought the thesis topic a legitimate area of inquiry
- Several interviewees treated community building and community involvement /consultation as synonymous during these discussions.

COMMUNITY IN TERMS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT:

- Several people thought mainly about built responses to the idea of community building such as pathways to schools, cycle tracks, aged friendly streets, shops and various community facilities
- One person thought that DUAP was already in the arena through Mainstreet programs and the Urban Improvement Program²¹.

²¹ These are time limited grant programs which provide for physical improvements with either community consultation or involvement.

- Several people thought that busy streets/vibrant shopping areas and cafes, events and festivals constituted community and thus that those elements constituted community building.
- One person thought that planners should only be involved in the public realm, 'what we are really concerned with is how the public realm should work'.

SECTION 94 AND DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS:

Several respondents mentioned section 94 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EPA Act). This section allows local government authorities to levy developers for contributions to community facilities.

One person said:

- S94 – this section of the Act reinforces the physical infrastructure approach.
- The developer is not the end user and therefore doesn't see any benefit from S94. The developer only sees it as a cost.
- Developers don't think beyond their site and their profit margin or beyond their obligations under S94. Developers design to cost parameters and without regard to surroundings.
- The planning system has become legalistic, adversarial and compliance driven and so this encourages developers to only be interested in issues outside the legal requirements if it helps market their product. There is no incentive to do more than the planning instruments require.

Several people thought:

- Developer funded community facilities could be done through agreements with the developer for larger developments, without recourse to S94. This would be more flexible and the facility would be delivered as part of the development and not some time later. They noted that getting the terms of the agreement right so as to ensure that the facility was properly costed and would eventuate, was difficult.
- S94 should be amended to include recurrent costs. The current regulations and recent guidelines reflect the mindset of planners.

OTHER SYSTEM CONSTRAINTS:

One person said:

- It is difficult to get social issues considered by the strategic planning teams early enough and in an integrated way. The structure of consulting teams and staff shortages in councils and DUAP all militate against this.
- Under the NSW planning system, if a local council zones an area for a community centre for example, then it has created an obligation to purchase the land²². The alternative is to make a community centre a permissible use and then to see if they can persuade the developer to accommodate the permissible use. But they can't use it as a negotiating factor because if the developer wants to agree to include the community centre in return for some concession then the council has to either rezone the area or amend its LEP to allow the concession, i.e. to bend its own planning instruments. This undermines their forcefulness and any sense that their requirements are correctly based. As well, it takes between 1-3 years to change a planning instrument.
- The sheer inflexibility of planning instruments also means that they reflect out of date thinking and tend to avoid things which are innovative and difficult to enforce.

Another person said:

- Planners have no ability to negotiate. When they try to create flexibility in plans they do it in a quantifiable way and then if the developer meets the requirements there are no grounds on which to reject the development. They haven't yet learnt how to put other requirements into their planning instruments in an enforceable way.

POWER AND LEADERSHIP ISSUES:

Points raised by individuals:

- Community building is very dependent on local leadership and 'often when the leader goes the program goes'
- 'People doing the plans don't have any control over the resources, they can only act as a mediator or coordinator, they don't control the budget. The real planner is the controller of the budget. Planners control land, it is only a bit of the resources. Actually, nobody is really in control of all of it'

²² For example, recently, North Sydney Council sought a change to planning legislation because it is faced with just such a situation. Having zoned a piece of privately owned land for public reserve it is now faced with having to purchase that land at the price it would fetch if it were being sold for housing. See *How land boom could send councils broke*, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 October 2002

- Social impact assessments/social plans have only arrived on the scene in the last 10 years. They are still new, they are still tending to be about bricks and mortar and planning schools haven't taken these new initiatives on board yet.
- In general, planners are not exposed to the theories and practice of community development and don't know how to begin or what it means – eg they don't understand network development, how to foster leadership or how to use this to create organisational infrastructure.
- Planners tend to be powerful by holding onto information and decision making. They have little experience of being powerful through sharing information and decision making. Community development is about empowerment and planners have trouble with power-sharing. They are not used to mutuality, bargaining and partnering. They fear loss of control – both to elected representatives and to other planning staff. Planning arose from a need for order. Community empowerment runs counter to this and leads to a fear of lack of order.

All these responses tended to endorse my proposal that this is an area of town planning requiring further elucidation. They suggested that in considering a question about the relationship between town planning and social wellbeing, planners focus on:

- physical infrastructure
- private sources of funding and ways in which this could be required or encouraged, and
- technical and legal aspects of planning and particularly the recurring issue of whether a local council's planning decision would survive an appeal to the NSW Land and Environment Court, and
- their power to effect a social outcome, for example to secure a social benefit such as a building from a developer

At the end of these interviews, I had a strong sense of NSW planning practitioners as focused on the technical and political details of their day to day experiences, but that their consideration of the role of planning in community building or social wellbeing was within a relatively narrow frame.

RE-CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

In and among all of this my reading had a particular, and for me, rewarding pattern. The pattern related to the starting point for the thesis, reflection on the fact that I was dealing with something which had been around in the 1960s, that I had known about it then, and that it had survived until 2002 for me to write about. I found that I needed not only to read about the history of planning, (and I also attended, and gave a paper at the 8th International Planning History Conference at the University of NSW in 1998), but I needed to catch up with what had happened to sociology since I graduated.

In part I wanted to revisit research and theories which had informed my early education. So I went back to see what sociologists had written about community and to early studies, such as that by Young and Willmott (1957) which had left, I discovered an indelible impression. As part of this pilgrimage to my past, I visited Sir Michael Young's (1915-2002) offices – still in Bethnal Green – to see what he was saying, in 1998, about planning and communities. It turned out that I was in England when he was away, but I met with his colleague, Gerard Lemos, and discovered that Michael Young was still active, advocating that a proportion of new public housing should be allocated on the basis of kin, so that in such new areas there would be at least some established kinship networks from the outset (Young and Lemos 1997).

I quizzed my fellow graduates from the 60s in the UK about the impacts of Margaret Thatcher's famous remark 'And you know, there's no such thing as society' (Women's Own 1987) and her gradual erosion of sociology faculties throughout the country. I revisited the LSE to find the coffee shop no longer looked the same and the library was definitely up market.

I also used visits 'home', to that place of attachment, to research the developing vogue in the UK for public/private and third sector partnerships in urban regeneration projects. As a small consulting project for Landcom, I conducted a range of interviews and collected some recent research papers on these partnership arrangements, which I report on in Chapter 6.

At the same time I needed to catch up with what had happened to sociology in the intervening years. We might have been Modernist in the 1960s, but we didn't call ourselves that nor did we think that we were engaging in top down universalism, and we were not overlooking the fracturing differences that made up our society. We were after all students at a time of major social change, a creative flowering was represented in our music, sexual liberation was acknowledged in the rising hems of our skirts and we were, at least at the LSE, closely involved with the significant influx of highly visible immigrants whose culture was tantalisingly interesting and different. I gained an overview of what has happened in sociology since then by going to some recent sociology textbooks (Abbott 2001, May et. al. 2001, Burr 1995) and had the curious experience of reading about 'us' from the perspective of a later generation. However, this also demystified the new vocabulary and made Giddens, Young, Friedmann, and many of the theorists I read more accessible.

I maintained this pattern of reading and visiting as a way of connecting with communities of interest throughout my candidature. I followed trails from the bibliographies of articles aided by University of Sydney librarians, but I also went to academic bookshops in London to spend hours browsing their urban sociology and planning shelves. By this unorthodox method I happened upon the work of Richard Wilkinson (1996, 2002) which has significantly informed my approach to this thesis.

* * *

My research examines the apparent gap between the social intentions of planners and what they do in practice. This is done in two stages.

The first stage is an examination of the broad issue through content, discourse and thematic analysis of planning documents. This examination covers several themes: the poor cousin status of social issues (Chapter 3), the use of the concepts village and neighbourhood in planning (Chapter 4), the meaning of the word community when used as a noun and as adjective by planners (Chapter 5), the impacts of community development theory and the current emphasis on community engagement processes and on sustainability (Chapter 6).

The second stage develops and explores specific propositions about

- what practising planners say about social roles of planning, and
- the content of their planning repertoire.

These are investigated these through the mechanism of a formal questionnaire. This stage is dealt with in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

3: THE *TWO-AND-A-BIT* BOTTOM LINE

THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

In the Introduction I asserted that planners as a profession are not unfamiliar with social objectives but that there is a gap between their stated intentions and what they do in practice, a gap which the thesis would demonstrate and explore. There is nothing novel about my assertion (Thomas 1999, Taylor 1999, Harrison 1975, Healey 1991, Talen 2000, Evans 1994 etc). But I would like to begin by demonstrating the gap using very recent planning documents from NSW.

It is all too easy to do. There is a long tradition in public sector planning of placing the activity of planning within a set of ideals. In the nineteenth century these might have been expounded in a treatise

In the garden city, town and country would be *'married'* and *'out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilisation'*. (Howard,1965:32)

but these days these ideals are contained in vision and mission statements or aims. For example:

Our mission is to set *'the strategic planning agenda for the future to achieve the right balance between the environment, employment and the social aspirations of the people of NSW.'* (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1999a:1)

and:

'Our purpose is to plan for a sustainable future – for a better environment, jobs and livable communities' (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 2000:1)

and:

*'We set the direction for growth and change across New South Wales.
In partnership with state agencies, local government, the community and business we ensure:*

- *sustainable growth in the right locations,*
- *improved investor and community confidence,*
- *effective management of natural, environmental and cultural resources and values,*
- *diverse, equitable and pleasant neighbourhoods which reflect community needs and aspirations,*
- *integrated delivery of regional infrastructure and government activities.'* (PlanningNSW 2002: Setting the Direction).

The emphasis on open space and the natural environment; reliable sources of employment and economic growth; and nice places to live in terms of their housing stock, safety, physical attractiveness and the facilities and services they contain are the consistent theme. This theme can also be found in regional and local planning documents. Three regional strategic plans which, at the time, were well regarded in PlanningNSW²³ are the *Northern Rivers Regional Strategy*, the *NSW Alpine Regional Strategy*, and *Shaping Western Sydney*. The aims of these regional planning strategies are as follows:

THE ALPINE REGIONAL STRATEGY

'Our vision for the Alpine Region is to have:

- *a healthy and viable community*
- *a sustainable natural environment and resource base*
- *a strong and diverse regional economy.*

Three broad objectives for the region are proposed to support our vision for the Alpine Region...

- *to maintain and enhance the quality of life for residents throughout the Alpine Region...*
- *to stimulate and to diversify the regional economy of the Alpine Region...*
- *to conserve and to manage the natural environment of the Alpine Region in a sustainable and cooperative manner.* (PlanningNSW, undated:15-16)

²³ Personal communication, PlanningNSW's Director Policy and Reform, February 2002. While this is not an objective measure of relative merit, none seemed available. Regional strategic plans were few at the time in NSW, there were perhaps 5 or 6 to choose from and my point is not that they were 'good' as such but that they were seen to be relatively good in the Department, i.e. by practising planners of the day. See also the footnote on page 24.

THE NORTHERN RIVERS REGIONAL STRATEGY

'A healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for the communities of the Northern Rivers region' with projects in the areas of planning and coordination, natural resource management, economic development, social planning/services and infrastructure, transport/communications, general policy (eg data accessibility and compatibility, conflict management strategy) and implementation management and monitoring.
(Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Organisation, Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1998)

SHAPING WESTERN SYDNEY

'Shaping Western Sydney is designed to help achieve a future for Western Sydney that features:

- *strong jobs growth, with more Western Sydney residents able to find jobs within the region*
 - *a large workforce with skills to meet the demands of a changing economy*
 - *improved access to services and employment within the region*
 - *superior access to the national road freight and rail networks*
 - *a first-rate and well used public transport system, reducing reliance on private cars and impact on air quality*
 - *a wide range of housing choice in pleasant, safe neighbourhoods that are well designed and serviced*
 - *safe and useable public spaces that are well located and designed*
 - *waterways and natural areas that provide a wide range of recreational experiences*
 - *air and water of a quality that protects public health*
 - *a well conserved natural and cultural heritage that adds to the quality of life in Western Sydney and is the basis of a thriving tourism sector*
 - *continued redistribution of education, health and other community services to achieve excellent and equitable provision*
 - *strong regional partnerships, with councils acting as a key element in matching regional and metropolitan goals with local aspirations.*
- (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, undated:5)

Moving to local government in NSW, the Strategic Plan for Camden introduces Council's vision for Camden in 2025 with the following words

'In viewing Camden in the year 2025, we would see that: Camden has retained many of the traditional qualities of a rural lifestyle and environment and is characterised by historic towns, country villages and new suburban areas. This has been achieved whilst accommodating the fastest urban growth in the Sydney Region. Importantly, it is not a mere extension of the suburban sprawl of Sydney....'(Camden Council, 1999:2)

Other local councils follow similar themes, for example, Warringah Council's vision for its local government area²⁴ is

'Warringah is a community which values its quality of life and strives to care for its special bush and beach environment'
(Warringah Council 2001)

Vision statements, in more or less these terms, are replicated across Australia, in all kinds of planning documents. The language shifts over time but the theme is consistent. The question is: with all this time – over a century – to contemplate these social visions and objectives, what impact do they have on the content of plans of today?

In Table 3.1 below the contents of four of the planning documents cited above are set out. Table 3.1 cites the vision, goal or purpose statement of the plan and then lists the content in the document which purports to address the vision or goal. As this thesis is particularly concerned with what planners are doing to promote the social part of their stated objectives, the specific actions, projects or priorities relating to social or community initiatives or activities are cited in full in a fourth column.

In this fourth column, actions are listed from each plan relating to matters which are conventionally regarded by planners as having some bearing on social outcomes in a place. On this basis actions relating to: jobs/employment; housing; the provision of built social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, community centres and recreation and leisure facilities; urban design; the development or conservation of cultural heritage and the provision of parks, gardens and small scale open space have been included.

²⁴ Only Camden Council has a strategic plan at the time of writing. Other NSW Councils have management plans. The Warringah vision statement is from WarringahPLAN, the Council's management plan cited because this council's Local Environment Plan is often referred to (eg by staff in PlanningNSW) as a model.

Where inclusion seemed borderline, the action has been included so as to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion. However, actions whose benefit is clearly primarily economic or environmental have not been included in this column. For example, an action to purchase or reserve large tracts of “natural” or uncultivated open space are not included in the fourth column because the link with social outcomes is tenuous and contestable²⁵, the primary motivation is environmental benefit and it would be difficult to argue that such an action would improve or add to relative social equality.

Similarly an action such as “provide a Parramatta to Chatswood rail link” in *Shaping Western Sydney* is not included in the fourth column because the main aims of the action are

- *‘to improve the region’s transportation system, reduce the number of private car trips and ease peak hour congestion thereby reducing trip times and duration and improving air quality, and*
- *to facilitate business, commerce and industry at sites along the new rail link’.*

While social benefits may be associated with each of these outcomes, the action is not primarily directed at social benefits. In addition similar actions in another part of the Shaping Western Sydney Strategy which relate to the improvement of air quality by facilitating public transport use, walking, cycling and the co-location of housing and services, pick up these social benefits and have been included in the fourth column. The Table is not intended to provide the definitive measure of the relative weight of various strategies and actions in the four strategic plans cited. Other analysts might make a different selection or a more detailed analysis. For example, they might compare socially focused actions with those focused on environmental or economic outcomes using a different measure such as relative expenditure.

²⁵ For example, many large tracts of open space are regarded as unsafe by women or people on their own, are not accessible to people with disabilities, and the impact of their natural “values” on the social fabric of society is long term and difficult to specify.

TABLE 3.1 OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS OF 4 STRATEGIC PLANS

DOCUMENT NAME	KEY WORDS OF VISION / PURPOSE	COVERAGE/CONTENTS	ACTION, PROJECT OR PRIORITY FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES
Alpine Regional Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'a healthy and viable community ▪ a sustainable natural environment and resource base ▪ a strong and diverse regional economy' 	<p>Regional policy and action areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinated planning and management: regional approach, settlement, resort town and adjacent areas, Snowy Mountain Hydro Electric Scheme towns, rural planning. ▪ People, services and infrastructure: access to community services, health housing, physical infrastructure (water, waste, roads), transport, communication. ▪ Sustainable economic development and investment: local attraction, tourism, fishing, snowsports, agriculture, value adding, access to markets. ▪ Conserving the natural environment and cultural heritage: community (partnership) approach, biodiversity, Australian Alps national parks, Water, Land, Aboriginal cultural heritage, European cultural heritage. ▪ Education training and research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'support opportunities for communities to work together for a unified regional approach to key issues' ▪ 'prepare a regional settlement strategy...' ▪ 'explore opportunities to share delivery of services, including use of a centralised one-stop shop, mobile facilities and telecommunications' ▪ 'development of social plans for each local government area...' ▪ 'establishment of a local health Divisional Plan Forum...' ▪ 'prepare a seasonal housing strategy...' ▪ 'establish a Transport Forum to take responsibility for coordinated transport planning within the region...' ▪ 'strengthen the role of Cooma as a regional technical centre by:...enhancing community, health, business and education services.' ▪ 'develop partnerships with Aboriginal communities to protect the region's rich and diverse Aboriginal heritage; raise awareness of the link Aboriginal people have with the region through education, tourism or specific cultural awareness events' ▪ 'identify the significant cultural resources; establish guidelines to protect and promote the resources while maintaining their values' ▪ 'identify relevant funding and support programs for telecommunications...' ▪ 'identify training needs and opportunities...; identify under-utilised educational facilities...;promote local training...; explore co-sponsorship ...of programs designed to encourage...; establish local youth training programs and encourage new employment opportunities...;extend training courses...; identify and develop education needs of centres, such as Jindabyne.' <p>(20 of a total of 86 action plans and priorities)</p>

DOCUMENT NAME	KEY WORDS OF VISION / PURPOSE	COVERAGE/CONTENTS	ACTION, PROJECT OR PRIORITY FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES
Northern Rivers Regional Strategy	'A healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for the communities of the Northern Rivers region'	Project areas; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'planning and co-ordination ▪ natural resource management ▪ economic development ▪ social planning/service and infrastructure ▪ transport/communications ▪ general policy ▪ implementation /management/monitoring' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Alignment of educational infrastructure with the NRRS' Strategy (convene a forum, use the forum to establish a co-ordinated approach to support specific training and educational needs, develop a strategy to integrate components of the NRRS into Southern Cross University's research programs) ▪ 'integrated regional human services planning' (i.e. to promote joint planning between agencies) ▪ 'develop a social impact assessment model...determine how to incorporate the results of research on quality of life indicators and community values' ▪ 'undertake research and consultation to develop guidelines for preparing residential (urban and rural) strategies which: promote sustainable human settlement patterns' ▪ 'Identification and Protection of Cultural Heritage: identify and record our region's significant items of cultural heritage...' ▪ 'Sustainable Regional Employment: Implement the strategies defined in NOREDO's "Turning Visions into Reality"...Liaise with SCU and TAFE to assist with education and training provision, Establish links and networks to improve employment opportunities, Develop mechanisms to increase investment within our region, Develop mechanisms to emphasise the contribution of small scale local industries, Support and acknowledge the role the Business Enterprise Centres play in the maintenance of economic resources in stimulating local and regional economies, Further develop manu of the projects currently being undertaken by NRRDB...improve business training opportunities for artists and cultural tourism operators...' ▪ 'Conflict Management Strategy' <p>(8 of 34 main project areas not including Implementation /Monitoring/Management)</p>

DOCUMENT NAME	KEY WORDS OF VISION / PURPOSE	COVERAGE/CONTENTS	ACTION, PROJECT OR PRIORITY FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES
Shaping Western Sydney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strong jobs growth ▪ a large workforce with skills ▪ improved access to services and employment ▪ superior access to the national road freight and rail networks ▪ a first-rate and well used public transport system ▪ housing choice in pleasant, safe neighbourhoods ▪ safe and useable public spaces ▪ recreational experiences ▪ air and water of a quality that protects public health ▪ natural and cultural heritage & a thriving tourism sector ▪ continued redistribution of education, health and other community services ▪ strong regional partnerships, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment and Economic Growth. Subheadings: jobs and growth; Industry and warehousing; natural resources; natural and environmental tourism and recreation; Parramatta: city at the centre; Homebush bay and the olympic legacy; a network of centres ▪ Environment. Subheadings: improving air quality; water quality; regional open space; natural assets; ▪ Housing: subheading: urban consolidation; sustainable housing supply; the rural fringe; human and community services; ▪ Accessibility. Subheadings: access in Western Sydney; transport supports employment; cross-regional transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Continue to encourage councils to prepare...heritage plans...' ▪ 'encourage residential growth within the city edge' ▪ 'strengthen existing policy of discourage rezoning proposals for retail, office, entertainment and service users to be located outside centres' / 'locate community facilities and services in centres'/ support the identification of areas close to centres for higher density residential development' ▪ 'undertake local access studies for Castle Hill; Blacktown; Penrith and Campbelltown' ▪ 'implement recommendations of the Liverpool Access Committee' ▪ six actions to 'reduce number and length of trips made by private cars' by facilitating public transport use, walking and cycling through the co-location of housing and services ▪ 'continue to implement Neighbourhood Improvement Programs for public housing' encourage good urban design..' ▪ 'focus any appropriate urban development in non urban parts of the region on exiting villages with the ability to provide...services' ▪ 'encourage the development of planning controls that respect the integrity of villages of historic significance' ▪ 'develop a human and community services data base in Western Sydney' ▪ 'develop strategies for early community service provision in release areas' ▪ 'improve coordination of agencies in planning for population growth' ▪ 'continue to make provision for new schools in growth areas' ▪ 'improve access to services for disadvantaged groups' ▪ 'look for opportunities to locate affordable and public housing close to centres, transport and services' ▪ 'continue to support the use of development contributions to provide community facilities' ▪ 'refocus the Area Assistance schemes to make better use of existing resources and encourage inventive and preventive approaches.' <p>(25 of 142 listed actions)</p>

DOCUMENT NAME	KEY WORDS OF VISION / PURPOSE	COVERAGE/CONTENTS	ACTION, PROJECT OR PRIORITY FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES
Camden 2025	<p>'In viewing Camden in the year 2025, we would see that: Camden has retained many of the traditional qualities of a rural lifestyle and environment and is characterised by historic towns, country villages and new suburban areas. This has been achieved whilst accommodating the fastest urban growth in the Sydney Region. Importantly, it is not a mere extension of the suburban sprawl of Sydney....'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing Urban Growth ▪ Accessibility ▪ Environmental Systems ▪ Economic and Community Development ▪ Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Place manage new development areas to agreed strategic plans'/'Place manage towns and villages' ▪ 'Manage development to achieve inclusive, sustainable communities' ▪ 'Revise development control process and policies to improve urban and environmental design' ▪ 'Protect and enhance the country town role, image and historic values of Camden' ▪ 'Undertake a review of heritage items' / 'Maintain an ongoing commitment to the identification and conservation of significant heritage items in the Camden local government area' / 'Support owners of heritage items in the pursuit of their maintenance and conservation' / 'Encourage community access to heritage items through their appropriate usage and promotion' ▪ 'Encourage innovative solutions to private and public transport needs' ▪ 'Ensure language, literacy and cultural diversity are not barriers to accessing Council's information and services' ▪ 'Ensure all members of the community have equitable access to facilities and services for community based activities including sport, recreation, education, information...' ▪ 'Develop and implement policies and practices which minimise the physical barriers to access' ▪ 'Use appropriate communication technologies to address physical access issues' ▪ 'Promote sustainable communities through implementation of Local Agenda 21' ▪ 'Develop and implement a local environmental noise policy' ▪ 'Create affiliations to ensure local education and training reflect local are employment needs and opportunities' ▪ 'Foster business networks and co-operative arrangements' ▪ 'Develop & implement a social, cultural & recreational plan that recognises diverse and changing lifestyles' ▪ 'Develop effective partnerships with both government and non-government sectors to improves services at the local level' ▪ 'Encourage community participation and celebration to develop a sense of identity and belonging' ▪ 'Promote quality urban design' ▪ 'Develop Camden's unique character by enhancing its landscape setting' ▪ 'Ensure policies and processes minimise opportunities for conflict' ▪ 'Develop policies for rural cultural and lifestyle' ▪ 'Develop a comprehensive consultation policy incorporating existing and new mediums and technologies' <p>(22 of 67 'strategies and actions')</p>

In this short hand way, it is possible to obtain a quick insight into how much of each document is devoted to social issues, as compared with physical infrastructure (road, rail and other transport, communications infrastructure) economic activity (business, industry and commerce) and the natural environment (waste management and pollution control, biodiversity conservation).

The data from the sample of planning documents in Table 3.1 demonstrate the conundrum being investigated in this thesis.

- In all of the regional strategic planning documents, despite the triple bottom line nature of their vision or aim statements, and despite erring on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion of actions or strategies lists, **less than one quarter of their actions, projects or priorities are initiatives for social outcomes**. It is only in *Camden 2025*, the local government strategic plan that one third of 'strategies and actions' relate readily to social outcomes. However, that strategic plan is closer to a corporate than an urban planning document²⁶.
- These documents in the main **rely on the efficacy of indirect action for social outcomes**. They appear to operate on the assumption that by making places look nice and designing them for good surveillance, access, legibility etc; by having some provision, however small or tenuous, for affordable housing; by securing more education and health services in under-supplied areas; by securing small grants for community initiatives; by preparing innumerable plans or policies; by raising awareness, convening a forum, developing a social impact assessment model or developing a human services data base and so on - liveable, healthy, viable and sustainable communities will result or that these things will provide substantial foundations for socially well communities. By contrast these plans propose more direct action when it comes to environmental or economic outcomes. Such direct actions include weed management, pest management, the installation of signage for tourists (*Alpine Region Strategy*), the upgrade of various roads and building a new railway station (*Shaping Western Sydney*), the introduction of water metering, volume conversion of licenses and introduction of water trading (*Northern Rivers Regional Strategy*), and 'review and modify drainage

²⁶ I.e. it covers more areas of Camden Council's responsibilities

systems and *'identify all point source pollution discharges and implement a program for reduction'* (Camden 2025).

- In addition, many, if not most, of **the proposed actions for social outcomes are not only indirect but weak**. This is partly an aspect of the indirectness of the actions (*'look for opportunities to locate affordable and public housing close to centres, transport and services'* *Shaping Western Sydney:28*) but is also present in the verbs used to introduce the action.

While such initiatives have their benefits the point is that this is all. In the social and community actions and initiatives column, there is not one dot point which begins with the word 'construct', 'install', 'limit', 'require', 'reduce', 'increase' or 'provide'.

While it is true that the regional plans represent agreements between agencies and this may limit their general capacity to 'install', 'provide' etc the same language is found in Camden's plan for which the Camden City Council is the sole agent. *Camden 2025* does use the word 'ensure' – but only in regard to finding *'innovative solutions to private and public transport needs'*, *'access to Council information'* and *'policies and processes which minimise opportunities for conflict'*.

Further, the coalition of agencies responsible for Shaping Western Sydney did not feel that their lack of relevant corporate powers prevented them from listing as actions such things as *'widen Hoxton Park Road'*, and *'provide a Parramatta to Chatswood rail link'*, the actual provision of which rest with only one agency or with the NSW Government. So it is reasonable to assume that the relative tentativeness and weakness of social actions in that plan at least have to do with the social arena rather than the coalition nature of the planning group.

- Finally, reviewing these actions against the additional selection criterion - does the action foster or add to relative social equality - did not result in my adding any new actions to any of the lists. This review also revealed that developing those lists with relative social equality as the sole criterion would have resulted in many of the items being excluded – that is the proportion of actions promoting social well being would then have been even smaller.

For example, while social plans prepared in the Alpine Region might address this issue, there is nothing at all in the Alpine Regional Strategy to suggest that they would.

'Improve access to services for disadvantaged groups' in the Shaping Western Sydney plan suggests an interest in relative social equality as do

'continue to make provision for new schools in growth areas', 'develop strategies for early community service provision in release areas', 'look for opportunities to locate affordable and public housing close to centres, transport and services', continuing to 'support the use of development contributions to provide community facilities', and making better use of the Area Assistance Schemes. However, these amount to a mere 6 of the 142 actions in the plan.

Further, none of these plans state relative social equality (however, worded) as a strategic aim or as the purpose of a particular action or strategy. Indeed, the plethora of plans and policies to be prepared and the indirect and weak nature of the stated actions all combine to indicate, in each of these plans, that the plan preparers were either unclear as to exactly what they were aiming for, or felt they could not state it in the same unequivocal terms which were being used for rail links and weed management.

The purpose of this exercise was to provide an initial litmus test in relation to my research concerns. While not seen as perfect, these three regional plans, were regarded (at the time) as showing the way for the regional plans proposed in PlanningNSW's planFIRST reforms. *Camden 2025* was presented at that Department's first Sustainability Conference in 2001 as a similar kind of model for the local government strategic plans likely to be required under planFIRST.

Their relative lack of attention to social issues and their indirect and weak approach to them is, therefore, significant. The talk is about a triple bottom line and this implies equal interest in social, economic and environmental outcomes²⁷. But these plans show that social issues are consistently the poor cousins in this triumvirate and the triple bottom line is really more like a *two-and-a-bit* bottom line.

* * *

I am interested in the content of the missing bits and why they are missing. What I have just laboriously shown for four recent strategic plans

²⁷ A wide range of writing about sustainability supports the view that social sustainability is as important as ecological integrity and economic viability in any 'triple bottom line', see an extensive list of these on the website of the Sustainable Living Network: www.sustainableliving.org

can be picked up again and again in any quick scan of approaches by planners to the question of sustainability.

It is reflected in Local Agenda 21 and the requirements of the NSW Environmental Planning Act, in PlanningNSW's brief for its Sustainability Unit and the content of its annual Sustainability Conferences, in the expertise of staff recruited to the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney and to positions concerned with sustainability in local councils.

The NSW Government has established a Sustainable Energy Development Authority and the Environmental Protection Authority has a raft of tools at its disposal for dealing with pollution, waste and resource conservation – topics about which there is now a substantial and detailed literature. However, planning publications on sustainable communities are actually about urban design elements to reduce waste, prevent pollution and conserve natural resources with a few helpful hints about encouraging people to get to know each other through urban design strategies of surveillance, pedestrian networks and walkable meeting places, with the recent addition of local internet or intranet communications (Barton et. al. 1995, Barton 2000, Wellman 2001)

The result in 2003 is that even if there is not the political will to deal with, for example, vehicle emissions or local sewage treatment plants, a great deal is known about what to do and how to do it. And, as these strategic plans demonstrate, some of it is getting on the agenda by being included in regional plans.

This contrasts with the position of the available content and the missing bits of social sustainability content. The available content, as I have shown, is weak and indirect. The missing bits are alluded to in largely utopian terms and left to linger in vision statements.

It cannot be said that Australians are more short of information about what fosters social sustainability than about what fosters environmental sustainability. There is an extensive literature in social epidemiology, social policy and related disciplines such as criminology, public health, education and the creative arts. Just as it is known that failing to put pollution traps into stormwater drains results in heavy pollution of Sydney Harbour, it is also known that high levels of unemployment, polarised

income distributions, racial segregation and relative social inequality will have measurable and quantifiable, long term negative social impacts.

The question is, why have planners taken on the environmental issues but not social ones.

4: VILLAGE UTOPIANISM

THE LONG HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE IN PLANNING

'...twentieth-century city planning, as an intellectual and professional movement, essentially represents a reaction to the evils of the nineteenth-century city.' (Hall 1996:7)

In the nineteenth century in England and parts of Europe, people were flocking to towns frequently to be accommodated in mill or mine terraces, city tenements and other forms of low standard and overcrowded accommodation (Cole and Postgate 1963; Marshall, 1965). In these environments social and health problems were more apparent through, and in some cases were magnified by, overcrowding and proximity. At the same time the support systems of the agrarian lifestyle were no longer available to town dwellers. These supports included the presence of an extended family, subsistence based on various agrarian rights such as access to common land for grazing, to woodland for wood, to fields for gleanings, to old practices such as poaching, and, if you were lucky, a *'kind and generous landlord and a good friend of the people'*²⁸ (Cole and Postgate 1963; Marshall 1995)

Of course, the agrarian economy had only offered support to some. Too large a family, a bad landlord, crop failure, death of the family pig, death or illness of the manual labourer/'breadwinner' and various fluctuations in prices for the products of cottage industries (Ashton, 1959) could all too easily leave a family stranded and impoverished (Thompson, 1975). As evidence of this, the Poor Laws in England predate the Industrial Revolution by some two hundred years (Elton, 1960 :188).

Notwithstanding these realities – realities which had rendered rural and village living vulnerable and insecure – all kinds of people, artists and poets as well as social commentators and reformers, galvanised by the concentration of ills in industrial towns and cities, looked back to the settlement types of the agrarian economy for inspiration and a model of a

²⁸ inscription on a memorial to David Berry (1795-1889) in the town of Berry, NSW.

better life. Victorian painters painted idyllic cottages with flowering gardens, Durkheim (1858-1917)– an early French sociologist and one of the founders of the discipline – wrote extensively about the impacts on people of disconnectedness from family, kin and the strong bonds of shared social norms which the exodus from rural areas brought (Durkheim, 1952, 1964).

Meanwhile in Germany, the social commentator Ferdinand Tönnies (1887 tr.1957) developed the concepts *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* to describe people's relationships in towns as compared with their relationships in small village communities. In doing so he too contributed to the eulogising of village life.

Village life as he described it was seen as integrated, as *Gemeinschaft*, because people's primary relationships (work, family, religious adherence) were bounded by the village, or a relatively small geographic area. This produced a set of social relationships based on mutual aid and trust, with strong networks based on kinship, religious observance and tradition. By contrast, social relationships in towns, *Gesellschaft*, were seen as loosely connected, fragmented, isolated and unsupported. In town individuals experience relative anonymity and autonomy and can pursue their own interests, without, however, high levels of mutual support and trust from their neighbours or the close proximity of kin.

According to Hall (1996), the birth of the planning profession was part of this widespread reaction to the perceived ills arising from the industrial revolution. As such its origins were embedded in a view of the village as a model for a better life. Ebenezer Howard's Welwyn Garden City is the best known example, but George Cadbury (Bournville) put it like this:

'through my experience among the back streets of Birmingham, I have been brought to the conclusion that it is impossible to raise a nation, morally, physically and spiritually in such surroundings, and that the only effective way is to bring men out of cities into the country and to give everyman his garden where he can come into touch with nature and thus know more of nature's God.'(George Cadbury quoted in Meacham1999:23)

and his peers William Lever (Port Sunlight) and Henrietta Barnett (Hampstead Garden Suburb) echoed these sentiments (Meacham 1999:34 and 151). Despite the fact that individual examples such as

Hampstead Garden Suburb, Port Sunlight, Bournville, and Letchworth could not be said to have solved the problems of the urban poor, the idea that life in a 'village' is a good life is powerful and has lingered on.

Hall went further at the 8th International Planning History Conference (Hall 1998) to suggest that in many respects planning at the end of the twentieth century had come full circle from the precepts espoused by the Garden City planners of a hundred years before. He noted that clear reference to the Garden City with its village like atmosphere can be seen in neo-traditionalist and 'New Urban' design guides to planning and in the development of New Urbanist villages such as Celebration and Seaside in the USA. Hall did not make this comment to criticise but rather to note the enduring usefulness of the Garden City concept.

These days, it is almost impossible not to trip repeatedly over references to the village ideal in current planning and sociological literature. But the definition of the village has become fuzzier since the first round of enthusiasm in the nineteenth century.

Both Durkheim and Tönnies described villages as places small enough for an individual to know the names of most people living there, where extended family networks operated as safeguards in times of ill-health or other setbacks and where shared norms and values, particularly as enforced through religious practice, ensured social stability.

Nowadays, the term 'village' has different meanings in different places and in particular the size, geographic spread and principle economic activity of villages have all changed since the nineteenth century. There are many different academic and professional interpretations of the term village and its relationship with other settlement concepts such as hamlet, neighbourhood and town (Barton 2000). The Northern Rivers Regional Strategy Discussion Paper *A Region of Villages* notes

'the Macquarie Dictionary defines a village as a small assemblage of houses in a country district, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town and/or, the inhabitants collectively (Delbridge et al. 1990). DUAP (1995²⁹) defines a village as a settlement that provides services and a focus for

²⁹ DUAP (1995) *North Coast Urban Planning Strategy: Into the 21st Century*, Sydney, NSW Government

several rural precincts or a district sub-catchment, ranging in size from 30 – 500 households. The Northern Rivers Framework for a Sustainable Future (NRRS Secretariat, 1997³⁰) suggests that small villages may range in size from about 100 up to about 1,000 persons, and large villages may comprise a population range of 1,000 to 5,000 persons. The British Urban Villages Campaign describes a village as having a population of 3,000-5,000 in an area of about forty ha (Corbett and Corbett, 2000³¹).

Defining a village by population size is also made problematic by changes in population size over time. In NSW many rural villages (eg Ardlethan near Narrandera) are being depleted as people move to larger country towns (Albury, Griffith, Wagga Wagga) while at the same time other villages are growing to become dormitories for these larger towns (eg Coolamon near Wagga Wagga). In fact, as the main settlement in the Shire of Coolamon, Coolamon regards itself as a town, while to urban eyes it looks like a large village and, in terms of the NRRS definition above, with a population of some 1500 it *is* a village.

Going on local self definition, villages may be towns and towns may be villages. The village of Kirkcudbright in Dumfries and Galloway Shire, S.W. Scotland (population some 3000) calls itself a town because in 1455 it was declared a Royal Borough. The village of Indigo in northern Victoria is 3 houses. London is frequently explained as a series of villages.

Using geographical size as the yardstick is equally complicated. The nineteenth century village was a place which was usually walkable, end to end, in a reasonably short period of time. But the definition of a reasonably short period of time has changed. When people were accustomed to walking as their primary means of transport (Thompson, 1975), a walkable distance was much longer than would now be contemplated. I know this from personal experience. A hundred years ago, relatives of mine in Northumberland walked to work in Alnwick each day from their fishing village - a distance of 5 miles. Today, my relatives tell this story in tones of disbelief and some of them get in the car to drive

³⁰ Northern Rivers Regional Strategy Secretariat (1997) *Northern Rivers – Framework for a Sustainable Future*, NRRS Secretariat

³¹ Although this citation is given, the paper does not list the source in full in its list of References.

from one side of the harbour to the other, a distance of a few hundred meters.

Finally, the rural village has long since ceased to be the place of residence of people mostly engaged in agriculture (Lewis 2004). In Australia as in the UK, the farm working population of villages has dramatically declined along with the total population in some cases. Many villages are full of empty shops; this can be seen in villages all along the road from Narrandera to Junee³² for example. Many rural villages are now economically sustained, however poorly, by tourism and by the weekend presence of people for whom a country cottage is their second home. They are places with a tiny permanent population and a high turnover of visitors. This phenomenon can be seen across NSW from Burrawang to Bingara. In these circumstances the rural village becomes a transit zone, constantly engaged in welcoming and farewelling and far removed from the relative population stability of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A CONCEPT RESISTANT TO CHANGE

But the village as an idea and as a planning concept lives on. Despite all these changes planners have entrenched their use of the idea of a village over the century. The village has moved from the rag-tag group of tied labourers' cottages or a few freehold houses around a market square or common to being used as a model concept for sustainable communities (Barton 2000).

'the idea of the village, as a physical place and a social community, has exercised something of an hypnotic attraction for town planning theorists ever since the industrial revolution. Against this background, contemporary proposals for planning eco-villages (or neighbourhoods) can be interpreted as a perpetuation of this old idea of seeking to create small, village-like, relatively self-contained communities'. (Taylor 2000:23)

³² In far western, rural NSW and an area of rural out-migration in the last decade. Australian Census data shows that the population of Junee declined 3% and the population of Narrandera declined 9.2% between 1996 and 2001. The empty shops were observed by the author in 2001.

and

'Apart from a major difference of opinion about which cities in which countries are more energy efficient, 'most academics found themselves in a remarkable – even unusual – degree of agreement: that development should be based on fairly small neighbourhood units, each combining homes and job opportunities and services.' (Hall 1996: 413)

Or as Ruth Glass put it much earlier and much less mildly

'Although several movements contributed to town planning and traces of the old divisions still remain, it is the ideology of the Utopians which has become predominant.³³ It is they who represent the 'super-ego' of current planning thought – not only in Britain, but also in many other parts of the world which have imported British planning concepts. The anti-urban bias in town planning has to be attributed to their influence. The love for formula making is due to them as are the strong anti-sociological tendencies particularly observable in such ideas as those of the neighbourhood unit and the garden city, which are imbued with nostalgic notions about the virtues of the small-scale, 'balance' and self contained community. It is because the Utopians have provided planners with their own home-made sociology that there has been a persistent separation between town planning and the social sciences in Britain. The Utopian version of 'sociology', mechanistic and romantic and so happily definite in its conclusions, is of course one which appeals especially to the disciplines represented in the planning profession³⁴.

The Victorians, and the Utopian writers especially, were afraid of bigness in all its forms – be it a big city or a big organization, The big city - crowded, ugly and unhealthy, a panorama of class conflict, the image of the growing power of the working class - was seen throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth as ...a threat to the established social order.

³³ Her footnote refers to campaigns for public health housing of the working classes and for municipal reforms as well as 'the movement for social regeneration which I have referred to as the Utopian movement in the text because this adjective gives the best brief clue to its main characteristics.'

³⁴ Which she cites as architecture, engineering and surveying.

So Chalmers³⁵, the Scottish theologian writing in the early nineteenth century, for example, put forward his 'principle of locality' – the division of the city - in order to counter this threat.... To split up the 'mass' was the main motive behind all those interrelated ideas of town design which were later elaborated and which are intended to remove or at least to camouflage, urban characteristics - such as ideas about density (the lower the better), decentralization, new towns, neighbourhood units etc.' (Glass 1959:401-2)

What Glass lamented in 1959, is still a driving force in the twenty first century³⁶. The village is either the primary unit of urban settlement

'Design each new area as a clearly defined urban or rural village with its own heart.' (DUAP 2000b:3)

or its original *physical* features (size, central focus, walkability) have become incorporated into 'the neighbourhood unit'. More than eighty years after American architect William Drummond promulgated his theory of the neighborhood unit in 1913, (Johnson 2002), the neighbourhood is still the mainstay of urban design. And in the context of the environmental sustainability requirements of Agenda 21, the neighbourhood is still the key unit of sustainable settlement development:

'People per hectare, rather than bed spaces or dwellings, is the key measure of density when considering the viability of public transport and of local services, or the use of resources such as water. The average should be taken as applying to neighbourhoods, not to individual sites or streets.' (Barton 1995:80)

According to Barton, each neighbourhood should be provided with a primary school within 400 meters or five minutes walking from 'home'. The primary school catchment area he suggests is a population of 2,500 - 4,500, just the size that the British Urban Villages Campaign designate as a village.

³⁵ Chalmers, T., (1821-26) *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*, Glasgow, Volume 11, pp390-40

³⁶ With the possible exception of recent PlanningNSW requirements for higher densities in urban areas of Sydney.

At the same time 'urban sociology has tended to be **neighbourhood sociology**.'(emphasis in the original) (Wellman and Leighton 1979:363) because, say Wellman and Leighton, the neighborhood is

First 'an easily identifiable research site... Second, many scholars have interpreted the neighborhood as the microcosm of the city and the city as an aggregate of neighborhoods. Third, administrative officials have imposed their own definitions of neighborhood boundaries upon urban maps' such that 'spatial areas, labelled and treated as coherent neighborhoods have come to be regarded as natural phenomena. Fourth, urban sociology's particular concern with spatial distributions has tended to be translated into local area concerns. Territory has come to be seen as the inherently most important organizing factor in urban social relations rather than just one potentially important factor. Fifth, and most importantly, many analysts have been pre-occupied with the conditions under which solidary sentiments can be maintained. Their preoccupation reflects a persistent overarching sociological concern with normative integration and consensus. The neighborhood has been studied as an apparently obvious container of normative solidarity.'(Wellman and Leighton 1979:364)

Thus professionals working in urban planning, environmental planning and urban sociology have, by these various devices, taken the village and its assumed spatial, social and structural features and translated them into desirable features of a core spatial element of urban areas: the neighbourhood.

Far from planners responding to Glass' post-war criticisms, the same ideas have re-emerged since then clothed in a school of thinking called New Urbanism (Katz 1994, Calthorpe 1993). New Urbanism, or neo-traditional urban design, is based on the idea of the neighbourhood as the

'essential building block... The neighborhood is limited to an area approximating a 5- to 10-minute walk from center to edge, ensuring that all neighborhood activities are within convenient walking distances of residents. Within the neighborhood are a variety of housing types and land uses, a mix of shops, services and civic uses capable of satisfying many of the resident's daily needs.' And that idea is firmly based on 'some of the principles constituting what New

Urbanists call “traditional urbanism”, built patterns and relationships that have been recurring in hamlets, villages, towns and cities of all sizes for thousands of years but that became disrupted under 20th-century zoning and subdivision laws;’ (Bohl 2000:762-3)

And, even if the gap between the utopian dream and reality is acknowledged, town planners continue to justify the neighbourhood or the locality as a core organising principle:

‘So even if nothing could be done to bring about more local lifestyles, there remain environmentally friendly initiatives which can be pursued at the level of the locality. In other words, the fragmentation of local communities and local living does not preclude locally-based action³⁷... And if the eco-village project is reconceived in terms of such local action, it has a part to play in contributing to environmental sustainability.’ (Taylor 2000:27)

In the maintenance of the village as an ideal, planners are frequently joined by their client groups – local councils, community development organisations and people consulted in community consultation workshops.

The Ahwahnee Community Principles, for example, prepared by the Sacramento based, not-for-profit Local Government Commission sum this up nicely

‘By drawing upon the best from the past and the present, we can plan communities that will more successfully serve the needs of those who live and work within them.

1. *‘All planning should be in the form of complete and integrated communities containing housing, shops, workplaces, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of the residents.*
2. *Community size should be designed so that housing, jobs, daily needs and other activities are within easy walking distance of each other.*

³⁷ Examples given include participating in locally-based energy supply and recycling systems, local shopping, working locally etc

3. *As many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of transit stops....'* and so on (Local Government Commission, 2002:website)

In NSW, the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy Secretariat (NRRSS) Discussion Paper *A Region of Villages* and *Workshop Report* (2001b) provide a well documented example of the process by which the ideology of the village is sustained and reinforced. The *Workshop Report* documents what people living in the region had to say, at a workshop, about living in villages. Their views were summarised as follows:

'Values of Villages

Workshop participants suggested more social values for villages than economic or environmental values as villages are really perceived to be about the people and the community. The social values identified include community spirit, ownership and pride; a feeling of belonging; common interests; social support; tolerance and acceptance of diversity; communication and information exchange; interaction; friendliness; knowing or acknowledging most residents; safety and freedom...³⁸

Advantages and Disadvantages

Workshop participants identified a number of advantages of villages that were mainly associated with the potential of villages to provide a controlled growth and settlement option, social and community development benefits and a perception that villages tend to have a close relationship with the region's rural landscape. Many of the advantages contribute towards the features and values of villages, and are covered in greater detail in those sections of this report. Additionally, as most workshop participants were supportive of the village concept, feedback tended to focus on either the disadvantages or actions required to enhance the sustainability of villages in the long-term.

A significant disadvantage that was noted occurs as a result of political circumstances, with a number of the workshop groups questioning the impact of State and Federal government regulations and policies on villages, and the ability for local or regional interests to redress these with a long-term vision. Some groups were concerned about the

³⁸ environmental, economic and design values were also identified by participants

viability of infrastructure provision for towns and cities as opposed to the levels of servicing and viability for smaller settlements such as villages. Other disadvantages relate to the form and amount of population growth, the limitations of some villages for further expansion and concerns about the potential loss of farming land and animal habitats to village and other types of urban development. However, most disadvantages of villages raised by workshop participants relate to economic viability and sustainability issues, such as:

- *Limited employment opportunities in most villages at present and a need to develop self-reliant economic centres;*
- *Lack of services (medical, education, government facilities) and limited accessibility, particularly associated with a lack of public transport options;*
- *Physical infrastructure in most villages, particularly for roads, telecommunications and effluent disposal requires enhancement;*
- *A minimal ability to influence market forces and leakages out of the local economy and community, which raises questions about the establishment of self-reliant economies;*
- *The difficulty and cost of retaining the viability of local services when similar services are located nearby in large urban centres, coupled with ease of access by private transport to services and facilities of choice;*
- *The vulnerability of villages to unsympathetic developments;*
- *The potential reliance on tourism, particularly for coastal villages;*
- *The economic impacts of a high proportion of the population on low incomes and a high (and increasing) elderly or retiree population;*
- *Lack of a critical population mass in the village to support sufficient employment, transport, services etc for a majority of residents;*
- *Limited coordination of marketing expertise and efforts; and*
- *Concerns about the impacts of the Pacific Highway upgrade on village economies and sustainability.*

Workshop participants also recognised that villages may also contribute towards a number of social disadvantages. For example, there may be 'social claustrophobia', a lack of privacy and few people are anonymous in a village. Parochialism, community expectations, entrenched power bases and other social dynamics, as well as the accessibility of relevant services were noted as factors that may contribute towards community apathy, intolerance, social

isolation or differences between non-conformists, or old and new settlers. There are also not many villages that are able to cater for the whole life cycle, and in particular meet the needs of youth/adolescents and elderly residents. This may lead to families or people actually migrating to other urban centres to service these needs.

Impediments

There was a fair degree of overlap between the disadvantages of villages and the impediments to the village concept. Factors such as an insufficient population mass to overcome the lack of public transport between villages, the ability of market forces to dictate outcomes, investors preferring larger structures and government approaches to rationalise and centralise services were perceived as some of the most difficult impediments to address. Some participants noted that providing more infrastructure may also lead to a greater chance of the village expanding to become a larger urban centre. Another impediment that raised concerns was the potential for unlimited or uncontrolled growth and expansion in villages. Participants also noted that most of the growth pressures are occurring on the coastal fringe at the moment and this results in inequities in servicing coastal and hinterland settlements. The high levels of income dependency and equity of access to information and telecommunications technologies were other critical barriers. Participants felt that there are few examples of truly functioning villages in the region, so it is not clear as to how to determine the right commercial mix to serve the local population or how to build or create a village. The process of village and community development will be a dynamic process that requires active public participation, which also leads to a risk in that the local community may seek to achieve different outcomes' (NRRSS 2001b:8-9).

Despite all these practical and potentially insuperable difficulties, the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy Secretariat, in a spectacular example of the ideal overcoming reality, decided to go ahead with a planning concept of *A Region of Villages*, based on its discussion paper of the same name (NRRSS, 2001a). The incongruity of this, in terms of its fit with the *whole* of what workshop participants were saying, did not sound alarm bells. In 2002 the NRRSS had a little money to spend and decided to spend it progressing the region of villages idea. It made this decision, before it had attempted to integrate the 'disadvantages of villages' into its

thinking about this proposed planning concept³⁹. Had it done so, the NRRS might have been forced to consider such issues as

- People report a sense of belonging to a wide range of residential environments, including slums and various institutions, and to places where they don't actually live at all - the "home" country, the 'new country' (Read 2000) and for Aboriginal people, the land of origin. The fact that residents of villages report a sense of belonging does not distinguish villages from other settlement types,
- Whether it is useful to characterise a region in terms of its past settlement type, one which is increasingly in the minority, and if so, what that characterisation might mean for the social and cultural future of its residents as the vision is increasingly out of touch with the reality. In the case of the Northern Rivers Region the emerging settlement pattern is one of continuous coastal suburbanisation with a population shift from declining inland towns (such as Lismore) to the coast.
- Despite the sustained rhetoric about social benefits of village life, the workshop participants provided a vivid list of disadvantages, and if this were not enough in itself, there is a small, but carefully documented literature on the stultifying and repressive aspects of village life (e.g. Blythe 1972) as well as celebration of the liberating and invigorating aspects of city life (Sennet 1996), a characteristic widely appreciated by many young people, for example.
- At the same time there is solid evidence that social wellbeing, in terms of health, educational outcomes, enterprise and low levels of crime, is a characteristic, not of the settlement patterns of small places, but of relative equality in income distribution across a society (Wilkinson 1996, 2002, Wilkinson and Marmot 2003), and
- The focus on settlement patterns, and in this case on one in particular, as a source of social wellbeing is a form of spatial determinism (Gans 1968, 1991, Harvey 1997). As Harvey noted, it is not just that

³⁹ Email communication to the author from a member of the Northern Rivers Regional Secretariat 8 April 2002

'a fundamental difficulty with modernism was its persistent habit of privileging spatial forms over social process' but that such privileging, as L. Marin (in Utopics: Spatial Play, 1984) shows, is central to all classical forms of utopianism (beginning with Sir Thomas More, whose descriptions of Utopia bear a rather distressing similarity to those set out in the new urbanism).'(Harvey 1997)

There was no evidence in the documentation sent to the author as a potential consultant for the little bit of extra work that any of these issues had even been thought of. In fact I was advised that the decision to go ahead had been made without the feedback from the workshop being integrated into the Discussion Paper. One of the problems with ideal types is that they falsely lend legitimacy to inadequately examined ideas. This is particularly evident in the application of 'the village' to urban design in the school of thought known as New Urbanism.

THE VILLAGE IN THE NEW URBAN SOLUTION

The village in its recent urban design manifestation as the focused, pedestrian friendly and mixed use neighbourhood emerged in part as a reaction to modernist planning and housing in which the transitional areas between public and private domains

'porches, balconies, arcades, stoops and yards were eliminated in favor of uniform open public space which belonged to everyone and no one' (Bohl, 2000:787).

A number of writers, Jacobs (1961), Newman (1972, 1996) Gehl (1987), Coleman (1990) had pointed to the role of territorial definition, housing design and semi-public/semi-private spaces (front gardens, porches, narrow streets) in encouraging acquaintanceship, surveillance and other forms of good neighbourliness.

New Urbanism, the *'most important phenomenon to emerge in American architecture in the post-Cold War era'* (Muschamp 1996), took these ideas further by adding 'village' characteristics to neighbourhood design. Since the early 1990s in the USA, and more recently in Australia, the principles of New Urbanism have been applied to inner city revitalisation projects, brownfield development sites, affordable housing development, and new greenfield/urban edge residential development. Although the

style of housing varies, the key features of walkability, central location of a mix of shops, services and civic facilities, and the achievement of desired densities within a framework of low rise housing are common to these projects.

In New Urbanism, the design descriptors concern density, set backs, housing types, connectivity, permeability, legibility and the use of devices such as front gardens, narrow streets, porches and verandas to encourage acquaintanceship, but the justifications are made in social terms highly reminiscent of the nineteenth century concept of *Gemeinschaft*. Villages, and now neighbourhoods, are said to encourage: a shared sense of morality and common purpose, social order, the building of social networks and the *'intertwining of personal and place identity'* (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). These objectives have especially served the developers of new middle class towns.

Celebration, the Disney version of New Urbanism

'appealed shamelessly to family values, sentimental longings for bygone days, and a barely suppressed fear of the present...indeed the script itself had a mythic ring: "There was once a place where neighbours greeted neighbours in the quiet of summer twilight. Where children chased fireflies. And porch swings provided easy refuge from the cares of the day. The movie house showed cartoons on Saturday. The grocery store delivered. And there was one teacher who always knew you had that special something. Remember that place? Perhaps from your childhood? Or maybe just from stories. It held a magic all its own. The special magic of an American home town."'
(Frantz and Collins 2000:23)

Like the NRRSS, New Urbanists do not deal in feedback that villages may be socially claustrophobic, lacking in privacy, controlled by entrenched power-bases (or the development team [Frantz and Collins 2000]), or that in thousands of streets in country towns and suburban neighbourhoods across Australia *'keeping to yourself was the mark of a good neighbour'* (Horne, 2002).

But in addition to questioning the fantasy, there are serious criticisms of New Urbanism in terms of its social impacts. When used in rebuilding inner city housing New Urbanism often results in lower densities and/or

inner city gentrification. Either price or the reduced number of dwellings, or both, force the relocation of some residents (Bohl 2000, Sohmer and Lang 2000). As a school of planning thought, New Urbanism has nothing to say about what should happen to these former residents. As a movement, and a development style, it does not address the social consequences of dividing families through relocation, of marking social rank by neighbourhood, or the absence of job opportunities on poverty. As well,

'Most (New Urbanist) principles are narrowly focussed on urban livability and sense of place but give limited attention to environmental protection, social equity, and economic development' (Berke 2002:29)

In a comprehensive critique, Bohl observes that New Urbanism

*'is not a housing program'.
'is not an economic development program. It will not provide job training or start-up capital'.
'is not a social service program'.
'is subject to the limitations of place--based initiatives which do a poor job of addressing problems that originate outside the local community, such as racism; inequality; spatial mismatches; and local state, and federal policies affecting low-income population.'* and

'While the geographic neighborhood sometimes mirrors a place-based community, communities of interest, such as the African-American or the Latino communities can be equally important and commonly encompass irregular geographic areas.' (Bohl 2000:792)

What Bohl says here is accurate, however, the problem with these statements is that they can encourage a view that if only housing programs, economic development programs and social services can be added to these excellent urban design principles, all will be well. A number of writers have responded to criticisms of New Urbanism along these lines. They say that people should stop making claims which are too broad, too vague or utopian so that New Urbanist design principles can be seen in a less ambitious light but as nonetheless valid.

*'proponents often get caught up in rhetoric and make claims implying that New Urbanist design can lead to
"strengthening personal and civic bonds essential to an*

authentic community” or that “we designed the public spaces to maximise social interaction and civic engagement” (Congress for the New Urbanism 1999). The potential for design to encourage and support social and civic interaction should not be confused with causing neighboring and civic engagement’ although ‘the potential for the built environment to support broader policy objectives and to afford diverse human needs should no longer be casually dismissed.’ (Bohl 2000:793)

‘We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice. (Congress for New Urbanism 2002)

And more explicitly

‘Much can be gained by freeing ourselves from the quest for community and focusing instead on other, often more tangible goals.... The provision of proper access to facilities, of quality public spaces and of humanly scaled neighborhoods.’ (Talen 2000)

that is that planners should get on with the business of physical design, having recognised that many elements of community, particularly a psychological sense of community, are too ambitious and too difficult to link directly to social outcomes.

‘it is difficult to conceive of how suburban development, which lacks the necessary design requirements of mixed housing types, mixed uses, pedestrian access, compactness, and public space, could hope to accomplish the social goals of equity and the common good.’ and

'It is hoped that this debate will not stay unprofitably focused on the legitimacy of linking physical design to social goals, but rather will progress to a discussion in which the effects of particular New Urbanist principles are scrutinized in greater, socially relevant detail.' (Talen 2002)

However, it is not as simple as removing the utopian claims and letting the urban designers get on with design. The fact is that design integrally reflects and impacts social and economic circumstances. Removing utopianism may take some of the heat out of expectations, but it does not deal with these impacts.

For example, New Urbanism as urban design may not be a housing program as such. However, it is used in housing programs and it impacts the outcomes of housing programs, (through price or relocation outcomes as well as by imposing a particular style of residential arrangements⁴⁰).

New Urbanism may not be a social service program as such, but design principles, and the hierarchy of values they implicitly and explicitly, contain have a range of impacts on social and economic outcomes. This has most clearly been seen in regard to gated communities:

'Gated communities are rarely designed to fulfil social sustainability goals. They intentionally lack flexibility. They emphasize strong covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs), which make adaptive reuse difficult, and perhaps impossible. They attempt to protect the future by reifying the past. They employ walls and guards to prevent crime rather than applying integrated, holistic solutions that encourage community participation to ward off destructive elements. Gated communities do not undertake strategies to acquire and maintain adequate education, jobs, and public services – fundamental civic goals that are the first crucial step in crime prevention. Instead of rich, vibrant public spaces, they contain, at best, private recreational facilities and clubhouses that serve a limited membership and offer a narrow range of activities rather than the entire spectrum of community needs.' (Blakely and Snyder 1997:169)

'The gated community is perhaps the most blatant and literal expression of the trend [toward increased private space and

⁴⁰ The imposition of style seems only to be understood as an issue when dealing with markedly different cultures such as Aboriginal people in Australian urban environments

the disappearance of public space]. Physically it denotes the separation, and sadly the fear, that has become the subtext of a country once founded on differences and tolerance. Politically it expresses the desire to privatize, cutting back the responsibilities of government to provide services for all and replacing it with private and focused institutions: private schools, private recreation. Private parks, private roads, even quasi-private governments. Socially, the house fortress represents a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more isolated people become and the less they share with other unlike themselves, the more they do have to fear. To this extent privatisation is a powerful force in the market place which directs the home building industry and our land use patterns.' (Calthorpe, 1993:37)

But in a much more general sense, urban design requires decisions to be taken about the hierarchy of uses in a place, about which things it is most important to make provision for, which things will have priority and/or be located centrally (on the prime real estate), and above all, how these decisions will be folded seamlessly into the built fabric of a place at all levels of design - from street layout to the form of civic buildings and their decoration.

Even without the elements of gating (which in their physical or symbolic forms are now very widespread) these decisions represent the values which inform the development of a place. The kind of values which can be endorsed or suggested through design include those of hegemony,⁴¹ and those of relative equality. Relative equality, and its absence, have major and well documented impacts on the wellbeing of societies (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003). Not to acknowledge this could be regarded as perverse or devious. At the least it is a dramatic omission.

New Urbanism appears not to be directly concerned with issues of poverty, inequality and race segregation, but indirect impacts can be every bit as effective as a direct program of separation and segregation. From the point of view of the displaced, it matters little whether overt race or income segregation is contained in the design principles or it happens indirectly through the implementation of design guidelines which foster segregation on the basis of housing type and value. Indirect forms of

⁴¹ As dictators of various persuasions have long demonstrated and the regimes which follow them have frequently underscored through programs of demolition and renaming

discrimination are well recognised in employment⁴² and advocates against ablebodiedism have been successful in having these concepts applied to building codes⁴³. However, the directly and indirectly discriminatory socio-economic and racial impacts of urban design have not had the same attention.

By making the goals more limited, and by tidying away the utopian or overweening claims made for neo-traditionalism, the social components of the 'necessary' design elements do not go away. A recent systematic review of gentrification studies found that gentrification invariably causes displacement of low income residents (Atkinson 2002) and the literature on gated communities confirms that these residential areas are usually relatively homogenous in terms of income and social status (ways of achieving this are described in vivid detail by Frantz and Collins 2000).

The New Urbanism literature seems reluctant to take this challenge on board. It's proponents appear to want to define professional boundaries rather than to replace utopianism with a more detailed examination of the relationship between planning, design and socio-economic outcomes.

'Perhaps all this proselytising about a "new urbanism" and its captivating fantasies of village life is just a way to avoid confronting planning and design issues we are not even sure how to think about, let alone resolve.' (Durack 2001:64)

This discussion about New Urbanism is about the application of the village to urban design. The criticisms above might encourage planners of new areas and urban designers (often the demarcation between the two professions is unclear) to try to fit considerations of relative social equality into the New Urbanist model. My concern, however, is that the village concept has major flaws as a core element in planning or designing new urban areas.

⁴² Viz. where apparently neutral practices have discriminatory impacts eg promotional penalties for employment discontinuities (eg due to childrearing), narrow selection criteria etc

⁴³ Through requirements for accessible buildings, toilets, etc

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE VILLAGE?

THE WRONG METAPHOR

The very privileged position which 'the village' occupies in planning history and thinking is imbued with the ancient characteristics of villages. In particular, pre-industrial revolution villages, the ones for which nostalgia is felt and to which the retreat from the ills of industrialism was referenced have been seen as stable social environments in which people knew each other and had a strong sense of belonging and of their responsibilities in their place of residence. This image of the village initially described by Durkheim and Tönnies continues to be drawn on by communitarians⁴⁴ (Etzioni 1993) and community builders⁴⁵ as well as planners and New Urbanists.

The social structures of these villages of reference, however, were racially unitary, excluding of outsiders, densely networked within, poorly networked without, characterised by the remnants of feudal administration, strong social controls, and rigid social stratification. None of these characteristics are appropriate to planning concepts in the present era. Australia is racially diverse, is primarily comprised of non-Indigenous immigrant peoples, espouses democratic rather than feudal administration and has an ethic, however weak, of egalitarianism. Moreover, many of its inhabitants maintain strong ties of cultural affinity and kinship across the globe. The village metaphor does not suit Australia in the 21st Century. It does not reflect important demographic characteristics of Australian society and it focuses attention on too small a spatial scale as the arena for social networking and affective ties.

THE VALUES OF EXCLUSION AND SEGREGATION

A major problem with the village is that concept carries intrinsically within it the seeds of social exclusion because it is based on a model involving internal homogeneity and an inward-lookingness. These attributes are not only out of touch with life as it is lived in Australia in the 21st Century, but as planning values they are more consistent with ideas of segregation

⁴⁴ Community development theorists concerned with a new moral, social and public order emphasizing citizens' rights and responsibilities

⁴⁵ See the NSW Government's Community Builders Network:
www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

than with ideas of integration. Both residential and racial segregation are associated with negative social indicators, such as crime, illness and mortality (Lobmayer and Wilkinson 2002, Kawachi 2002, Kennedy et. al. 1997), and the relationship between poverty, violence and illness is well established (Wilkinson et. al. 1998).

While planning documents espousing new estates on the outskirts of Sydney do not overtly propose to establish new communities of poverty, this is in effect what frequently occurs because issues of income segregation are not directly addressed in their planning and design. Rather, there is an unexplored assumption that neighbourhoods or villages have something in common which is the unifying characteristic which will hold them together, and indeed that this is a good thing:

“it is...important to understand and identify the characteristics of public and private development to ensure change and development are managed appropriately so that the consistent elements which reinforce the neighbourhood’s fundamental character can be maintained while inconsistencies which detract from it can be remedied.”
(DUAP 1998a:2)

‘Design each new area as a clearly defined urban or rural village with its own heart.’ (DUAP 2000b),

There are no PlanningNSW documents that I know of which deal with what happens when poverty and exclusion is at the heart of a new village and is its fundamental character, even though this has frequently been the outcome in Western Sydney (Gleeson et. al. 2002). The Department’s Urban Design Guidelines, (DUAP 1998b) do not address cultural diversity, poverty or exclusion, only the end-manifestation of these – as in design solutions to safety on the street.

THE WRONG END OF THE SPATIAL SCALE

The village metaphor is also at the wrong end of the spatial scale for the current focus of planning practice. Over the last 50 years, planning in NSW has been gradually moving from early practices of pegging out new streets for urban development to strategic planning for large areas⁴⁶ and

⁴⁶ This history of planning in NSW can be seen by examining the annual reports for the State planning agency, called PlanningNSW at the time of writing this thesis.

this movement has been consolidated in 2001 with the publication of PlanningNSW's White Paper, planFIRST. This white paper proposed a new system in which planning is a strategic activity occurring at state, regional and local government levels. The most important of these is the state level because state planning policies will '*set the context for regional and local planning and decision making*' (PlanningNSW 2001). Although it is now unclear whether planFIRST will be introduced by the renamed and restructured Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR), it is clear that the trend is to strategic planning for land uses at regional⁴⁷ and local government levels⁴⁸.

The village metaphor is not particularly relevant to large area planning, and it is too static a concept to contribute to strategic planning.

This shift in focus by planners is also taking place among urban sociologists who have been questioning '*the validity and future viability of urban sociology*' for over a decade on the basis that locality '*the empirical domain of the urban sociologist*' is increasingly under challenges as the best unit of analysis by which to understand urban processes (Flanagan 1993:162-3).

COMPARISON WITHOUT RATHER THAN WITHIN

Finally, in present times, people rarely live their lives within the boundaries of their neighbourhood or village. Rather than the neighbourhood or village providing nourishing and overlapping social networks and mutual support, it is more likely to act as a point of status reference for its residents. This is particularly (but not exclusively) so in urban areas where neighbourhoods are joined to other neighbourhoods. Their very contiguousness leads to comparison between them. Urban people, in particular, derive much of their understanding of their place in *society* by comparing their neighbourhood with others. It is one's place in society which impacts on health, crime outcomes (Wilkinson 2001) not one's place within the few local streets which constitute a neighbourhood.

⁴⁷ DIPNR is preparing a Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney – announced in 2003 – which will be '*a blueprint to develop long term, sustainable transport and infrastructure options, helping to create vibrant, liveable communities*'. See www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au

⁴⁸ The same trend is happening in England see for example a similar white paper put out by the UK Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2001

'Today, it could be argued that neighbourhoods (as much if not more so than homes themselves) are competitive and inherently comparative entities which are visible and convey social information. One can either influence one's social position or have it determined for one, according to the type of neighbourhood one inhabits and creates.' (Kearns and Parkinson 2001:2106)

As an extension of this, employers often base hiring decisions on the residential addresses of job applicants (Bauder 2002 citing numerous previous studies). A low income neighbourhood is much less likely to provide its residents with a platform for making connections with employers, educational institutions or business opportunities in other areas (Kearns and Parkinson 2001:2105). Living in a deprived neighbourhood tends to contribute to social exclusion (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001).

These areas of research point outward from the neighbourhood/village not inward and what matters is how your neighbourhood or village ranks in a wider area. Exceptional local circumstances (such as very high levels of social networking and cooperation or the common experience of an external threat or oppressor) are required to offset the debilitating effects of relatively low status of a neighbourhood (Wilkinson 1996:116-8).

But the village/neighbourhood design model in planning is not focused on relativity with other neighbourhoods but on what happens spatially within it. In this way it is inward looking and misses one of the significant roles of neighbourhood in modern urban societies. Dealing with neighbourhoods as a core unit of planning encourages the idea that

'neighborhoods are in some sense "intrinsic," that the proper form of cities is some "structure of neighborhoods" that "neighborhood" is equivalent to "community," and that "community" is what most Americans want and need (whether they know it or not).' (Harvey 1997)

The neighbourhood-as-intrinsic-unit approach not only discourages examination of the relationships between neighbourhoods but also facilitates inattention to the way in which the planning profession participates in differentiating neighbourhoods. For example, land use planning differentiates neighbourhoods by wealth indicators such as density and lot size, by distribution of open space, by distribution of public

facilities, by distribution of commercial and residential space and so on. As noted above, it is the relative distribution of resources, especially income, which plays a major part in social wellbeing.

There is nothing about the inwardly focused concept of the village that would assist planners to deal with relativity issues such as relative social and economic inequality, cultural exclusion or racial segregation. The profession's discourse about the village is not located in a companion discourse about how to deal with these issues. The companion discourses of market pricing of land and planning policies promoting higher densities at urban transit nodes⁴⁹ are silent about social issues of relativity, and this may even imply that relative social inequality is in the nature of things and not to be tampered with. The discourse about social impacts in planning is so weak as to be virtually silent (Burdge 2002).

The village-as-neighbourhood approach treats the neighbourhood as a community, the local domain of friendships and mutual support, and as a commodity, a safe and secure lifestyle packaged and sold, forgetting that the neighbourhood is also a context *'particularly in the negative sense of social reputation, labelling, ill health and the development of perverse social norms and behaviour as responses to social exclusion'* (Forrest and Kearns, 2001:2141).

* * *

In this chapter I have demonstrated the history and tenacity of the concept of the village in planning discourse. I have shown that even in the face of immediate, negative feedback, the village functions more as an ideology than as a useful planning concept for the 21st Century.

I have also shown that faced with criticisms of utopianism in the use of the village ideology, planners have tended to call for a retreat to professional boundaries rather than to address the social issues with which the ideology is dealing so inadequately.

The idea of the village seems to belong to planning's comfort zone, but it is an inappropriate metaphor, it smacks of exclusion and segregation, it is

⁴⁹ NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 53: Metropolitan Residential Development and the Victorian Department of Infrastructure's Melbourne 2030, Implementation Plan 4: Activity Centres.

not useful to strategic approaches to land use planning and, by focusing on what happens within rather than between villages, it facilitates avoidance of distributional issues by planners.

In 1959, Ruth Glass asserted that town planners' lack of a sociological frame of reference made them particularly vulnerable to the '*romantic and mechanistic*' '*home-made sociology*' (Glass 1959:401) of the Utopians, and she also noted the divide and conquer motivations of early proponents of locality based planning.

The planners of her day did not heed the call. The planners who followed built a new form of the old ideology. This prompts the question whether the profession of planning has been maintaining the village as an archaic comfort zone, like a hip flask in the back pocket, while also getting to grips, elsewhere, with social issues.

In the next chapter I show, however, that this is not the case. The ideology of the village has had a pervasive influence on how planners conceive the idea of community and deal with social issues.

5: COMMUNITY: THE ELABORATE SUBTERFUGE

PART 1: HOW PLANNERS USE COMMUNITY

Planning documents use the word community freely. It is sprinkled liberally over master plans, urban regeneration proposals, funding applications, urban development strategies and even the annual reports of planning and development agencies.

The word community has such ubiquitous use that it seems safe to infer that this is because the writers of these documents believe that community is integral to planning, development and urban renewal. This view is reinforced by the wording of the vision statement of the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1998-9 Annual Report:

'Our vision: Planning for our future – for a better environment, jobs and liveable communities'

the mission statement of the NSW Government's development arm, Landcom:

'Creating quality communities' (DUAP 1998-9:41)

and the principal goal statements of master plans, for example

'The primary goal of the Draft Structural Master Plan for the Green Square area is to establish an environmentally sustainable suburb which supports the wellbeing of present and future communities as well as providing a complex urban environment for rich interaction'. (Stansic, Turner/Hassall, 1997: 1)

The purpose of this chapter is, however, to examine the question: When planning agencies (eg a state planning department/councils/consultant urban planners) say that their aim / mission is sustainable / vibrant / liveable / quality communities, what do they actually mean?

In this chapter this question is approached by analysing the meaning of the word community as used in six public planning documents⁵⁰. The documents examined are:

- the 1998/9 Annual Report of the NSW State Government's Department of Urban Affairs and Planning,
- the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning's 1999 – 2000 Strategic Directions document,
- Department of Urban Affairs and Planning's Affordable Housing Strategy Background Paper published in 2000
- Department of Urban Affairs and Planning's Area Assistance Scheme Policy and Procedure Guidelines, 1999 (the Area Assistance Scheme is a community self help grants program administered by the Department)
- the Green Square Draft Structural Masterplan prepared by the firm Stansic, Turner/Hassall in 1997 in regard to a large inner urban renewal area in Sydney, and
- a recently published proposal for Neighbourhood Management, Report of the Policy Action Team 4, put out by the UK Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit – a unit whose output is significantly influencing public planning and social policy in NSW.

A WORKING SET OF CONCEPTS

There is a long history of definitional debate about the noun community, So it might be thought that the planning and urban renewal documents of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries are using well established concepts which have been defined, debated and long since established.

The initial set of definitions is often ascribed to Ferdinand Tönnies (1877) who, as already noted, differentiated

- *Gemeinschaft*, meaning the product of a set of social relationships based on mutual aid and trust, characteristic of villages and localities where people know each other and there are strong networks based on kinship, religious observance and tradition, from

⁵⁰ The criteria for selecting these documents is set out on 23

- *Gesellschaft* meaning more loosely connected social relationships within which individuals experience relative anonymity and autonomy and can pursue their own interests, without, however, high levels of mutual support and trust from their neighbours or the close proximity of kin.

Gemeinschaft is often equated with the English concept community and differentiated from the English word society which, in one of its meanings, refers to the social and civic relationships of a nation (Giddens 1990:13).

As I noted in the previous chapter, these concepts were developed as part of a response to the perceived social ills of industrialisation. They were part of a backward glance and a strongly conservative yearning. However, despite the cosy Victorian stereotypes contained in *Gemeinschaft*, and the overlooking of non kin or religion based networks resulting in mutual trust (now known as social capital) operating in *Gesellschaft*, the two concepts are still referred to, suggesting that they contain a germ of truth or that they epitomise stereotypes which still have emotional currency. For example, even William J Mitchell in talking about e-topia, is moved to say

In an era of interlinked digital networks,... you can live in a small community while maintaining effective connections to a far wider and more diverse world – virtual Gesellschaft, as we might term it, without tongue too far in cheek. Conversely, you can emigrate to a far city, or be continually on the road, yet maintain close contact with your hometown and your family – electronically sustained Gemeinschaft. (Mitchell 1999:22)

The original ideas about *Gemeinschaft* can also be found loaded into current definitions of community. For example Blakely and Snyder note

'Community implies sharing: usually a shared territory, certainly shared experiences or social interactions, and also shared traditions, institutions, common goals or purposes, and political or economic structures. It implies not just a feeling of community, but participation in the social life of a place, and often also the political and economic life, because of a sense of shared destiny within the territorial community. (Blakely and Snyder 1997: 32)

Blakely and Snyder's typology of elements of community is just one of many, but it is a planners' typology. It hangs on the idea of sharing –

shared territory, experiences, traditions, institutions etc. It is, in effect, the concept of community defined in terms of the village. Their table below shows, however, that it is all a bit of a muddle. Shared public realm is a subset of shared territory. Shared destiny, which might be thought to relate to a shared vision for the future, turns out to refer to voluntary organisations which are also the mainstay of another category - shared support structures. Shared values turns out to refer to the characteristics which most divide people: race, class, income and religion.

TABLE 5.1: BLAKELY AND SNYDER'S ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY

ELEMENT	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
Shared territory	Defining the boundaries of the community	Historical names; housing type; subdivision name; walls; gates
Shared values	Defining identity and commonality	Racial/ethnic background; income level/class; religion; history and traditional celebrations
Shared public realm	Common ground for interaction	Public parks; open space; streets and sidewalks; private subdivision facilities
Shared support structures	Mutual aid and association	Voluntary community organisations, charitable and recreational; churches; professional management
Shared destiny	Mechanisms to protect or guide the future	Civic associations; voluntary neighborhood groups; rules and CC&Rs (covenants, conditions and restrictions); home-owner associations

(Blakely and Snyder 1997: 33)

The typology implies that sharing means having interests and benefits in common. However sharing also has the meaning of apportionment (Hanks 1979:1339). Apportionment means distribution and distribution may reflect an equity of interests or the impact of unequal interests. The residents of a territory may share traditions and institutions, in the sense that they all participate in these in one way or another, but these traditions and institutions may apportion money and power inequitably.

They may entrench 'the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate'⁵¹.

Muddle in typologies about community is not unusual. Colin Bell and Howard Newby remark that

'sociologists have frequently launched into defining community with a will bordering on gay abandon. Indeed the analysis of the various definitions was at one time quite a thriving sociological industry. The piece de resistance was George A. Hillery Jr's (1955) analysis of no fewer than ninety-four definitions.'

Hillery found that there was an absence of agreement about the definition beyond the fact that community involves people. However, Bell and Newby, in reviewing Hillery's analysis found that

'a majority of definitions, include...the following components of community : area, common ties and social interaction'
[Bell 1971: 29].

These common components were reformulated in a straightforward, sociological definition of community by Peter Willmott who noted

'the essence of the word, as all etymological explanations show, is the idea of "having something in common". What is in common may be 'a sense of common purpose, a capacity to come together to meet common ends or the existence of local networks available to provide help and support.'
(Willmott 1989:Chapter 1)

Willmott notes that people can have a **territory in common** and

'The territorial community...can vary widely in scale, it can be as small as a few streets or as large as a nation (or even a group of them, as in the European Community)'.(Willmott 1989:Chapter 1)

⁵¹ From the frequently omitted verse of 'All things bright and beautiful' Hymns for Little Children, Cecil Frances Alexander 1848.

People can also have an **interest in common**. An interest community may share ethnic origins, religion, politics, sexual preference, occupation or a common condition or problem, as in self-help groups.

People can also have **sentiments or feelings in common** which lead to a sense of identity or common membership of an 'attachment community'. Whereas members of interest communities may have little actual interaction, 'attachment communities' are based on social relationships and on people's perceptions of a sense of identity, solidarity or belonging.

Willmott's classification is less loaded than Blakely and Snyder's and each type of community can be readily distinguished from the other. As well, by relying on the idea of things held 'in common', that is '*mutually held or used with another or others*' (Hanks 1979:305) this conceptualisation of community enables Willmott to avoid the idea of community as necessarily based on people knowing each other, agreeing with each other or even dealing directly with each other. Willmott's classification allows people who have things in common but who may not formally organise themselves around those things in common to be regarded as a kind of community. His classification also allows the possibility that a person may belong to many communities, these may be of different types and, in terms of their geographic distribution, they may be dispersed or concentrated, cover a wide area or a small one. This is a more open, neutral and flexible definition than one based on sharing.

Willmott's classification is, therefore, particularly useful to planners. It gets away from '*moral connotations, nostalgia, and romanticism*' (Blakely and Snyder 1997: 32). In terms of the emotive connotations of the village, it is quite neutral. It also permit a matrix to be set up which shows, in terms of this typology, how the word community is being used.

Willmott notes that while community can be defined in terms of territory, interest or feelings in common, usually each of kind of community overlaps in multiple ways with all kinds of other communities. Thus, a given place or territory contains interest communities and attachment communities within it. A given community of territory may also be part of, and contain within it, other communities of territory. Interest communities have geographic boundaries, even if in some cases this is the world, and members who form attachments within the interest group.

Attachment communities only have common boundaries with communities of interest and with communities of territory, where these occur in well defined and relatively isolated neighbourhoods and villages. Attachment communities with wider geographic boundaries may be based on face to face social relationships, such as kin relations, or on people's perceptions of a sense of identity, solidarity or belonging. The latter may encompass such diverse perceptions of connection and attachment as membership of a cultural group, an alumnus association, or a nation. Attachments may be overt or infrequently expressed, perhaps a good example of the latter are the expression of solidarity and connection recently occasioned by Princess Diana's funeral in the UK and the Olympics in Sydney. Of course, alumni, gays, ethno-cultural minorities, nationals etc may also have interests in common.

What Willmott's classification thus reveals is that each kind of community can often be described in terms of place or in terms of the people who comprise the community. For example, a community of territory can be described in terms of the place held in common or in terms of the people in that place. Interest communities can sometimes be described in terms of the geographic boundaries of interest or membership, and usually in terms of the people who hold the interest in common. Attachment communities can sometimes be described in terms of the territory or place they occupy and sometimes only in terms of the people who feel attached.

This allows a matrix to be developed showing ways in which each type of community can be described. The examples in the matrix below also demonstrate that the matrix can be used to describe large as well as small communities.

TABLE 5.2: DESCRIBING COMMUNITIES X TYPE & X DESCRIPTORS

TYPE OF COMMUNITY: <i>DESCRIBED IN TERMS OF</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE			
smaller	Eg. The community of Arcadia Waters Local Government Area	Eg. The Arcadia Waters Progress Association	Eg. The Jones Street neighbourhood
larger	Eg the community of South Australia	Eg. Queensland Growers Association	Eg. The University of Sydney Alumni Association
PEOPLE / MEMBERSHIP			
fewer	Eg. The residents of Arcadia Waters	Eg. Members of the Arcadia Waters Progress Association	Eg. Local Armenian families
many	Eg. Australians in the UK	Eg. The backpacker community; future generations	Eg. The Findhorn ⁵² community; the gay and lesbian community; the Church.

HOW VARIOUS PROFESSIONS DEFINE COMMUNITY

One of the reasons there appears to be such confusion about what the word community means is that the professions which traditionally have been closely associated with urban planning concentrate on different types of community. In this section I show briefly some of these main areas of focus. They are important, not just because they explain apparent confusion within planning circles, but also because they go some way to helping to explain the poor cousin/orphan status of the social in planning thinking – a theme I explore in later chapters.

⁵² The Findhorn Foundation is a major international centre of spiritual education and personal transformation located near the village of Findhorn, Inverness. It hosts 14,000 visitors every year

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGISTS, URBAN DESIGNERS, CULTURAL PLANNERS AND POLITICIANS

There is a considerable community psychology literature on sense of community. Most of this literature concerns people's attachment to place, and in particular to their local residential neighbourhood. In an often cited article, McMillan and Chavis reviewed literature attempting to define and measure sense of community. They found a

'recurring emphasis on neighboring, length of residency, planned or anticipated length of residency, home ownership, and satisfaction with the community.' (McMillan and Chavis, 1986)

They went on to describe a sense of community by defining four elements, namely membership or a feeling of belonging, influence or a sense of mattering, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection

'the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences'.

In regard to the last of these, McMillan and Chavis consider that shared emotional connection is *'the definitive element for true community'* noting also that such communities need not be *'bounded by location'*. However, they do not go on to develop a definition for true communities not bounded by location – although the matrix above suggests that such communities could be identified. Further, McMillan and Chavis are unable to provide a definition of sense of community saying

'It is difficult to describe the interworkings of the four elements of sense of community in the abstract. Therefore, the following examples are offered as illustrations.'

Their examples are the university, the neighbourhood, the youth gang and the kibbutz, all of which have clear and relatively small territorial boundaries.

Other community psychologists such as Puddifoot(1996) have built on this work to develop further measures of community identity and still others, such as Wiesenfeld (1996), to challenge the exclusionary and homogeneous aspects of these definitions where part of the definition of

what a group of people have in common is the identification of who is excluded and the establishment of physical or other boundaries to demonstrate that exclusion.

However, it is noticeable that the main focus of these examinations of the concept are place based. Puddifoot's measurements were neighbourhood and 'locality' based while Wiesenfeld's critique begins from a locality based definition:

'community is an entity which is constructed' by individuals who share a set of common features – the specific environment in which they live, work, and enjoy themselves, help each other, and the needs they face' (Wiesenfeld 1996)

In terms of the above matrix then, it can be seen that although feelings of attachment and a sense of having feelings in common can be experienced by people who do not have place in common (the women's movement provided a powerful example in the 1970s), community psychologists concerned with communities of attachment tend to focus on place based communities of smaller places such as neighbourhoods.

The community psychology approach has been taken up in the literature of urban design which makes use of such concepts as sense of identity, sense of belonging, sense of community spirit and sense of place. For example, the UK based Urban Design Group stated on its website (2000) that *'urban design aims to create a "sense of place"*. The NSW Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning wrote in the foreword to his Department's Urban Design Guidelines

'Urban design plays an essential role in improving livability. For example, good urban design will help enable new housing to be responsive to community expectations and local character. Good urban design can help develop safer environments with a strong sense of community...' (DUAP 1998)

The concepts of sense of community, sense of place and sense of identity have also been taken up by community cultural planners. The Cultural Planning Handbook states that

'Cultural resources play a fundamental role in all those elements that create a sense of "community" – individual affirmation, identity, communication between individuals and

between groups, participation, and a sense of place....The availability and quality of cultural resources can determine whether or not people think their area is a 'good place to live'. (Grogan et al. 1995:7)

In terms of the matrix, both urban design and cultural planning focus in practice on places, sometimes as small as neighbourhoods and sometimes larger places such as new release areas, urban renewal areas, and city centres. Urban design proponents expect that attachment to community can be engendered through attachment to place fostered by the quality of design of built elements, while cultural planners seek to foster sense of community by engaging people, usually the residents of a place, in activities which will build common values, experiences and hence a sense of shared emotional connection.

Some actions of national leaders can also be seen as attempting to create a sense of community in much larger groups up to and including the nation as a whole. The classic example of this is when a politician uses an external war to galvanise a sense of community at home (everyone is encouraged to experience their commonality with other citizens, non-citizens may be isolated in camps, people are asked to participate in various deprivations for the common good etc.). More generally, leaders of all sorts use symbols, themes and metaphors to encourage people to identify with and feel attached to the community they represent, such as the nation, the party, the sport etc..

ECONOMISTS

By contrast with the above disciplines, economists are concerned with the operation of communities of interest. Communities of interest include consumers, manufacturers, service providers, property developers, primary producers, industry organisations, trade organisations etc., and they interact in a multiplicity of ways often referred to, in a shorthand way, as the market. Communities of interest can be congruent with territories such as the European Common Market, the NSW Farmers' Association, regional tourist development associations and so on or they can cross territories, national boundaries and continents. Economists of the market economics persuasion are little concerned with people's attachments, being convinced that their rational interests will win the day, and territories are sources of barriers or cheaper inputs as the case may be (Friedman 1953 and c1980). In terms of the matrix, economists may

describe communities of interest in terms of place or in terms of membership:

'the key to regional leadership is a committed group of people drawn from all parts of the community – those people who can make change happen, can make the investments, can help change attitudes'. and 'The supportiveness of the local business community varies between communities and is something that the communities themselves can affect.'
(McKinsey 1994:30 and 6)

ARCHITECTS

Perhaps it is the profession of architects which most focuses on communities of territory. Indeed, architects are focused on quite limited aspects of territory and place and their principal representation of these is in visual terms and built form. Frequently when architects represent community they draw or are speaking about visible elements of street life. A vibrant community, according to the NSW Government Architect,⁵³ is one in which there are a lot of people and a diversity of activities on the street. This view has an honourable tradition in Jane Jacobs' detailed discussion about the uses of sidewalks (Jacobs 1961:chs. 2,3,4).

In the Green Square Draft Structure Masterplan, the architectural firm Stansic, Turner/Hassall notes

'The masterplan site contains a number of small existing communities, and will also be subject to the establishment of new communities through developments. While the provision of an appropriate range of facilities in the Green Square Precinct is a priority area for social planning it is important that the broader context of the social environment is understood. The concept of 'street-life' at its best exemplifies the notion of social environment. A street that functions well on this level acts as a natural gathering place. It encourages activities to be undertaken in a way that adds social value to the experience of the street and reflects the culture of its users: Mardi Gras paraphernalia, Vietnamese groceries, the TAB are all clear messages about the social role of the street.'

⁵³ Personal communication 1998 as part of an interview re. the preparation of the Green Square Community Plan

In established areas good social mapping along with opportunistic site planning can allow communities to build on the strength of social environments.

In new developments, identifying the critical mix of activities is important if urban places are to develop vitality and social meaning.’ (Stansic, Turner/Hassall, 1997,:48)

This is the idea of community reduced to the appearance of hustle and bustle, but it is fundamentally an idea attached to place. Without pressing the point too much⁵⁴, one might represent the differences in focus and emphasis which this discussion suggests in the terms of the matrix in the following manner.

TABLE 5.3: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROFESSIONS AND THEIR FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

TYPE OF COMMUNITY	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
<i>focus on PLACE</i>	Architects	Economists	Community psychologists Urban designers
<i>focus on PEOPLE MEMBERSHIP</i>		Economists	Cultural planners Politicians and other leaders

Architects, economists and urban designers are important fellow travellers with town planners and undoubtedly influence them. But how do town planners themselves conceive community? This is important because how planners think about community is likely to set the parameters for what they do in regard to any given community.

⁵⁴ For example, by digressing into an in depth study of the use of ‘community’ by the professions

COMMUNITY AS A NOUN

In Australia, community is frequently a code word for social issues⁵⁵. So how town or urban planners think about community is likely to provide insights into their approach to social issues. In examining this question, it quickly became apparent that planners' use of community varies according to whether it is being used as a noun or an adjective. In this section a content analysis of the meaning of community as a noun in the six planning documents, named at the beginning of this chapter, is described first.

The aim in analysing the use of the noun community in the six documents was to identify any pattern or preference among planners for treating community as a place, a set of interests or a set of attachments, and to see whether within this there might be a preference to describe communities in terms of place or in terms of people. For example, do planners tend to define communities as places *and* talk about them in terms of their physical characteristics?

To do this content analysis, the intended meaning was taken from either an explicit definition in the text or from what was clearly intended by the context. For example, in the 1998/9 Annual Report of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, the report of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation states that its goal is

to provide lifestyle, economic and environmental benefits for the community... (DUAP 1998/9: 45)

It is clear that the community referred to is that of Newcastle, NSW. On page 4 of the same document there is the statement:

'We aim – in collaborative partnerships with communities, local councils and state agencies – to develop shared visions which reflect the needs of regions and places in country NSW...'

⁵⁵ For example, at a Western Sydney Growth Area information session on 13 December 2002, representatives of PlanningNSW describing the organisational structure of the Metropolitan Development Program, a structure to achieve a triple bottom line in metropolitan planning, showed a diagram with headings for environmental issues, economic issues and community liaison. It was clear that the community column (which was empty) was intended to contain the organisational structure to deal with social issues in metropolitan planning.

The context makes it clear that the communities referred to are geographic ones, rather than either communities of interest, which cut across place-based communities, or communities of attachment which are about feelings and relationships rather than about places.

TABLE 5.4: COMMUNITY AS NOUN / DUAP ANNUAL REPORT, 1998-9: 3-48

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>REFERS TO</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	Safe sustainable communities,4,14, Liveable, sustainable communities 44 A sustainable vibrant community 46 Liveable communities 4,16,17, Quality communities 5 Regional communities 26 Communities in the catchment 26 The South Sydney community 47 The central coast community 48	The business community [metropolitan area]15 The Newcastle business community 46	
PEOPLE OR MEMBERSHIP	The community [meaning the people in a given area, eg the metropolitan area, Newcastle, Clarence Valley] ,4,17,17, 22, 27,30,45,46 The community/the wider community [meaning the general public/the citizenry of the State] 3,3, 3,3, 11,15, 21, 39,42,43, Communities 4,4,19,24,27, 27, 27, 27,43 The local community[ies] 18,19,48	The farming community 27 The Indigenous community 28,29 The scientific community 28,29	

Page numbers are shown for each mention.

The above analysis relied mainly on contextual interpretation, however, this was mostly straightforward. Almost the entire document is focused on communities of territory whether neighbourhoods, regions or the State as a whole and whether these were referred to as local communities, communities in the catchment, liveable communities, quality communities or regional communities. For example,

'The preparation of the Georges River Catchment REP has addressed the environmental health of the Georges River, which had been of concern to the local community for some time' (DUAP, 1998-99:18)].

There are three examples of community of interest which are not place related, but both references to the business community are those of place. However, within the category of communities of territory described in terms of people or membership, there are two quite discrete uses. Mostly 'the community' means the people in a given area, eg the metropolitan area, the City of Newcastle, the Clarence Valley. However, the introductory Message from the Director General, refers to the community as meaning the general public, the Department's biggest stakeholder, the citizenry of the State:

'Our aim is to realise the full potential of our major metropolitan areas in innovative ways which meet the demands of the new millennium....and demonstrate to the community the benefits of good planning. (DUAP 1998-9 :3)

and this usage is found from time to time throughout the document. Even so the community referred to in this sense is a community of the territory of the State. Similar interpretation applied to the DUAP's Strategic Directions (2000d).

TABLE 5.5: COMMUNITY AS NOUN / DUAP STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 1999-2000

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>REFERS TO</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	Liveable communities 1,6, Communities in regional NSW 3,		
PEOPLE OR MEMBERSHIP	The community [meaning the general public/the citizenry of the State} 2,2,3,4,6, All sectors of the community 2, Community[ies]'s needs 4,5,6,	Communities of interest 6,	

Page numbers are shown for each mention.

In this document, the community means the people of NSW, because the document refers only to the Department's strategic directions and its responsibilities apply to the State as a whole. For example, '*We will treat the community with fairness and equity*', and '*We are committed to consulting fully with the community*'; while the aim '*to ensure increased accessibility for all sectors of the community*' probably means, from the context, for rich and poor alike in the State.

The sentence '*Problems and their solutions can be identified and owned by communities of interest*' (p6) is an interesting and rare use of this concept by the Department and notably cuts across the Department's usual, geographically based use of the word. It is not clear what the sentence means, however.

The same method of analysis reveals that the Draft Green Square Master Plan, which is concerned with part of the South Sydney Growth Area is exclusively concerned with communities of territory and specifically those of Green Square and its immediate environs (Table 5.6).

In this masterplan the distribution and use of the word community is very dependent on the topic under consideration in the masterplan, being confined largely to the vision statements and the social infrastructure sections. For example, there are no mentions of the community in the section on Ecologically Sustainable Development.

TABLE 5.6: COMMUNITY AS NOUN / THE DRAFT GREEN SQUARE
MASTER PLAN[1997]⁵⁶

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>REFERS TO</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	Residential communities ⁵⁷ 12,		
PEOPLE OR MEMBERSHIP	Wellbeing of present and future communities 12, existing and/or new communities 13,48,48, 50,51, the local community/ies 26,40,40, the community 27,49,51,52,53, communities 48, a stable community ⁵⁸ 49, low income communities 49,		

Page numbers are shown for each mention. Quotations of other documents using the word community have been excluded, eg p 39. Proper names such as the Department of Community Services, p84, have also been excluded.

All this raises the question as to whether the kind of communities that are mentioned by planners varies with the subject of the document. To consider this possibility, the use of community in the Department's Affordable Housing Strategy and Area Assistance Scheme Policy and Procedure Guidelines were analysed.

⁵⁶ Pages 12 - 94

⁵⁷ The sentence begin: 'Its location in the southern sector, adjacent to both established residential communities and industrial/warehouse uses...' indicating that place and position is being discussed rather than people. By contrast the reference to the local community on page 26 for example is to 'parks ... well used and enjoyed by the local community...'

⁵⁸ The reference is to the demographic profile of the community

The Department of Urban Affairs and Planning's Affordable Housing Strategy

'aims to generate affordable housing in NSW. This will be achieved through a partnership of the private sector, not for profit organisations and State and local government to help the growing number of people who need affordable housing.'
(DUAP 2000c)

Thus the stage is set for the Department to be concerned with a diverse communities of interest. The document's use of community as a noun is shown in Table 5.7.

TABLE 5.7: COMMUNITY AS NOUN – DUAP'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY BACKGROUND PAPER 2000

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>REFERS TO</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	The community 5,		
PEOPLE OR MEMBERSHIP	The community 5, Communities 5,6, Social mix of a community 5, Local communities 7,		

Page numbers are shown for each mention.

All uses refer to communities of territory. For example, the document mentions that

'loss of income can result in a household having to leave the community, disrupting links with schools' and

'Changes in the social mix of a community can have wide ranging implications. Demand for certain services...may fall'

A similar distribution is found in the department's Area Assistance Scheme Policy and Procedure Guidelines (DUAP 1999c):

TABLE 5.8: COMMUNITY AS NOUN – DUAP'S AREA ASSISTANCE SCHEME POLICY AND PROCEDURE GUIDELINES, 1999, PP 3-12

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>REFERS TO</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS			
PEOPLE OR MEMBERSHIP	The community 3,9,9, Local communities 4, The community's capacity to participate 6		

The Area Assistance Scheme is a community self help grant program. Pages 3-12 of this document deal with the objectives, funding structure and planning requirements of the scheme. Page numbers are shown for each mention. Position titles such as Community Project Officer, grant program titles and the names of industrial awards have not been included.

In this document the community refers to the people of NSW even though the Scheme is focused on projects in small areas usually within local government areas or at most clusters of local government areas.

To see whether this is a peculiarly Australian usage, the same analysis was done for a recent publication of the UK Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit. This Unit is focused on social and economic inequalities in deprived areas in the UK and on achieving inclusion and equality as part of urban renewal. The Unit's work has been influential in the NSW Government including the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, now PlanningNSW. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning visited the Unit in April 2000. The document selected was the most recently published report of a Policy Action Team at the time of analysis, namely the report on Neighbourhood Management by Policy Action Team 4. The use of community as a noun in Chapters 1 to 3 was analysed (Table 5.9).

TABLE 5.9: COMMUNITY AS NOUN – POLICY ACTION TEAM 4'S
REPORT ON NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT FOR THE UK
SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>REFERS TO</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS			
PEOPLE OR MEMBERSHIP	Deprived communities 1.7, 1.8, 1.32 Local community /ies 1.8, 1.52, 3.17, 3.22 The community 1.17, 1.18, 1.34, 1.35, 1.38, 3.22, Communities 1.27,	Black and minority ethnic communities 1.19,	

Paragraph numbers are shown for each mention. Deprived communities are communities described in terms of their membership because the indicators of deprivation used by the SEU are social, economic and demographic.

Perhaps it might be argued that the similarity of use between this document and the NSW documents (which almost certainly did not influence it) is because the neighbourhood is fundamentally a community of territory. However, as I have shown earlier in this chapter, this does not prevent many other writers considering the neighbourhood as a community of attachment.

It seems, therefore, that people working in the context of planning in NSW are usually thinking of places and the people in geographic areas when they refer to communities. Only on rare occasions do they refer to an interest group as a community and on no occasion do they refer to communities held together by emotional ties and bonds. At the same time, these place-based communities in planning documents are more often described in terms of the people who live in the place than in terms of their physical boundaries or other physical characteristics.

The pattern of usage demonstrates (Table 5.10) where planners belong in the matrix of professions and their use of the concept of community (compare with Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.10: PLANNERS' FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

TYPE OF COMMUNITY <i>FOCUS ON</i>	COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY	COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT
PLACE	Architects Planners	Economists <i>Planners</i>	Urban designers
MEMBERSHIP	Planners	Economists <i>Planners</i>	Cultural planners Politicians and other leaders

Least focus is represented by italics

The analysis also shows how easy it would be for planners using community as a place-based concept to believe that they were also using it as a social descriptor because of their tendency to describe communities of territory in terms of the people in the territory. In this way it would be easy for planners to believe that in referring to place-based communities they were also referring to communities of interest and attachment because interests and attachments are characteristics of people and not of places. The adoption of the language of community psychologists by urban designers would reinforce this.

However, I shall show this has led planners into a conceptual trap in which interests and attachments have been related to place in ways which cannot be justified

A COMMUNITY BY ANY OTHER NAME?

Before considering the implications of the emphasis by planners on communities as a geographic concept, I checked these documents to see whether they deal with communities of interest and attachment by calling them something else, such as community groups, stakeholders, sectors, movements or associations.

A scan for this purpose reveals that the DUAP Annual Report (1998-9) makes repeated reference to the Department's partnership with local councils, other state agencies and stakeholders and in some places these stakeholders are identified as professional associations; peak industry, environment, community and Indigenous organisations;

catchment management committees; specific interest groups; farming, timber, property development and mining industries. These groups are often mentioned in a list with '*communities*', or '*the local community*', suggesting that area based communities are but one stakeholder or even that the community of territory is an interest group which must be consulted like all the other interest groups. This usage, however, also tends to imply that the local place-based community is homogeneous in terms of its interests, a usage which harks back to the idea of the village.

The report does identify the farming, Indigenous, scientific and business communities as stakeholders and it would be possible to extrapolate from this and suggest that other stakeholders mentioned in the document, such as local councils, professional bodies, property development groups, timber and forestry groups, are also seen as having interests in common. However, the word community is not applied to them. Notably absent as potential groups with interests in common are: women, children, men, future generations, people with a disability, immigrant groups and refugees. So at best there is a very limited recognition of communities of interest, and it is groups with economic interests in common which are seen as the main stakeholders.

There seem to be no references to communities of attachment by this or any other name. The potential for Indigenous communities to be recognised as place based communities of attachment, in the sense of groups of people linked by attachment to places they mostly no longer live in, is not explored or alluded to.

DUAP's Strategic Directions document, as noted, makes reference to the business community. The Area Assistance Scheme Guidelines deal with councils and local or regional community organisations and these may be regarded as communities of interest, but the concept is not developed in either document. Neither document suggests that there are communities of attachment.

The Draft Green Square Master Plan makes reference to industries in the area, government agencies and service providers and some demographic characteristics of the present and projected populations in ways which might imply that these sectors have interests. It would be entering the realm of conjecture, however, to imagine that the master-planning team considered these sectors in any way acted as a community, even as communities of interest.

Policy Action Team 4's report on Neighbourhood Management identifies potential communities of interest in some of the examples chosen to illustrate points made in the report⁵⁹. The list of organisations involved in neighbourhood improvement does imply a sector that is networked, as indeed in many respects it is. However, the theme of this report is that these organisations operate in a fragmented policy and resource management environment which is detrimental to their effectiveness and the report's recommendations concern integration of these organisations, and the government's efforts, *on a geographic basis*.

CONCLUSION

Overall then the conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that planners and people concerned with urban or neighbourhood renewal make considerable use of the idea of community but with a meaning which tends to

- define community as a territorial concept
- describe the territory or place more often than not in terms of the people who live there
- understate the complexity of communities of territory and imply greater homogeneity than actually exists,
- recognise the presence of some interest groups but give preference to economic stakeholders over other potential communities of interest,
- blur the distinction between the citizenry of the State, the networks of communities of interest in the State and the residential members of a place or geographic area, and
- overlook entirely the diverse ways in which communities of interest and communities of attachment cut across communities of territory.

This simplistic, uni-dimensional approach to community is of concern when leading planning organisations such as PlanningNSW, its satellite agency the South Sydney Development Corporation, and its former satellite, Landcom, state that their fundamental and overriding aim is to build liveable or quality communities.

⁵⁹ For example it refers to Housing Action Trusts, Neighbourhood Learning Centres, Local Strategic Partnerships, tenants organisations, community centre organisations such as the Bromley-by-Bow Centre, community associations, councils, and urban regeneration organisations.

COMMUNITY AS AN ADJECTIVE

Scanning documents for the use of the word community as a noun draws attention to the frequent use of this word as an adjective. The next step in this investigation was, therefore, to examine how these documents use community as an adjective.

Determining the meanings of the word community when used as an adjective in planning documents proved difficult because I am not aware of an available typology to apply and, even taking into account the context and sometimes an explicit definition in the text, there was often more than one available meaning. The fact that interpretation of meaning was not straightforward is significant in itself. It also meant that this writer's interpretations needed checking. In line with good practice (Burr 1995:172) I had my interpretations checked by a professional writer⁶⁰ for several reasons:

- the planning documents were intended for a lay audience and I wanted to ensure that I had identified meanings that would be attributed by a lay audience, and
- because the word community as an adjective seems to be used to suggest layers of meaning, the task was complex and by obtaining a second opinion I was able to discuss and refine my interpretations. In a small number of cases I revised my original prioritisation of meaning.

More recently I also compared the meanings identified with definitions of community governance and community strategy found in the Glossary section of *The Guardian's* website and found them to be similar⁶¹.

Across the 6 documents under review, 9 different meanings for community when used as an adjective were identified. These meanings are:

- i not-for-profit, area or interest based – as in *community organisation*

⁶⁰ Scriptwriter Geoffrey Atherden who made his own assessment of the items listed in Attachment 4.

⁶¹ <http://society.guardian.co.uk/glossary> accessed May 2003

- ii representing or involving people in a local area – as in *community consultation*
- iii representing or involving people in a wider geographic area eg the State – as in *community consultation* across the State
- iv belonging to everyone in the local area – as in *community goals*
- v belonging to everyone in a wider area such as the State – as in *community needs* (where the community referred to is everyone in NSW)
- vi open to the public/available to everyone – as in *community events*
- vii inexpensive – as in *community housing*
- viii feelings of attachment – as in *the community functions of the school* (a rare usage referring to facilitating attachment)
- ix basic human (services and facilities) as in *community services and facilities*.

Even looking at this list it is clear that in some circumstances and in some contexts one could expect to find some of the examples listed above in other categories. For example, a community organisation is often a not-for-profit organisation with a particular geographic and/or special interest focus (meaning i). However, sometimes it means simply a loose knit group of people who are involved in making diverse representations on a range of issues (meaning ii).

What emerges from the charting of meanings in the use of community as a descriptor in these documents is that

- there is an array of possible primary meanings, and
- there are often secondary meanings.

The analysis of community used as an adjective in the six documents is set out in Tables 5.11 – 5.16 in Attachment 4. In the tables, the primary meaning – as agreed by both readers of these texts – is shown in ordinary type. Secondary or subordinate meanings are shown in italics. Where there is doubt, the possible meaning is noted as ‘maybe’.

THE SLIPPERY SLIDES OF ADJECTIVAL MEANING

Nine possible meanings which can be overlaid and used in concert creates the opportunity for a feast of meanings, or for a great deal of imprecision and the opportunity to imply more than can be justified. These documents are replete with such examples.

For example, Table 5.11 referring to DUAP's 1998-9 Annual Report shows that there were a number of references to community groups, in the sense of not-for-profit interest organisations, however this usage often carried a secondary meaning of representing or involving people in a given area. The primary, not-for-profit meaning is the literal meaning, while the idea of involvement and representation is the implicit and much broader meaning.

'Planning and Building consults closely with key state agencies, parliamentary counsel, Local Government, professional associations, peak industry bodies and other environmental, community and indigenous groups' (DUAP 1998-9:11-12)

Here community is not only the catch-all at the end of a long and ranked (in terms of status) list but also suggests that everyone who might have an interest has an opportunity to participate in a consultation process, or even that such consultations are open to the public and participation is available to everyone. Similar implications are contained in community consultations, community workshops, community input.

The Draft Green Square Master Plan (Table 5:13) makes a similar use of 'community organisations'. The primary meaning of not-for-profit is clear especially in the following example:

'The design options prepared have many common qualities derived from inputs in the public consultation by residents, community organisations, developers, businesses, emergency services and state and local government departments...' (Stanisic-Turner 1997:14)

where community organisations are differentiated from residents in another list, this time ranked in the reverse order. However, in this example too, community organisation also carries with it the idea of representation and involvement by local people. Similarly the use of 'community consultations'

'The community consultations for this study confirms a community culture that is reasonably robust' (Stanisic-Turner 1997:49)

not only suggests that local people were involved but also, by referring to the culture of the community, that these consultations were open to the public and available to everyone.

‘Not-for-profit’, ‘representing or involving people in the area’, and ‘open to the public/available to everyone’ are discrete meanings. What happens in the usages cited above is that the primary, defensible meaning is stretched to imply other meanings which may not be justifiable.

For example, in regard to consultations the word community could appear to be shorthand for: every not-for-profit organisation in the local area as well every regional peak organisation and every member of the public (were invited to participate in a series of workshops or meetings). Whereas usually the fact is that, at best, a limited number of not-for-profit organisations are invited to any consultation process, members of the public may or may not be invited, and there may be a series of meetings, but not necessarily.

Few planning agencies have the funds for extensive community consultation. Frequently⁶², ‘extensive community consultation’ actually means many meetings with one group of invited representatives, and/or advertised opportunities to attend a limited number of public meetings (opportunities, if you are available on the dates specified, to speak but not to take part in the assessment of decision making processes which follow). These limited exercises could be seen for what they are – but, cloaked in the disguise of community, their limitations are less obvious. This adjective carries the implication of the wider meaning whether or not this meaning has any veracity.

Other uses of community to obtain a wider meaning abound in these documents. In both the Draft Green Square Masterplan (Table 5.13) and the Report of Policy Action Team No 4, (Table 5.16), community, in the sense of ‘basic human’ services and facilities also carries with it an implication that the service or facility is free or cheap or open to the public and available to everyone. For example, the Masterplan’s social infrastructure principles include:

⁶² In 5 years of consulting to the public sector I have yet to come across a brief from an agency willing to pay for a consultations process saturated with opportunities for participation and none in which there was any real opportunity for self selected individuals to assist with or to be any part of a decision making process.

- *'Integrate community services with residential and retail activity as part of the development of well resourced, lively neighbourhoods...*
- *Commercial and community facilities can be mixed both as a way of promoting an energetic range of activity and as a means of increasing the number of customers or all services...*
- *Interactive planning with key human service providers should be an integral part of the development of sites identified for inclusion of community infrastructure...*
- *The role of open space in providing well designed venues for community meeting, ceremony, performance and public events should be considered in the provision of community resources.'*(Stanisic-Turner 1997:50-51)

In these principles there is every implication that community facilities, services and resources will be open to the public and generally available to everyone. However, this tricky issue is not canvassed overtly perhaps because this implication would turn out to be incorrect. Development applications already granted⁶³ in the South Sydney Growth Centre area allowed 'community facilities and services' which are exclusive to residents and tenants and a number of these have been built⁶⁴.

A further example of the way in which community can be used to extend meaning is demonstrated in the Policy Action Team, No 4's Report on Neighbourhood Management, Table 5.16. In this document, extensive use is made of the false singular to imply that the commitment, participation, involvement etc of the few actually represent the entire community or everyone in the area. For example, the report notes

'The Policy Action Team would expect all neighbourhood management structures to have some kind of board. But, for it to represent the community voice effectively, the majority of board members would have to be residents, elected or other members of the community.' (Social Exclusion Unit 2000:ch1, p3)

⁶³ At the time the Draft Green Square Master Plan was being written

⁶⁴ Eg at Moore Park Gardens. It should be noted that South Sydney Council has since imposed stricter controls.

By using ‘voice’ in the singular with the definite article, and by attaching community as an adjective, the impression is created that the views of everyone in the local area can be heard, and heard in a coherent manner. However, a review of what is proposed in the report could not conclude that *the community voice* in this sense is intended to be canvassed. Nonetheless, the incautious reader is invited to be lulled into false security by this use of language.

Other examples of the false singular include:

community expectations, community support, community needs	in DUAP Annual Report, pp 46,48,
community needs	in DUAP Strategic Directions, p4
community culture,	in Draft Green Square Masterplan, p49
community understanding	in DUAP’s Affordable Housing Strategy, p7
community issues, community needs	in DUAP’s Area Assistance Scheme Guidelines pp4,6,9,11
community commitment, community consent,	in PAT No 4 report paras 1.3,2.3

CONCLUSION

In short, what the use of the word community as a qualifier has allowed the writers of these documents to do is to suggest a level of access, inclusion, participation and ownership greater than that which will occur or has occurred. This then enables the report writer to appear to be creating or referring to a community in more than the geographic sense – a community where consensus can be achieved, everyone has access to a basic set of facilities and services and these in and of themselves provide individuals with the means to engage in democratic processes which will influence the way in which the development is built, and services and facilities are provided and managed.

Further, by using the noun as an adjective in the false singular, the territory or place acquires human characteristics. The implied community is endowed with human qualities such as needs, a voice, the capacity to

determine a direction and the ability to withdraw or give consent. By anthropomorphizing community in this way, planners can imply the *interests and attachments in common* which they otherwise so assiduously avoid when using community as a noun, that is, they can endow communities of territory with the attributes of communities of interest and attachment without explicitly saying that this is what they are doing.

The problem for any profession is that community is a '*warmly persuasive word*' which '*never seems to be used unfavourably*' (Williams 1976). Planners seem to be exploiting this characteristic to the hilt.

PART 2: THE EFFECTS OF THIS USE

In Part 1 of this Chapter, I sought to clarify what planners mean when they refer to community because planning agencies so often say that their aim is to create sustainable/vibrant/liveable/quality communities.

My analysis showed that in a diversity of documents written by planners and intended for public consumption,

- most of the time, community as a noun is used to refer to places or to people who have territory in common
- however, the way in which community is used as an adjective in these documents attributes common interests and attachments to people with territory in common in ways which suggest inclusion, democratic participation, consensus and the meeting of common needs and thus a coincidence of territory, interests and attachments, i.e. that for the purposes of the matter at hand there is one community and it is largely a consensual one.

This usage, with its emphasis on territory and on the village-like attributes of the residents of such territories requires empirical scrutiny. Is the fusion of territory in common with interests and attachments in common consistent with the facts? Is 'the community' in effect a place?

CONFUSING COMMUNITY WITH PLACE

There is a long standing view that communities *are* fundamentally linked to places (Sussman 1959, Sjoberg 1965, Parsons 1966, Bell 1971). There has even been a group of community theorists known as 'ecologists' who emphasise patterns of symbiotic relations between people in a place (Hawley 1950:v, Bell 1971:33). Community as place is steeped in reference to post nomadic, tribal settlement patterns, ideas of tranquillity, contact with nature, absence of urban stress, feudalsocial controls, and it still has meaning.

For example, the 2003 Conference of the Community Development Society held in July at Ithaca, New York, USA was called *Community as Place*. Prior to the Conference, the opening page on its website began:

'We need to claim a place home and possess "local knowledge," which is not primarily the scholar's knowledge, but the hard-won knowledge of men and women with long experience in a specific landscape.--Deborah Tall, in "From Where We Stand: Recovering a Sense of Place"

To decide to be someplace as members of a community demands that we become active placemakers again, that we participate with others in our communities in thoughtful, careful, responsible action. -- Linda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley, in "Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building"

But there is a difference between the currency of an idea, what that idea means as a reflection of the current anxieties of a people, its value meanings, and on-the-ground day to day realities. The problems arise when the value and the descriptive meanings are used interchangeably (Plant 1974:12). These days, in Australia, territory in common is only one thing among many kinds of things which people have in common with other people and it would be very difficult to demonstrate that it is the most important or the dominant one, or that it is a principal causative factor in social wellbeing.

Planning's consistent use of community as territory and particularly as local place or neighbourhood-of-residence is an assertion that where you live takes priority *in terms of your interests and affiliations* over, say, nationalism, membership of an immigrant group, membership of an ethnic, linguistic or cultural group, family or kinship, political party

affiliation, sporting affiliation, professional or business affiliation etc. On a day to day basis, this seems increasingly unlikely to be true.

Having a local place or place of residence in common may be a basis for some kinds of community in some places and for some residents of some places, but it is demonstrably less and less true for most people in the highly mobile, highly connected and multiple cross-linked post industrial world. According to Willmott,

'places are more likely to be 'attachment communities' when the following conditions apply

- *When there has been relative population stability, and thus large proportions of people have had lengthy continuous residence in the area.*
- *When kin live in the area.*
- *When many people work in a local industry.*
- *When people are alike in social class and income, or share membership of a particular minority.*
- *When a large proportion of local people have the specific social skills, and the appropriate values, to get to know others quickly.*
- *When there are many locally –based organisations.*
- *When a place or its residents are under an external threat, particularly when this results in the creation of local campaigning organisations (though this may be a more temporary effect than the others).*
- *When physical layout and design encourage rather than discourage casual neighbourly meetings and a sense of separate physical identity.*
- *When a place is particularly isolated.*

In terms of residents, the following kinds of people more often develop attachment to their local territorial community.

- *Those, again, who have the relevant skills and values including a readiness to join a local organisation – all of which have so far been more common among middle-class people*
- *Those who have young children (especially if the mother is not in full-time work outside the home and has no car).*
- *Those whose family background, past experience or temperament predispose them to be sociable.' (Willmott 1989: ch 1)*

In Australia and many parts of the developed, English speaking world fewer and fewer *places* or *people* fulfil these criteria for communities of attachment. The declining number of two parent families where one parent does not work fulltime outside the home and has no car and declining membership rates of local organisations (Putnam 2000) suggest that the potential for people to form attachment to a local community of territory is also limited. As Willmott's definitions make clear, having territory in common is, nowadays, a quite different thing to having interest and/or attachments in common.

Willmott notes that communities of territory, interest and attachment cut across one another. People may, and often do, have multiple memberships of territorial (local and non-local) and interest communities. In fact 'community without propinquity'(Webber 1964) is becoming increasingly common, accelerated by developments in transport and communications and processes of globalisation.

'The rise of dispersed social networks and dispersed communities of interest has meant that, to a greater extent than in the past, local attachments now constitute only one part of social life among others. Most residents look beyond their local community for many of their social relationships, often including some of those most important to them. Local ties are weaker than historically they have been, because they overlap much less often than they used to with other ties, of kinship, friendship, work, leisure and other interests.'
(Willmott 1989:ch 1)

Similarly, Wellman and Leighton noted from their research in the Borough of East York, Toronto, that

'Some of an urbanite's ties tend to be clustered into densely knit, tightly bounded networks, their solidarity often reinforced by either kinship structures or residential or work-place propinquity.... Yet we have found (Wellman 1979⁶⁵) that such clusters are likely to comprise only a minority of one's important network ties. The other ties tend to be much less densely connected.... These sparsely knit, loosely bounded, liberated networks are structurally not as efficient in mobilizing collective assistance for their members, but

⁶⁵ cited as Wellman B (1979) "The community question" American Journal of Sociology (forthcoming)

their branching character allows additional resources to be reached.' (Wellman and Leighton 1979:378)

The decline in relative importance of neighbourhood networks is now well established:

'the neighbourhood provides the realm of practical relations involving the exchange of small services as well as convivial relations what might contribute to a diffuse feeling of security and wellbeing. These relations continue to be significant parts of people's overall social network, in which the most significant ties exist outside the neighbourhood.' (Bridge 2002:25)

By and large it is only those people whose lives are constrained by geographic isolation, youth, disability, poverty, discrimination or certain cultural practices and orthodoxies whose communities of attachment and interest are relatively bounded by territory (Briggs 1998, Kearns and Parkinson, 1993, Bauder 2002, Buck 2001). Even Aboriginal Australians, who could arguably be said to have territory, attachment and many interests in common (particularly because of their cultural attachment to land) are geographically dispersed having for the most part been forcibly removed from their lands of origin.

In terms of urban myths, it may be comforting to think that post-industrialism and the information technology revolution is seeing increasing numbers of people working from home, shopping locally and becoming quite attached to their local coffee shop and piece of public art. But this is a minority experience, just the latest example of the myth in operation. In contrast to the small percentage working from home, the more complete picture shows an ever increasing concentration of people living in, or more frequently around, the major cities and engaging in lengthy commuting. It is now pulling a very long bow to suggest that place of residence is the most important interest or attachment in common for most people.

Interest in neighbourhood of residence can be activated by a threat (a development application for the block next door or down the street) but this is a short term and specific interest focus. As well, while closing ranks for territorial and related (economic, status) interests does highlight territory in common, this is community of place based on exclusion and is not consistent with broader, public aims of planning. In fact planning is in

a bind on this point. By endorsing community as a territory based concept, planners all too frequently find themselves, whether wittingly or unwittingly, as proponents for geographic segregation.

Finally if this issue were still in doubt, research on neighbourhoods suggests that the trend is towards less socialising within the neighbourhood and more socialising outside it (Guest and Wierzbicki 1999), that neighbourliness (mutual respect and assistance) is not seen as the same as friendship, and levels of both neighbourliness and socialising vary with ownership status (Rohe and Stegman 1994, Forrest and Kearns 2001, Saegert et.al. 2002). People in poor neighbourhoods, where they are usually tenants or publicly housed benefits recipients, are disadvantaged by their lack of connections with people and systems both within and outside their neighbourhoods (Social Exclusion Unit 2001). Meanwhile, other research suggests that outside these socially excluded areas people are increasingly connected and affiliated with geographically dispersed interest groups (Putnam 2000,) and their primary relationships, with family and friends are conducted across the globe (Bridge 2002, Wellman 1999).

While the reality is that communities of interest and attachment rarely coincide with communities of territory in developed societies, and community of territory only assumes primacy in people's affiliations under circumstances of particular deprivation or external threat, the *idea* of place as the focus of interests and attachments still has wholesale currency as the legitimate arena for planning. This is demonstrated in Talen's review *The Problem of Community in Planning*:

'many studies have documented that localized interaction is simply not a requirement for building a sense of community. Thus, the multiple meanings of sense of community render the planner's involvement in its procurement problematic, and the multiple levels of sense of community undermine the planner's ability to be effectual.' and
'Once the multiple dimensions of community are revealed- membership, shared belonging, influence, and so forth, it becomes evident that it is out of the purview of planners to "design" such components.' and
'The provision of proper access to facilities, of quality public spaces and of humanly scaled neighborhoods that respect history are goals that stand on their own and do not need to be linked to the various qualitative dimensions of community that exist in a given locale (Talen 2000:177-8).

Talen's argument is that even where 'placeless communities' are acknowledged (her term) the planner is nonetheless still concerned with place. However, restricting the planner to place narrows the frame and the restricts the context in which planners define and attend to social issues (Schon 1983:40). One of the results of this is that this frame keeps planners to the design activities Talen cites, rather than demanding that planners ask more searching questions about the impacts of land use design on social wellbeing – both within and outside the place being designed . However, this would require planners to take a sociological look at what they do.

RELIANCE ON AREA BASED SOLUTIONS

In examining the impact of the ideology of the village, I noted that one of the downsides of planners' use of the village/neighbourhood as a core element in planning was that it encouraged an inward rather than an outward focus. That is, while planners are focusing on designing street and housing networks around central transport or shopping nodes, they are in effect trying to achieve better social outcomes by making the places themselves work better and contain all the right elements. This is the both inward looking and mechanistic. It also flies in the face of contemporary sociological and epidemiological research which shows that it is what is happening outside a neighbourhood which seems to have the most impact on the quality of life within neighbourhoods and this is a function of comparison between neighbourhoods (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001) and the impact of reputation, relative status and relative deprivation.

Wilkinson's careful reviews of epidemiological data provide repeated, cross-national and intra-national evidence that it is relative social and economic inequality which affects death rates – one of the most basic measures of social wellbeing (Wilkinson 1996). Wilkinson also reports that there are now 45 separate data sets which show that homicide rates are higher in more unequal societies⁶⁶ as well as numerous studies which establish the relationship between relative inequality in societies and life expectancy, heart attack rates, infant mortality (Wilkinson 2002) and the powerful health impacts of human sensitivity to social status and the

⁶⁶ A point he made frequently on his tour of Eastern Australian States in November 2002

chronic anxiety which accompanies relatively low social status and powerlessness (Wilkinson 2001).

These and other studies (Montgomery et. al. 1996, Bartley et. al. 1997, Power 1994, Van Doorslaer 1997, Bosma 1997, Bethune 1997, Burchell 1994, Ferrie et al 1999, Kawachi et al 1997) confront the notion that it is area as such that is a causative factor in social distress and poor social outcomes.

*'In the careful study by Nick Buck⁶⁷ on "Social and economic change in contemporary Britain: the emergence of an urban underclass?" he convincingly demonstrated that, apart perhaps from Merseyside, it was not possible to isolate any persisting urban effects such as putative area-level process of cumulative causation specific to urban ghettos. "Large urban areas do not display any consistent pattern of a greater concentration of inactive and long-term unemployed households once their population composition and current economic situations are taken into account". Given this and similar studies, it seems to me that the persistent enthusiasm to discuss poverty in relation to specific milieux is a form of mystification. The urban research industry has a vested interest in maintaining their product range and in marketing it efficiently. But researchers might do more for social theory and political practice if they were more overt in emphasizing the relative **insignificance** of specifically urban patterns and processes. Successful cities are more dangerous beasts, to be sure – not for what they do to the poor but for the opportunities they provide for the rich to cause damage by drawing themselves further apart from the rest of society.'* (Pahl 2001:881, emphasis in original)

A review of area based projects focused on urban regeneration and social exclusion in four northern European countries notes

'trying to solve the problems of social exclusion within particular areas of cities is bound to fail, since the causes of the problems and the potential solutions to them – whether they are economic and social changes or institutional resources and programmes – lie outside excluded areas' (Parkinson 1998:2).

⁶⁷ Buck 1996:295-6

In a Sydney seminar hosted by NSW Premiers Department on 3rd July 2002, Professor Ian Cole⁶⁸, who is conducting an evaluation of the (area-based) *New Deal for Communities* program for the UK Government, noted that, since 12 Community Development Projects were announced by the Home Office in 1969, successive governments in the UK have been taking an area based approach to concentrations of poverty by focusing on deprived areas. In 2001, following research into social exclusion⁶⁹ by the Social Exclusion Unit of the UK Cabinet Office, the UK Government decided to re-use the same approach, despite the fact, Professor Cole noted, that it demonstrably has not worked over the last 30 years⁷⁰.

Although there has been a redistributive increase in mainstream health and housing funding in the UK⁷¹, the New Deal for Communities program is targeted to 39 areas selected from the 44 most deprived areas in the UK. The only difference this time is that the government is putting in a lot more money (£40 million [\$A125million] over 10 years). As Cole noted, this is one of a suite of area based programs with common themes: competitive bids for funding, a time limit for achieving results, an emphasis on value for money and auditing. Other area based UK programs with these themes include, the Community Empowerment Fund, the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, and Single Regeneration Budget urban renewal projects.

The amount of UK, and in the case of the Single Regeneration Budget, European Economic Community money flowing to social and urban regeneration programs in the UK on the basis of area, with associated hype about increasing accountability and expectations of early visible outcomes, carries a message, namely that this is the right approach. That this is a politically driven response, not one based on social research

⁶⁸ Director of Housing Research, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

⁶⁹ This research, undertaken by public sector agencies in the main, was largely done within the frame of area based, targeted and programmatic responses, rather than examining more systemic or structural causes.

⁷⁰ As evidenced, inter-alia, by the need to establish a Social Exclusion Unit within Cabinet Office.

⁷¹ And very recently, December 2002, the UK Government announced that it would redistribute funding to local government councils on a regional basis so that councils in the north and Midlands would receive a proportionately greater increase in funding than councils in the south and east of England (see Parker 2002)

findings, is not only evident in the repeated experience of failure but also in the literature⁷². But unless planners are conversant with sociological research, there is no realistic channel through which an understanding of the outmoded and essentially short term political nature of these programs might gain a foothold in the profession. Not only that, a lot of money is flowing to planners through these schemes, particularly through the highly funded Single Regeneration Budget projects which are in essence urban renewal through development.

The same can be said about Australia. A large number of public policy responses to social problems are similarly area based⁷³. In NSW, the only socially focused grants program of PlanningNSW, the Area Assistance Scheme, is area based. The NSW Premiers Department runs place management programs in areas selected for their high rates of crime and low rates of employment or similar indices. Nearly all of the NSW grants programs in other portfolios, with which the Area Assistance Scheme was compared at the time of its most recent Triennial Review (Australia Street Company⁷⁴ 2002), are area based, involve competitive bids for funding, a time limit for achieving results, an emphasis on value for money and auditing. These area based grants programs disbursed \$455.771million in 1999/2000 (Australia Street Company 2002).

It is evident that there is considerable mileage for governments in being able to disburse public monies on an area basis, since land is the basis of political constituencies. These grants and other area based approaches⁷⁵ legitimise the idea that solutions can, and should, be found within places by linking this approach to the disbursement of public money and the rhetoric of timely, audited outcomes. The public sanction obscures the inadequacy of the idea. It also obscures the conflict of interest which stands between planners and a critique of an area based approach which might divert the flow of money to another profession or require a very significant rethink about the role that planning should play in social wellbeing. Adding the public sanction to another interest – an understandable preference to stay on familiar territory – adds to ease with which practising planners can avoid the

⁷² See above and below.

⁷³ This includes social welfare programs in Australia such as Families First as well as planning projects and programs, such as the Area Assistance Scheme.

⁷⁴ The writer is a Director of the Australia Street Company

⁷⁵ Such as the NSW Urban Improvement Program

'incontrovertible evidence that the relative distribution of income is the best indicator of the social and physical health of a society. So called "urban" processes, if indeed there be such, are now generally accepted to be largely epiphenomenal and irrelevant. Whilst there is an emerging European consensus that the poor should not be too poor, there is not a similar consensus that the rich should not be too rich....Very recently, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, confirmed that he had no plans to put any more fiscal restraints on the rich. It is clearly considered to be politically unfeasible.' (Pahl 2001:882)

By focusing on community as specific places, planning as a discipline plays its part in providing the justification for governments to respond to society-wide distributive issues with area-based 'solutions' rather than tackling fundamental, systemic causes of social ill-being (Donnison 2001, Macgregor 2001, Cook 2001).

GLOSSING OVER INEQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION

Glossing means '*an incomplete or shorthand*' description of something where it is assumed that the word or phrase will be understood correctly because of the context (Abbott, 1998:53). Glossing has different impacts depending on the number of layers of meaning covered by the shorthand and the effect that the shorthand has in obscuring those meanings. In the case of community, as I have already demonstrated, the word is loaded with nuance, longing and regret and many layers of meaning, and planners use it widely, as an adjective, to gloss over questions of access, distribution and participation. The effect of this particular gloss is an illusion of oneness, unity and similarity.

In planning documents 'the community' can be used to mean everyone, for example all of the people in a place:

A Local Plan is 'a single plan for a local area, coordinating actions and containing all land use controls for a site...drawn up by the council in consultation with the community' (DUAP 2001:21)

or it is sometimes used in the sense 'everyone else (in the place) we haven't mentioned', the catch-all

'Regional Strategy: A single strategy providing clear direction and coordinating regional policies and actions...a whole-of-government, place based strategy, involving state and local government, business and the community' (DUAP 2001:6).

The document these examples were taken from does refer to its intention to *'better involve the community and key interest groups, including those that are often marginalised: older people, young people, and ethnic and indigenous communities'* (DUAP 2001:7). However, in planning documents generally, 'the community' is usually used in the singular as a shorthand for all those people who are too numerous to mention and whose diversity it is too difficult to capture in a single sentence.

Using a loaded term as shorthand, as the convenient catchall, is a high risk strategy when what is being omitted is not readily understood. In the case of a profession which has traditionally had units of land rather than the people and the structure and relationships of groups as its primary focus, the shorthand community is not a quick reference to something which any planner can find described in more detail somewhere else. In planning, as I have shown, the community is usually simply the people who live in a territory. As such the term glosses their diversity and suggests that for many planning purposes, they can be treated as a unit.

Since the passage of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act in 1976, and various subsequent amendments, the concepts of direct and indirect discrimination in the allocation of scarce resources such as jobs, accommodation, access to leisure and other facilities has been taken on board by public and private employers in NSW, and in regard to social planning, by local government authorities. In the literature on employment discrimination it is well established that the presence of discrimination can be demonstrated either by identifying directly discriminatory requirements or actions or by examining the pattern of outcomes in a series of employment decisions such as selection decisions (Ziller 1980). Pattern analysis has been used in various jurisdictions to demonstrate that various groups in the qualified workforce are not hired in proportion to their availability, for example.

The profession of town planning has taken aspects of these concepts on board in regard to some of the physical requirements of specific target groups. These have been provided for in some basic physical ways:

wheelchair/pram access, toilets, childcare centres and, less frequently, buildings for specific target groups such as Aboriginal community centres. These target groups have also appeared, as above, in lists of those people who are to be consulted. Despite a long history of planners being concerned about the disempowered position of the poor vis-à-vis city hall (Goodman 1972, Gans 1968, 1991, Harvey 1973) the profession has only advanced to the point of advocacy and consultation processes in assessing most social impacts (Burdge 2002:7).

This is not the same thing, however, as dealing with classism, sexism or racism *in planning*, that is, dealing with systems of ideas or practices in planning which treat one group more favourably than another on grounds which are not relevant to the planning decision. This is such an unexplored area that almost no one has written about it (Heikkila 2001, Kawachi 2002).

However, it is possible to think of patterns of outcomes which invite investigation as to whether a directly or indirectly discriminatory planning policy or practice has contributed - for example, a territory/place where people are residentially segregated by income or race. In searching for any discriminatory practices in operation one might start by looking at the specifications in zoning instruments, and the assumptions behind the distribution of facilities or policies governing publicly owned land. Just such a painstaking approach was needed to find and address a raft of directly and indirectly discriminatory employment practices in the 1980s in NSW Government departments and other statutory bodies.

As a somewhat weary former equal employment opportunity practitioner⁷⁶ I can hear a faint screeching in the background, something about how you can't constrain the market – as indeed a student respondent to one of my questionnaires confidently asserted. The fact is however, that planning already constrains the property market. The point is to examine the assumptions behind what the profession believes can and cannot be constrained. Assumptions, like ideologies, need to come out for an airing on a regular basis. In the case of jobs, it was unthinkable in the early 1980s to propose to constrain a department head's right to hire whomever she wanted. By the end of the 1980s it was unacceptable

⁷⁶ The writer was Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, a statutory appointment to the NSW Government, from 1980-88.

not to⁷⁷. The employment sector also moved beyond the idea that discrimination was necessarily a viciously intentional act to recognising that, frequently, an out of date set of assumptions were at work. There is no doubt that similar assumptions are there in planning practice for the looking.

However, glossing with 'the community' makes this extremely unlikely to happen. Community is after all a '*warmly persuasive word*' which '*never seems to be used unfavourably*' (Williams 1976), what could it possibly have to do with discrimination?

NARROWING THE CONCEPTUAL FIELD

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that a sociological definition of community in terms of having things in common is less loaded than planners Blakely and Snyder's idea of sharing. I now suggest that one way for planners to move forward from their traditional nexus of territory and community, with its inherent pitfalls, is to examine sociologists' ideas of communities as a social systems. Or to put it another way, the problem seems to be that planning, having land as the parchment on which it inscribes, has made geographic boundaries the framework for identifying and responding to social issues affected by planning. This has resulted in a gratuitous leap from land use to place-based strategies for social wellbeing.

In addition to borrowing from the conceptual toolkit of the employment practitioners, planners could try out the application of some other sociological concepts to planning policy and practice. For example, there is a well established school of sociological thought which sees social relationships in societies in terms of social structures, systems and networks:

'the immediate social environment of urban families is best considered not as the local area in which they live, but rather as the network of actual social relationships they maintained,

⁷⁷ The NSW Public Service Act in force at the time required selection on merit and discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, marital status and disability had been defined by and partly tested under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act.

regardless of whether these are confined to the local area or run beyond its boundaries'.(Bott 1957:99)

'a structure of interaction, not a structure of stone, steel, cement and asphalt, etc'.(Martindale 1958:29)

This approach would allow planners to treat places as receptacles for only parts of social systems and networks and consider the implications of the role of these receptacles in status systems. It would also assist planners avoid the whole issue of contrasting the *'ethical character of small local communities with that of the urban and organizational quality of the total society'* (Gusfield, 1975:103).

The sociology of networks and social systems has a venerable history (Young and Willmott 1957, Parsons 1960, and many others) and a very contemporary application:

'Community, like computers, has become networked. Although community was once synonymous with densely knit, bounded neighborhood groups, it is now seen as a less bounded social network of relationships that provide sociability support, information, and a sense of belonging. These communities are partial (people cycle through interactions with multiple sets of others) and ramify through space [a low proportion of community members in the developed world are neighbors⁷⁸]. Where once people interacted door-to-door in villages (subject to public support and social control), they now interact household-to-household and person to person.'

and

'the proliferation of computer networks has facilitated a de-emphasis on group solidarities at work and in the community and afforded a turn to networked societies that are loosely bounded and sparsely knit.

and

'the internet increases people's social capital, increasing contact with friends and relatives who live nearby and far away'(Wellman 2001)

⁷⁸ Wellman 1999

Another useful concept is social capital. It too had its antecedents in the thinking of a practical reformer - this time a state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, L.J. Hanifan, in 1916 (Putnam 2000:19).

Social capital is a concept based on the idea that *'networks of community engagement foster sturdy norms of reciprocity'* and refers to *'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'* (Putnam 2000:19 and 20) The word capital contains the idea of having something valuable in store:

'Social capital commonly refers to the stocks of social trust, norms, and networks that people can draw upon in order to solve common problems. (Lang and Hornburg 1997)

But unlike the fuzzy ideas surrounding 'the village' and 'the community'

"The many forms of social capital can be viewed along at least six dimensions: (1) formality – there are both formal and informal types of civic engagement⁷⁹; (2) purpose – some institutions are public-regarding, some are private-regarding; (3) bridging – bonds of trust and reciprocity can bridge cleavages in society or, conversely, bring like-minded or like-ethnic individuals together; (4) immediacy – trust may stem from immediate, face to face connections or generalized, anonymous bonds; (5) strandedness/intensity – at one end of this spectrum are durable, intense, and multi-stranded networks (i.e., people know each other through multiple, overlapping networks), at the other are the weaker, more fleeting bonds that might be created from a day of volunteering together; and (6) social location -- neighborhood ties represent the place-based end of the social capital spectrum, while Internet groups represent the function-based end. (Putnam 1998)

These six dimensions open up a much more differentiated concept. Social capital is not just an asset of small places but of whole societies. It is activated by the actions of strangers as well as people you know, by institutional arrangements as well as casual encounters and it is not place dependent. Discussion about social capital also includes the related idea of civic infrastructure

⁷⁹ elsewhere Putnam defines civic engagement in terms of involvement in community activities and participating in democratic processes (Putnam 2000 Chapter 1 and 2)

'Civic infrastructure refers to the network that exists among local groups such as community development corporations (CDCs), foundations, other nonprofits, local governments, public housing authorities, businesses, and voluntary associations. Even a single well-placed individual within a bridge-building organization can make a difference in the life of a community. Civic infrastructure is the social equivalent of physical infrastructure. The web of affiliations among community groups is less tangible than a physical bridge but may prove no less important to the life of a city. Civic infrastructure can be gauged by understanding the links between community groups such as CDCs. Social network analysis can also reveal which are the likely bridge-building organizations within a given community and who inside these organizations may serve in the role of intermediary.'(Putnam 1998)

Social capital and civic infrastructure add texture and detail to the concepts of interest and attachment communities as well as communities of territory and provide ways in which aspects of these communities can be documented and described. For example, studies of social capital sometimes measure instances of generalised reciprocity (Temkin and Rohe 1998) and there are a number of regular surveys in England, and America which measure levels of generalised trust, i.e. trust in strangers⁸⁰. These show a consistent decline in levels of generalised trust since the mid 1960s (Putnam 2000, Park et al 2002) and a number of other studies have suggested that this is linked to increased relative social and economic inequality in western developed nations (Kawachi et al 1997, Hsieh et al 1993, Wilkinson et al 1998, Wilkinson 2002). This is important information for planners to apply not just at the neighbourhood level, but across regions, metropolitan areas and the state.

The other key idea contained in social capital theory is that social capital, the stock of trust and willingness to engage in mutual reciprocity that a society holds, is a public good, held in common by all members of a society. As a public good, social capital contrasts with most physical and economic capital, with which planners are frequently dealing. The concept offers planners a way of thinking about a publicly owned form of

⁸⁰ eg the General Social Survey (US) and British Social Attitudes.

capital which cannot be traded, is not locked up inside 'gated communities' and is responsive to public policy.

Social network analysis and social capital theory offer planners a swag of useful concepts that could be particularly helpful in taking the discipline away from its Victorian social origins and into the 21st century.

Although planners deal with land use, they do not have to approach social issues in terms of territory. This realisation is well established among urban sociologists who have been questioning the validity of treating locality as '*the empirical domain of the urban sociologist*' and the best unit of analysis by which to understand urban processes for at least the last twenty years (Flanagan 1993:162-3), not taking into account the much earlier stand on this issue by Ruth Glass in 1971 (Milicevic 2001:769).

Instead of beginning with the place and what it does or does not contain, planners could begin with a sound understanding of social issues – an understanding based in a capacity to think discursively using sociological concepts and frameworks. Well resourced with this intellectual capital, they could then inquire what the contribution of planning should be to dealing with these issues either locally, or in the region or in the metropolis. Instead of only searching for place-based, physical answers (buildings, transport systems, employment zones) to social questions, planners could be asking what *their* role is in civic infrastructure development or in relative social inequality. It may be a small role. It may be an indirect role, or it may be a major role, but at present, for the most part, my research shows planners are not asking these questions.

* * *

In this chapter I have shown planners' preference for defining community in terms of territory and speculated that their reliance on community as a place based idea has led to

- a simplistic and unrealistic treatment of communities of attachment and interest,
- over-reliance on locality based approaches to social wellbeing and to solving social problems,

- a general tendency not to use well developed analytical concepts in relevant disciplines to inquire into the pattern of social impacts of planning decisions, or to
- look for a new range of options for dealing with social issues through planning, and
- that they are located in a conflict of interest position in regard to acknowledging and dealing with the current approach.

I have also shown that planners' liberal use of community as an adjective has added to these effects by permitting a wide range of relevant planning matters to be glossed by a *'warmly persuasive word'*.

I have suggested that by acquiring a vocabulary of sociological concepts and taking on board some of the conceptual tools of trade of anti-discrimination practitioners, planners would find that they had more options and a richer understanding of the social wellbeing they are keen to influence.

What could be simpler – a short course in sociology for planners! But such a solution is too simplistic. As Ruth Glass discovered, it is not enough to establish a Committee on Urban and Rural Sociology, as part of the International Sociological Association in an attempt to bring sociological enlightenment to town planning. By 1971 a new group of young urban sociologists had succeeded in establishing a counter-committee: the Research Committee on the Sociology of Urban and Regional Development which constituted an

'internal struggle for institutional recognition of radical urban sociologists. For example, the spatial aspects of social phenomena, which had been neglected by the existing Committee, was a unifying conception for the members of the new generation, as Edmond Preteceille testified: "I think it was an underlying, common statement that space is important, both in the structuring of economic and political relations and in the structuring of the way of production etc"'. (Milicevic 2001:768)

That is, when young, 'radical' urban sociologists sought their place among the existing sociological institutions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they resurrected spatial aspects of social phenomena, as well as erecting new organisational arrangements through which they could locate themselves institutionally (Milicevic op. cit.). They are of interest

here not only because they took urban sociology back to place and space for a while⁸¹, but also because their strategy represents one of the mechanisms by which a new group, especially a younger group, secures its position in any profession.

Planners, like sociologists have interests. Earlier in this chapter I pointed out the strong financial interests which planners have in cooperating with a view that social problems and social wellbeing are amenable to area based solutions. These financial interests have not merely to do with obtaining money for projects, but also, given that the financial endorsement represents strong political interests elsewhere, with keeping their jobs. These are not small interests and need to be taken as seriously as the poor vocabulary of planners' *'home-made sociology* (Glass 1959:401-2)'.

As well, there will be other interests of planners which serve to maintain various parts of the status quo. In the next chapter I examine the how *'home-made sociology*' and the interests of planners have coincided with community development theory and practice, community consultation processes and principles of ecologically sustainable development.

POSTSCRIPT

The idea of village is alive and well. As this thesis is being completed in July 2004, the chairman of the City of Sydney's planning development and transport committee is quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald in regard to planning rules regulating sex shops and convenience stores:

'If we want to create that sense of village and place...we've got to try and use what little resources we've got' (Dick 2004)

⁸¹ Although not for long, as Flanagan (1993) notes.

6: THE CONTINUING POOR COUSIN STATUS OF SOCIAL ISSUES

So far I have argued that the planning profession was founded in some nostalgic backward glances to neighbourhoods of old, and I have noted that some social theorists were every bit as concerned with the breakdown in social order as with gardens and village greens. But it can also be argued that planning was founded in a genuine and sympathetic concern for the social conditions of the industrial poor and that this is fundamentally a concern with social justice. Further, the history of planning includes a sustained interest in social justice (Goodman 1972, Gans 1968 and 1991, Sandercock 1998, Pahl 2001 and so on).

But it appears that the thread of sustained interest in social justice has occurred in a profession apparently also in the grip of nostalgia and the limits of a land use approach to social issues. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the evidence that people's important interest and attachment networks or relationships are not co-located with their place of residence has been accumulating for decades. But to take this on board would mean hard work. As Wellman notes

'The complex and specialized nature of personal communities means that these are fragmented networks. People must actively maintain each supportive relationship rather than relying on solidary communities to do their maintenance work'. (Wellman 1998 cited in Phillipson et al 1999)

While Wellman is referring here to individual work, his observation has direct implications for the work of planners. If planners believe they can set up solidary communities through spatial design (for example neighbourhoods in which solidary relationships flourish because of narrow streets, front porches and short walks to shops and transport), there is less need for them to undertake the detailed and innovative work required to provide the structures and systems that will assist people to 'do their maintenance work' in a world characterised by spatially fragmented networks.

Rising to that challenge would mean dealing with issues of social relativity, making foresighted telecommunications provision⁸² and abandoning traditional designs of many kinds of physical spaces on the grounds that to maintain their usefulness they need, above all, to contain spaces whose uses are not inexorably pre-determined⁸³ - just to give a few examples.

The origins of planning, the physical design response to social issues, is embedded in the profession. Arguably, as Putnam (1993) (and our mothers) have pointed out, how things start is how they go on. But it is remarkable that more than a century later the fragmentation of social networks, poverty and other social ills such as poor housing and lack of transport are still being addressed largely in physical terms by the planning profession. Glass wanted planners in the 1960s to take sociology on board, but some 43 years later *'a wide range of evidence suggests that consideration of the distribution of social welfare is marginal or absent' in planning and indeed that social town planning is at the margins of the profession* (Thomas 1999:15). This is important if the primary purposes of planning are social.

'First, the object of town planning, at any rate as it has been (since 1947) and currently is constituted in the United Kingdom is primarily the physical environment. But second, the purpose of town planning is necessarily social – 'social', that is, in the sense that the purpose of town planning is the maintenance and enhancement of human welfare. To put this another way, the means of town planning are primarily physical but its ends are social.' (Taylor 1999: 43)

In this chapter I discuss three areas of thinking and practice which have been taken on board by planners and show that while all three appear to be relevant to issues of community building, none challenge the physical design response to the fragmentation of social networks. Rather, I argue, they permit this response to continue. The three areas are community development theory and practice, community consultation and 'engagement' processes and principles of ecologically sustainable development.

⁸² Numerous expensive new apartment buildings constructed within the last 8 years in Sydney do not have broadband cabling or wireless access (Manktelow, Nancy 2003)

⁸³ A mere glance at most house plans tells the tale, they are marked out in terms of predetermined uses: bedroom, living room dining room etc.

1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In Australia community development theory flourished in the 1970s and 1980s (see especially Thorpe and Petruchenia 1985) and was summed up by Susan Kenny in 1994 who tried to synthesise *'Marxism, feminism, social movement theory and some aspects of liberal theory and interactionist and postmodernist theory'* (Kenny 1994:56) into a practical handbook for community development practitioners. Kenny believed that community development work is strongly based in the idea of redistribution of power.

'Community development differs from traditional service professions in its commitment to develop lasting structures which help people collectively to identify and meet their own needs. Thus, in everyday work, a community development worker's goal is to empower the ordinary people, to overcome isolation, and to ensure that real choices are available. Workers maintain profound respect for the legitimacy of the view points of ordinary people. They identify with the interests of the people they are working with, and learn from them. They approach issues in a collaborative way, and refuse to take on the role of an expert who provides solutions.'

'People must have control over knowledge and information, social relationships, decision-making and their own resources. Communities must be able to do things in their own way. While a community development worker's job is to work with communities to determine goals, issues and strategies, the ultimate power to accept or reject these lies with the community members. In the final analysis it must be the community's views or interests which prevail.'

*'Community development rests on the premise that if powerless communities are to have a better life, the members must be able to have real choices in their lives. Structures and processes should be developed whereby ordinary people can take **collective responsibility** for, and control of, the way in which their lives are organised. They should be able to determine the natures of their work, and what is produced. Structures are needed so that they can live in harmony with each other and with all life...' (Kenny 1994: 19-20, emphasis in original).*

Kenny's handbook has influenced a generation of community development workers⁸⁴ and many practising planners, as I noted in my Introductory Story, have relied on community development as the mechanism which should provide social outcomes in new suburbs and developments.

However, there are a number of problems with community development theory and practice. First **it requires a saint**, in fact an extraordinarily skilled saint, who is able to manage

'some of the elements that make community development so demanding and challenging. Not only does it rest on intellectual understandings of the political, social and economic contexts, but

- *it also requires a grasp of the great wealth of theories and the links between theory and practice.*
- *It requires a very high level of skills to effectively carry out its practices.*
- *It requires an approach to life which is based on the view that people's lives are inextricably interrelated, so that the interests of each person are tied up with the interests of others.*
- *It emphasises the need for humility, flexibility and creativity in human endeavour.*
- *It requires a commitment to the resourcing and overall empowerment of human beings so that they have increased control over their own lives.*
- *It requires dedication.*
- *It requires facing up to many dilemmas in its practice.*
- *It often requires working in a political and economic environment hostile to the idea of community development.* (Kenny 1994:Introduction XV)

In terms of sheer practicality, it is very difficult to find saints anywhere, but in an employment market that tends to pay on the basis of the perceived value of skills, community development work is so little valued that its rates of pay are invariably low. While it is well known that the duty statement for saints is never commensurate with their remuneration, the

⁸⁴ Personal communication, Jenny Onyx, member of academic staff at the University of Technology, Sydney in 2002.

fact is that good community development workers are always leaving for better paid jobs⁸⁵. Nonetheless many councils employ community development workers and keep replacing them as they move on.

The second major problem with community development theory is that **it appears to sanction, and/or is used to sanction, postponement** of both planning and delivery. This is because it elevates post-development process above pre-development provision, or at the least, requires process to precede provision. This can especially be seen in the relationship between community development workers and town planners.

Planners' relationship with community development workers is usually one of handover. The new suburb/urban regeneration area is developed and as the residents start to move in, the planner hands the territory (suburb) over to the community development worker whose job it is to facilitate the development of community (social networks and self help groups) and hold meetings to determine what facilities and services are wanted in that territory (place or suburb). This is the practice at Liverpool and Camden Councils in South West Sydney, for example. The problems with this approach to community building are numerous. It assumes that

- people who have new territory in common (the new suburb or neighbourhood) will also quickly acquire (through the efforts of the worker) interests in common and attachments within the new territory *and* that these can quickly form the basis for well informed, majority decisions about a desired future for the territory,
- there is in reality some inexpensive⁸⁶ method by which the spread of requirements that residents have can be identified and then ranked in priority order,
- the residents will be able to take part in this prioritisation having regard to the common good of everyone in the territory rather than merely the good of the people in the room

⁸⁵ I have found this to be the case both as a local government manager of community services and in 7 years consulting work to councils across NSW.

⁸⁶The only place where I have come across a new suburb where there was a substantial budget for community development work of this sort is in the areas developed in the 1970s in Albury under the then Department of Urban and Regional Development's decentralisation scheme. Even so methods which would be regarded as valid, such as a well run survey with many options and preference measures, would be beyond any such budget.

- people will defer their need for various services in a territory until the social systems can be developed that will deliver the demand for, and relative consensus about, service delivery needs,
- when local requirements have been identified some agency will actually deliver the service or facility in the territory, or
- the community development worker will be able not only to facilitate the discovery of the prioritised wishes of new local residents but also apply leverage to the local council, and/or other agencies to deliver what is sought.

Even where community workers are engaged to work in established neighbourhoods and suburbs, these are the problems that are built into the structure of their jobs. I am not asserting that there is no place for stitching together social fabric '*one favour at a time*' (Seyfang 2001). In fact a good case could be made for far better remuneration and higher standing for the people who do this intricate and difficult work. However, the practical experience in the territories where most community development workers are employed - new suburbs, low income suburbs - is that they provide face to face contact on behalf of agencies such as councils, and various government departments, which are slow to provide the facilities needed, indeed may have no intention of actually committing funds to the area for quite some time. PlanningNSW's \$10 million annual expenditure on the Area Assistance Scheme is based on this fact (Australia Street Company 2002).

The theory of community development practice falls down on this issue. While the community development worker may be practising humility and the empowerment of others, the fact is that these workers are among the least powerful of any council worker. They *may* be refraining from imposing their own ideas, but, unlike Gans' or Goodman's planners, they themselves have no power to transfer to local residents or to exercise on behalf of local residents. It is a false transaction. Kenny notes that the role of the community development worker may be to be '*a shrill or rowdy trumpet*' (Kenny 1994:258) and that community development '*challenges, provokes, presents unpalatable information, and even disturbs*' (Kenny 1994:21), but in reality a council employee can only engage in so much

revolutionary activity⁸⁷. After a while too much revolution has the same effect as too little pay. The worker moves on.

A third problem with community development theory is that it is not set up in a way which conveys any expectation that planners will respond to these shortcomings. Rather, community development theory **has endorsed and legitimised planners' propensity to think that social issues are someone else's responsibility**. The presence of community development workers has allowed planners to close their involvement in a territory, especially a new release area, with a great deal of unfinished business, business which should have been attended to not only at the planning stage, but early in the planning process. None of this is helped by the low status of community workers, nor their emphasis on participatory decision making processes in the economic efficiency and market driven corporate cultures of most councils. In addition, most of what they ask for represents a clear financial cost while the financial benefits are not as apparent (Roughley 1999:271-2).

The unfinished business tends to include making the early arrangements or thinking through the early requirements that will facilitate such things as

- including sites for community care facilities in plans for new suburbs (Gleeson and Memon 1996)
- ensuring bus routes can adequately service the new area in the early years (eg on a flexible/at call basis⁸⁸), and more generally dealing with upfront provision of infrastructure (Forsyth 1999)
- optimising future flexibility in the design and fit out of community centres (frequently left as a shell with up to date security but without the IT installation that virtually any organisation or activity will require,⁸⁹ and without options for wet areas, without sound insulation needed for a range of youth or generally noisy activities and so on)
- creating areas of socio-economic mix rather than socio-economically differentiated suburbs⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Based on 10 years of working in, and consulting to, the local government sector.

⁸⁸ For example, it usually falls to community transport officers to try to develop these arrangements by persuasion and cajoling.

⁸⁹ The community centre at Stanhope Park in Blacktown, NSW is but one example.

⁹⁰ At four of the five councils where I did my research, planners referred to recently developed suburbs in their areas as socio-economic entities – X suburb is less well off than

- managing new area development or urban infill/increase in density taking account of the thresholds required by health and educational services to provide new or upgraded services, so as to create the population densities required for increased service provision
- giving the same priority to health and welfare services as is given to sport⁹¹,
- considering the symbolic messages contained in development priorities (sport is more important than arts is a frequent message – it can readily be seen in the distribution of facilities in Blacktown, for example, which, however, has a large Aboriginal population which engages in art for income generation, as well as for cultural identity and self esteem.)
- putting in place the mechanisms which new residents can use to bring their urgent needs to the attention of the relevant agency such as council⁹².

A fourth problem is that the whole approach of devolving social infrastructure decisions to new residents not only **puts off big cost items** while **allowing privately funded developments to get priority**, including pride of place, in new town centres⁹³, it also **makes these decisions immediately subject to ‘nimby’⁹⁴ preferences**. The things people tend not to want in their backyard are anything which they think may devalue their property, such as, people who are unlike them. Thus handing over part of planning to community development processes not only closes off some important options (such as putting the youth centre where the developer proposes to construct a pub, or putting the school, childcare centre and community health centre all next to the library and putting the hotel in a less central place), but also feeds opportunities for racism and classism. Just because residents are consulted does not mean that residents will not put forward covertly exclusionary, racist or classist proposals. In fact, a great deal of community activism is in the

Y suburb / more affluent people will live in Y and less affluent people will live in X / as people move up they move from X to Y and so on

⁹¹ There is a propensity among planners to be able to provide sporting facilities, i.e. not just the fields, up front as the development goes in but, with the occasional exception of childcare and pre-schools, not the facilities which will directly support social wellbeing.

⁹² Planners tend to shy away from setting up precinct/progress/local self help committees. Often this is at the urging of other council staff who don't want to have to deal with yet more local representatives (Personal experience working in and with councils).

⁹³ In Shellharbour new town centre, for example, land uses in the centre of the new main street will comprise a hotel, cinema and library. A new youth centre has already been constructed well outside this envelope conveying both a message (please stay out of sight) and an opportunity (to be unobserved) to young people

⁹⁴ 'Not in my back yard'

cause of maintaining various forms of social exclusion (Monbiot 2002; Berke 2002). Recently, for example, the Sydney Morning Herald reported, in regard to a proposal to build a Muslim prayer centre in Baulkham Hills: *'Council and local residents say the proposal will change the village's character and therefore breaches planning laws'* (O'Rourke 2003)

Planning is a public activity the purpose of which is to intervene in self interest and establish controls and other parameters in advance so that outcomes which are in the longterm public interest can be facilitated. On this basis reducing racism and classism is within the remit of land use planning. However, community development is a post-hoc and ineffective planning tool. It takes place after the horse has bolted. All the best process in the world will not fix the empty content of the horse-less stable.

2 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The strong argument for community consultation is that it provides ways for local knowledge and a diversity of stakeholder interests to be taken into account in a planning proposal. Well conducted, community consultation processes prevent mistakes and improve outcomes. As well consultation can bring forward the start of community development processes by consulting with likely new residents and existing adjacent residents where a new area is to be developed.

Community consultation is seen as a safeguard against narrow perceptions and the, possibly unwitting, biases of the planning professional.

'The planner sees especially those parts of the potential environment that are:

- i *Amenable to his or her manipulation, that is, those over which he or she has professional control.*
- ii *Related to his or her training. Planners are concerned with the technical aspects of the potential environment, whether or not these are relevant to its use.*
- iii *Visible to his or her perspective which is basically that of the surveyor or spectator, and sometimes the professional tourist.*

Planners see an environment as it appears on the map or the blueprint; they look it over again in initial phases of construction and when it is completed. But unless the environment is planned for the neighbourhood in which the planner lives, he or she sees it only fleetingly and does not use it. While he or she may have ideas on how it ought to be used, the planner does not see it as do the people who live with it.' (Gans 1991:27)

And planners have proposed that the '*persistent habit of privileging spatial forms over social process*' be dealt with by better processes:

'A utopianism of process looks very different from a utopianism of spatial form. The problem is then to enlist in the struggle to advance a more socially just, politically emancipatory, and ecologically sane mix of spatio-temporal production processes...' (Harvey 1997:69)

The importance of consulting the community has received mainstream endorsement:

'I think the challenge for the future will be how do we engage the community in a meaningful way in planning the future of the city' Garry Prattley Keynote address to the Annual General Meeting of the Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, 7 March 2002, unpublished.

In 2001 PlanningNSW published a discussion document setting out principles and procedures for '*achieving better community consultation*' (Carson and Gelber 2001:.) This document sets a high standard for consultative processes and addresses a number of the difficulties cited in regard to community development practice. In particular, it recommends a four stage consultation process that involves three groups of actors:

- a group '*which shares knowledge based on common sense or personal experience*' and is randomly determined or selected – this group is often referred to colloquially as the community and might comprise whoever shows up to a workshop or a deliberately random selection technique might be used eg to issue invitations
- a social advocacy group which holds '*technical expertise or specialist knowledge*', and
- a group which holds '*knowledge derived from social interests and advocacy*'. (Carson and Gelber 2001:13-15)

The Carson and Gelber model deals with 'nimby' preferences and with know-it-all-professionals by

- cushioning specialist knowledge '*between two stages of consultation involving randomly selected citizens*' (Carson and Gelber 2001:14) and by
- utilising a social advocacy group at the testing stage as a way of ensuring that proposals have not overlooked the specific interests of some people, eg. cultural minority group members.

However, over and above these three groups and four stages, the report repeatedly suggests that '*the community as a whole*' or '*the entire community*' has an opportunity to provide input or comment which requires a public information process which may be augmented by meetings, conferences, forums, charrettes etc. The repeated going back to the community, the integration of specialists and advocates, and the two accountability steps: testing and evaluation, go a long way to increasing the likelihood that the outcome of planning process with such interwoven and extended consultation will deliver the holy grail of planning: a proposed plan that everyone wants and agrees to, and which meets other criteria such as long term interests of public good.

PlanningNSW has piloted this kind of process in its Living Centres projects⁹⁵, for example as part of the planning process for the Twofold Bay and Hinterlands Strategic Plan. At Twofold Bay, the planning process has utilised a 2-day Colloquium, a local Steering Group, a Reference Group, six community working groups preparing sections of a Community Discussion Paper, a photographer and an exhibition of photographs of local people and places, an education process, a formative evaluation, and the 3 year presence of a team of three people in the town of Eden to carry the project through. At the time of writing the project is not quite complete. However, even if local residents and stakeholders have been able to consolidate their issues and interests into a draft strategic plan to which they all agree, theirs is not the forum at which competing interests will be finally put to the test and resolved. The Carson and Gelber report puts it this way

⁹⁵ There were 4 Living Centre projects which ran from July 2000 – June 30 2003 in Eden and Bombala, Kembla Grange at Wollongong, the Northern Rivers Region and the Western Riverina of NSW

'It is important to remember that community consultation neither can nor should in any way replace the appropriate process of decision-making by elected, and accountable, public representatives...However, community consultation can help elected officials to understand and to incorporate public preferences and concerns into their decision-making. Community consultation should not replace a democratic, electoral process; it should be an integral part of it.'(Carson and Gelber 2001.: 6-7)

And herein lies the nub of the problem. The elaborate 4-step consultation model only takes participants as far as

*'Step 4: Evaluation
Information is provided to the entire community affected by the decision.'* (Carson and Gelber 2001:17)

and the process has only delivered a recommendation, not the final planning decisions. In other words, while consultation may provide valuable information and help to keep bureaucrats or elected representatives honest, it does not represent actual empowerment.

Public awareness of this has been highly evident in the Twofold Bay and similar PlanningNSW Living Centre projects all of which have encountered sustained scepticism among local residents about whether their planning proposals will be endorsed by either PlanningNSW or the NSW Minister for Planning. In some places high levels of scepticism have threatened to de-rail the consultation processes as people wonder why they are putting in so much unpaid effort for an uncertain outcome⁹⁶. To change this scepticism, planning practitioners would have to be able to show, over a period of time, a strong correlation between sustained and serious community input and the final planning decision, and/or, be able to point to some significant examples where long term consultative processes resulted in strategic planning outcomes with which the majority of the participants concurred⁹⁷. To achieve these outcomes, consultation would need to be a discursive, educative and iterative process not just a feedback gathering mechanism – i.e. more than what is usually regarded

⁹⁶ The author conducted a formative evaluation of each Living Centre project for PlanningNSW

⁹⁷ for example the Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management processes which accompanied the preparation of the Special Areas Strategic Plan of Management in 1998.

as consultation. It would require for each and every project, a substantial budget.

In reality in many planning projects, the consultative group is a tiny proportion of the local residential/stakeholder population, usually some 30-50 individuals in populations of thousands. Even where these individuals meet for 3 or 4 hours a month – a substantial time commitment – their deliberations are *of necessity* framed by the kind and quality of inputs provided by various specialists. Even were the 30-50 individuals themselves across all the issues required to be considered in formulating a regional or sub-regional plan (an unlikely proposition in itself), the vast majority of the population is not and can never be.

In effect then, planning projects like the NSW Living Centres projects have added a ‘third arm’ to the usual team of planners and consultants. The third arm is a selected (sometimes self-selected) group of local residents and business people. This third arm often adds considerable value by providing otherwise unarticulated points of view and by insisting on a change of priorities. But the people involved are at best notionally representative and they are not disinterested (having been selected / selected themselves to represent an interest). Once they have joined the ‘third arm’ they also acquire interests in their membership of the group. Further, citizens, residents and other stakeholders have no greater hold on integrity than any other party.

Public participation is treated, in theoretical texts and public sector documents alike, as if it were a safeguard against poor planning practice, overweening bureaucracy or corruption through the influence of vested interests. But public participation is a weak and limited safeguard.

‘very occasionally scrutiny from the grass-roots – from “the toad beneath the harrow” will lead the bureaucracy to pay more attention to the adequacy and relevance of its data and to the logic of its factual and social-philosophical arguments. Democracy does not mean that an active citizenry will always involve itself in community affairs. But, ...when it does so the public has a weapon, a frail and insubstantial weapon, but a weapon nevertheless, with which it can face the administration.’ (Dennis 1972:281)

If *in practice* the toad rarely manages to halt or divert the harrow, the risk is that these processes simply continue to serve the usual sets of interests (Jones 2003) and ignore another usual set.

This leads to an additional problem relevant to the discussion in this thesis. Extensive participation from the general public and key stakeholders may sway outcomes from time to time but have no impact on what planners regard as legitimate planning matters and what they regard as outside their domain to be taken up by other professionals, mostly after they have finished. People participating in consultation processes with planners have an uphill battle if they are trying to both

- influence outcomes in traditional planning matters, and
- extend the traditional brief of planners in regard to a new agenda for social wellbeing in a territory (one area or place).

To achieve the latter, consultation participants would have to challenge not merely the interests of stakeholders in other sectors but also the understandable interests which planners have in keeping their professional boundaries where they feel comfortable with them.

One of the reasons this double agenda is so difficult is that it is frequently left to residents to act as the social stakeholders. The rationale is

'people are humans and thus social, so if we consult the community through public involvement we have taken care of social impacts' (Burdge 2002:7)

As such the social stakeholders have less insider status than the economic and environmental stakeholders – both because they are not social policy specialists and because of the pattern of relative priorities within which the profession of planning tends to operate.

In addition, local residents are not necessarily the best people to act as stakeholders for long term public interest in the common social good. Residents are not necessarily well informed on broad social policy issues and much resident participation *'can be characterized as selfish, short sighted, segregated, sophisticated and scared'* (Hester 1996:47 quoted in Berke 2002) and focused on stopping things rather than solving problems and participating for the common good. All these factors make it difficult

and unlikely that consultation processes can and will be used to extend the focus of planning from physical and spatial issues.

The problem with the reliance on consultation processes to improve planning outcomes is *'the implicit and tenuous assumption that procedural justice will automatically bring about substantive justice'* (Cobb and Rixford 1998:22). Most of the time procedural justice does *'little to change prevailing practices'* (Cobb and Rixford 1998:22). As a result it enables the continuation of the status quo and is a distraction from the important issue of content (Abu-Lughod 1998).

3 ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

I have already referred to the role which urban design plays as an integral part of many planning departments and local councils. Urban design and architecture, from which it largely springs, have had a long association with town and country planning and urban and regional planning. Since the 1970s, however, these planning departments and local councils have been employing planners for the natural environment.

In NSW this co-location of town planning with the natural sciences dates from the initial location of environmental responsibilities in the 1960s within the State Planning Authority of NSW, the subsequent establishment of the NSW Planning and Environment Commission in 1974 and the NSW Department of Environment and Planning in 1980. Not until 1992 was the NSW Environmental Protection Authority established as a separate body while the planning department became the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, then PlanningNSW⁹⁸ in 2001 and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources in 2003⁹⁹.

As a result of this development of environmental protection from within the state planning agency for NSW, a number of local councils have employed natural scientists – people specialising in retaining the integrity

⁹⁸ This sequence of events was identified by reviewing the annual reports of the NSW state planning agency from the 1950s to 2002.

⁹⁹ Incorporating the former Department of Land and Water Conservation, and PlanningNSW with the Infrastructure Coordination Unit from the Premiers Department and the Strategic Planning Team from the Ministry of Transport – thereby placing planning firmly in a land use and major infrastructure frame of reference – still no social impact unit

of bushland, rivers, coastal environments and so on – in, or working closely with, their planning departments. Over time, in response to pressure from heritage groups and Aboriginal organisations, cultural heritage and archaeological elements have been added to the list of things to be protected and/or conserved in the physical environment and, slowly, councils have been taking on staff in these specialities as well, or at least engaging heritage and Aboriginal consultants to advise them.

The presence of these staff in local government planning departments has been driven by generous amounts of grant funding for specific projects from various NSW and federal government departments, by the need to comply with both the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act) 1979 (as amended) and the NSW Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (and preceding legislation), and by the influence of a steady stream of other legislative requirements¹⁰⁰. In addition, the plethora of responsibilities now placed on local councils and government departments in regard to the protection and conservation of various pieces of land, things on the land, and the ecological status of the land now far outnumber the list of responsibilities placed on local councils in regard to social issues.

Compared with environmental obligations, the requirements on local government under the NSW Local Government Act in regard to social issues are slight, general and mainly subsumed under one requirement to prepare a social plan. These social plans are targeted to a limited number of ‘target groups’ in the local government area and constitute only recommendations (whose recommendations is rarely specified):

*‘A social/community plan describes the local community, summarises the key issues facing it and recommends strategies that the council and/or other agencies **could** implement to address identified needs.’ and ‘Councils must decide annually **which** of the actions recommended in their social/community plan will be carried out’ (NSW Department of Local Government 2002:16 and 24, my emphasis)*

thus making these documents ambit claims rather than plans in the accepted sense of the word - namely documents which set out actions to

¹⁰⁰ the EPA website, www.epa.nsw.gov.au listed 89 pieces of related legislation in June 2002

be undertaken in a timeframe and to which the owners of the plan¹⁰¹ are committed.

In 2000, research for the Triennial Review of the NSW Area Assistance Scheme discovered that on average local councils in NSW spent a mere 2-4% of their budgets on 'community services' and 29% of councils relied on state or federal government grants for more than half of their community services expenditure. Although 78% of councils in metropolitan areas had a fulltime community services manager in 2000, this was true of only 38% of councils in non-metropolitan areas (Australia Street Company 2002: 34). This level of staffing bears no comparison with planning staffing levels in councils.

At the state government level, no NSW government department is required to have a social plan or to audit the social impact of its policies or initiatives on the residents of NSW¹⁰². By contrast, when any government agency wants to undertake an initiative which may have an environmental impact, it is required to prepare an environmental impact assessment (unless the relevant Minister exempts it from doing so). And, although the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act section 79C(b) requires consideration of

'the likely impacts of that development, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality',

this part of an EIS is often perfunctory¹⁰³ or sidestepped. As Burdge points out in regard to similar legislation in the United States

¹⁰¹ In this instance, there are no owners and there is no time frame because there is no planned commitment and councils decide what to do annually, thus undermining the capacity of the planning process, or the council, to use the social plan to obtain integrated outcomes over a 5-10 year period.

¹⁰² Even where a government agency has health or housing or welfare as its core function, it does not report, eg in annual reports, on its activities in terms of social impacts.

Occasionally some functions within a state department are subject to social impact assessment such as the requirements on the Liquor Administration Board to consider social impacts before authorising additional gaming machines in hotels of registered clubs, but this is not the same as assessing the social impacts of the work of the department as a whole.

¹⁰³ See for example the EIS for the Eastern Distributor in Sydney held in the archives of PlanningNSW .

'At least in the USA, the early EIAs included a socio-economic component that was intended to be "social impacts" as required under the NEPA legislation¹⁰⁴. However, engineers and landscape architects, who gave little attention to "social effects" did the early EIAs. Socio-economic impacts became a listing of demographic information for a project area. If the proposed action was large, housing, health, law enforcement and other infrastructure statistics were included. However, most of the socio-economic data was descriptive of the past – little was done to "project or assess" based on likely future change to human communities as a result of the proposed action.'
(Burdge 2002:6)

Further, while specific forms of environmental regulation were moved from PlanningNSW to the Environmental Protection Authority, PlanningNSW retained environmental responsibilities within its powers to approve development applications and to set state environmental planning policies. After the separation of the two departments, PlanningNSW established a Sustainability Unit concerned with environmental sustainability issues in planning but, by April 2003, had not established any comparable social sustainability unit or specialist social impact staff within the existing unit.

As a result of this history, environmental and related specialists in planning departments in the NSW State Government and local councils in NSW not only heavily outnumber social planners but their work is directed and reinforced by a large number of detailed and enforceable legislative requirements ranging across several portfolios. The relative influence of natural scientists, archaeologists and heritage specialists vis-à-vis social planners or social impact assessment staff can be seen simply by looking at the staffing levels and the difference in the amount of legislation which directs their work. Thus, that which might loosely be called 'the environmental movement' has been in a position to exert a considerable influence on the profession of planning separate to that exerted by planning's own history.

As part of this, the territory (place) focus of the natural sciences and heritage and archaeology professions reinforces the preference of planners to see community in terms of place, and so these disciplines

¹⁰⁴ National Environmental Policy Act

have not challenged the practice of dealing with social issues obliquely – as a subset of the economic or the environmental, as an exercise in demographic profiling, or as a matter the content of which will emerge through the process of community consultation rather than through social research and social policy analysis.

The operation of these priorities can also be seen in the development of sustainability principles. A great deal of environmental planning for sustainability has come to rest on sustainability principles. There seem to have been a number of reasons for this:

- the concept of sustainability required definition and the need for this definition was made urgent by the concurrent calls for action
- often it is only at the level of principle that agreement can be reached, and
- the definitional activity re-defined the scope of work for many professions, including planners.

The content of these definitions, in-principle agreements and scope of works has also had important bearing on the place of social issues in planning.

From at least 1980 when the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Wildlife Fund¹⁰⁵ published *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, people have been grappling with what the concept of sustainability means, why it is important and what governments should do to achieve it. In that context, numerous sustainability principles have been drawn up. In fact a simple internet search in June 2002 delivered 4790 sites in 10 seconds.

Although there is marked disagreement throughout the world about what should be done about many environmental issues, or even whether there is a problem, there seems to be a high level of agreement that some basic principles should be applied to proposals with environmental impact. Those enunciated by the Brundtland and UNCED World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland 1987)

¹⁰⁵ Source: a compilation of lists of sustainability principles compiled by Susan Murcutt, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and accessed at <http://www.sustainableliving.org/appen-b/htm> in June 2002

- Inter-generational equity
- Intra-generational equity
- Public participation
- Environmental protection integral to economic development.

have received particularly wide acceptance. Fifteen years later, versions of these principles can be found not only in radical documents calling for dramatic changes to western ways of life but even on NSW government websites. For example, the NSW Environmental Protection Authority lists the following ecologically sustainable development principles and programs:

- *'The precautionary principle – lack of full scientific certainty is not used to postpone measures to prevent environmental degradation*
- *The maintenance and enhancement of the environment for future generations*
- *The conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity*
- *Improved valuation, pricing of environmental resources and incentive mechanisms.'* (www.epa.nsw.gov.au/corporate/index.htm accessed July 2002)

What is noticeable about these two sets of principles is how the more recent one seems like an elaboration of the original one – except that the idea of equity has become an environmental issue vis-à-vis future generations. The (implicit only) social component suggested in the idea of intra-generational equity has disappeared. In its place is a new principle which seems more like a policy statement profoundly concerned with the question of implementation. *'Improved valuation, pricing of environmental resources and incentive mechanisms'* represents a decision that has been made somewhere that one way to achieve the prevention of environmental degradation, the maintenance of the environment and the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity is through valuation, pricing and incentives and these are so important they have been elevated to a principle. In the process, other potential mechanisms have been reduced in importance and omitted, or perhaps they have not been noticed¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ for example, Wilkinson's research (1996, 2001) suggests that reducing relative social and economic inequality might be as important, or even more important, a mechanism as pricing and incentives, but this option is not canvassed.

This is not an unusual development. For example, of fifteen principles of sustainability, developed by Robinson et al (1990, cited in Murcutt 1997), six are concerned with issues of governance and political participation, seven are concerned with environmental issues, while two relate to social aspects of sustainability.

Herein lies the issue for this thesis. While reference to the triple bottom line is in common use by planners and is often taken to mean that social, environmental and economic issues are of equal importance, their relative presence in sustainability principles demonstrates that this is not the case, not only in practice (as demonstrated in Chapter 3), but even when public servants, theorists and campaigners are speaking about overarching principles.

Using Murcutt's collation of lists of sustainability principles (Murcutt 1997) this point can be demonstrated over and over again. For example of thirteen ecological sustainability principles generated by the Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories for Australia's Green Plan in 1992, 4 specifically relate to biodiversity, ecological resources and the carrying capacity of the environment, 4 concern economic issues such as pricing, 3 are general principles which could be applied to environmental, economic or social issues but only two are directly concerned with the social part of sustainability:

'Social equity: social equity must be a key principle to be applied in developing economic and social policies as part of an ecologically sustainable society'

'Community participation: strong community participation will be a vital pre-requisite for affecting a smooth transition to an ecologically sustainable society'

None of the lists collated by Murcutt define or elaborate intra-generational equity. For this, another search is required which reveals that intra-generational equity is usually seen as referring to the following concepts: social justice (freedom from oppression, exploitation and discrimination), social equity (everyone has their basic needs met) (Biosphere Centre 2002) and/or elimination of poverty and societal resilience (Rayner and

Malone 2001). But I have yet to find it expressed as a principle, except in my own work (Australia Street Company 2003)¹⁰⁷.

Perhaps scientists find it much easier to make in principle statements about not damaging the environment than to make in principle statements about eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. So while sustainability principles can help planning teams establish common ground and agreements in principle, once again that common ground tends to demonstrate and maintain the poor cousin status of social equity issues vis a vis economic viability and resilience and environmental health .

All this is important because it is with apparent reference to principles of sustainability, that planners often define the scope of their work. For example, PlanningNSW's White Paper concerning proposed reforms of the planning system in NSW stated:

'Plan First will... produce strategies and plans that help to deliver

- *sustainable management of our resources*
- *environmental protection*
- *jobs and infrastructure*
- *suitable and affordable housing*
- *healthy and vibrant communities*
- *neighbourhoods that are attractive and safe'.*(PlanningNSW 2001)

The Green Square Community Plan prepared for the South Sydney Development Corporation provides a rare example of sustainability principles in which social sustainability takes a more equal place. Each principle is a statement of commitment from the South Sydney Development Corporation, whose Plan it is. The Plan also restates each principle as a criterion to show how the principle will be applied.

'this Plan will require interpretation and implementation on a day by day basis. As matters for day to day decision arise, the Corporation intends that proposals and options are measured against the principles on which this Plan is based through the use of six key criteria for decision making. The

¹⁰⁷ Stated as 'Intra-generational equity: *our actions should not increase relative social and economic inequality or relative poverty and should contribute to just and equitable access to facilities and services*'.

criteria will help to operationalise the principles.’ (Australia Street Company 1999)

Six principles were developed for, and included in, this Plan. These are shown in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1: PRINCIPLES, CRITERIA AND EXAMPLES OF THEIR USE FROM THE GREEN SQUARE COMMUNITY PLAN

SUSTAINABILITY Principle	Criteria
<p>The Corporation is planning Green Square for the long term. This means that in regard to both the built and the social environment we will be putting structures and organisations in place in ways which optimise their effectiveness and long term survival. This means we will seek to optimise sustainability in the following contributing areas:</p> <p><i>Natural resource use and waste management</i> by applying benchmarks and setting targets for Council, developers and landowners.</p> <p><i>Facility management</i> by facilitating the establishment of suitably constituted community organisations to manage key public facilities and the development of social capital generally</p> <p><i>Financial viability</i> by identifying, and where possible putting in place, sources of long term financial resource for the management of these key public facilities</p> <p><i>Flexibility and adaptability</i> by fostering a mix of opportunities and services in the area which, collectively, are likely to be able to generate their own sustainable momentum</p> <p><i>Ethical practice</i> by examining the symbolic and cultural meaning of what we propose to do for its consistency with our principles, and by fostering consistent and ethical practice among participants in the development as well as in the developing civic infrastructure of Green Square.</p>	<p>Does the proposal adequately cater for the sustainability of the item/area in the long term, including its financial viability, its organisational infrastructure and its cultural meaning or symbolism?</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Does the development meet ESD criteria?</p> <p>Does a proposed community organisation have an appropriate and sustainable constitution and brief? (some key elements for inclusion in these documents were attached to the Plan)</p> <p>Is the means for an income stream (for public/community facilities) also being built as part of the project?</p> <p>Is the facility's/program's/service's Brief broad enough to accommodate changing circumstances with integrity?</p> <p>Will the actual outcome be consistent with the marketing strategy – especially for neighbouring communities and cultural minority groups? Does the constitution of a proposed community organisation document policy in relation to conflicts of interest?</p>
SOCIAL INCLUSION Principle	Criteria
<p>The Corporation is committed to the concept of a Greater Green Square in which residents and workers in the wider area have access to and benefit from the opportunities, facilities and services that will be developed in the Growth Centre.</p>	<p>Will the proposed action result in increased experience of social exclusion?</p> <p>Have opportunities for inclusion been integrated into the proposal?</p> <p>For example:</p>

	Are items built with section 94 funds, or as offsets to s94 contributions, open to the public? Have we ensured that community facilities will have appropriate pricing structures?
RELATIVE SOCIAL EQUALITY Principle	Criteria
The Corporation understands that relative social equality enhances everyone's quality of life and we will avoid decisions which increase relative social inequality. In all our decisions we will endeavour to ensure that we are not adding to the burden of social and economic inequalities in the Greater Green Square area, and we are utilising opportunities to improve relative social equality	Will the proposed decision increase relative social inequality? For example: Does the proposal add to the weight/proportion of amenities, facilities etc only available to one socio-economic group or not available to one or more socio-economic groups, such as housing, sports facilities, basic food outlets?
AN EYE ON THE FUTURE Principle	Criteria
The pace of change makes it difficult but also imperative that plans for a development take stock of trends and look ahead at what is coming - new and changing technologies, industry sectors and economic generators, leisure preferences, demographic and social structures, communication patterns, lifestyles, lifetime employment patterns and prospects, essential skills, health needs. While the Corporation appreciates that predictions cannot always be accurate, it also firmly believes in a determination to capture the moment through attention to the emerging trends of the future.	Does the proposal/option reflect and respond to what we can already reasonably predict that the future will bring? For example: Does this proposal actively cater for the expectation that in 10 years time most people will be working and communicating online? Is the project flexible enough to accommodate and respond to foreseeable and potential technological change?
A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH Principle	Criteria
The Corporation is committed to collaboration and partnership as the principle means of securing effective, long term outcomes which are informed by a range of views and to which a number of relevant parties have made a commitment.	Have options for new and inventive partnerships been considered in the development of this proposal or option? For example: Have we thought outside the frame regarding who the partners in this project might be? Have we applied our criteria for sustainable community organisations to the partnership agreement?
CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION Principle	Criteria
This Community Plan is a departure from tradition. To implement it the Corporation and its partners in Green Square development processes will advance from old and established practices and find new answers and approaches through creativity and innovation.	Is this the best we can do – or could we be more imaginative and more inventive in our approach and in the outcomes we are seeking? For example: Is this just a copy of something or does it have the hall mark of original thinking applied to the specifics of the local issue?

Emphases in the original.

However, these principles were developed by the author so they serve only to show that it is possible to come up with sustainability principles which give equal weight to social issues. By contrast, despite the titles to the seven principles in *Melbourne 2030*, the strategic plan for the greater metropolitan area of Melbourne (Victorian Government 2002): Sustainability, Innovation, Adaptability, Inclusiveness, Equity, Leadership and Partnership, the content of the Plan is still overwhelmingly in the traditional areas of planning with by far the greater proportion concerned with transport, growth centres and urban boundaries¹⁰⁸.

* * *

This chapter shows the enduring nature of the poor cousin status of social issues in planning. The community development movement in many respects told planners to stay out of their bailiwick and planners largely complied. The community consultation movement had a similar message – better outcomes through community consultation with the implicit idea that a well received outcome is a better one. Again this has encouraged planners to hand over social issues to consultative processes and their outcomes.

Both these movements sit comfortably with the notion that the role of the planner is to manage the physical environment and social issues are not really her concern. In addition neither school of thought challenges the supposition that territory in common does, or should, form the basis for interests and attachments in common. And, except for Carson and Gelber's team of technical experts, neither school of thought provides for safeguards against the array of territory based interests and attachments which foster exclusivity and relative social inequality.

Finally the big issue to hit planning since the 1970s has been environmental sustainability. Planners have engaged substantially with this issue. However, natural scientists have not encouraged equal time or status for social issues either.

This overview of key influences on the place of the social in planning (Chapters 3, 4, 5 & 6) still raises the question as to whether people

¹⁰⁸ Of 124 pages devoted to Policies and Initiatives, 68 (55%) are devoted to urban growth centres and transport, 36 pages (29%) to environmental, urban design and open space issues, and 8 pages (7%) to social issues such as equity, social infrastructure and culture.

practising planning in NSW today are strongly influenced by the concepts, beliefs and perceptions I have outlined. The next step was to formulate a number of specific propositions about what planners think about their role in community building and to examine these directly through a survey.

7: EXPLORING THESE IDEAS THROUGH A SURVEY

My review of planning documents - the literature on community, village and the neighbourhood and the place of community development, community consultation and the environmental movement vis a vis town planning, has suggested some continuing themes in the way that planners think about the role of their profession in community building or in contributing to social wellbeing. However, it is always possible that the practising profession has moved on or away from these themes, that current practice or at least what current members of the profession would like to do if they could, is different to what this literature review has suggested. Stage two of this research was to formulate specific propositions and to explore them in an empirical way, through a survey of practising planners.

SPECIFIC PROPOSITIONS

The specific propositions to be explored were derived from my early informal interviews and the conclusions drawn from the literature. They are as follows:

- 1 **When planners in NSW think of community they are usually thinking of people connected by territory in common.** This is important because the conceptual framework of first resort is most likely to be the framework for thinking about community and, in terms of common practice, issues of social wellbeing. The territory-in-common framework encourages planners to look at what is inside a place rather than at the relationships between places, particularly in terms of the relative social status of residents in different places. (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5).
- 2 **Planners are more likely than not to rely on physical or built initiatives** to achieve social wellbeing or community building outcomes. This seems to be because of the profession's grounding in disciplines such as architecture, geography and surveying as well as because of their traditional reliance on the village and the neighbourhood in delivering social outcomes (see Chapter 4). They are also over optimistic about how much these physical initiatives can achieve (as evidence in

their casual use of community as an adjective – see the discussion in Chapter 5)

- 3 **Planners tend to rely on others for social outcomes**, in particular they tend to rely on other staff such as community development workers or on the residents and other stakeholders they consult (see Chapter 6)
- 4 **Most planners think that community building is not the role of town planners** (see the example in the Introductory Story and, again, as a derivative of the discussion in Chapter 6)
- 5 **Planners initiatives for community building are likely to be weak and indirect** (based on the evidence in Chapter 3).

DEVELOPING THE SURVEY

My first step in developing the questionnaire used in my survey was a one page questionnaire administered to a stakeholder workshop convened to prepare a strategic plan for the development of the Orchard Hills area in the Penrith local government area in NSW. The stakeholders were senior people in the University of Western Sydney, DUAP, Landcom, Penrith (local government area) Council, and some independent experts in planning and transport. These stakeholders were all senior people in their organisations and the group included a large proportion of senior town planners with many years experience at local government and/or state government levels. The strategic planning process ran over several workshops and Landcom, the convenor of the project which I was facilitating, agreed that I could administer the questionnaire at the beginning of one meeting.

The Orchard Hills questionnaire (Attachment 1), was in effect an exploratory pilot for the survey instrument I subsequently developed. I used the Orchard Hills questionnaire to find out what senior and experienced people engaged in strategic land use planning thought were legitimate social considerations in the planning of a suburb, which should have priority, and which were practical and feasible. The participants found it interesting and despite the questionnaire being a one-side/one pager, it took most people 20 minutes to complete. They were thoughtful about it.

The structure of this questionnaire was to list in the left hand column a range of potentially critical components for the proposed new community (i.e. they were thinking about a proposal for a specific place, and one with which they were already familiar) and to ask respondents to indicate

which ones they thought were critically important, which they would rank in the top six in terms of importance and which ones a development team could actually put in place – always, sometimes or not at all. The questionnaire and frequency results are shown in Attachment 1.

The components ranked most frequently **among the 6 most important** were a mix of traditional town planning concerns such as transport and employment with more recent urban design and environmental issues.

- Ease of public transport for residents (14 mentions)
- Local employment opportunities for residents (13 mentions)
- The mix of housing types [i.e. kind/size of dwelling] (9 mentions)
- Safety issues such as street lighting and surveillance (9 mentions)
- The messages contained in the legibility, permeability, and human scale of the development (9 mentions)
- The density of development (8 mentions)
- Local ESD initiatives eg grey water recycling, cycle tracks (8 mentions)
- A basic core of community and civic organisations. (8 mentions)

In including ‘a basic core of community and civic organisations’ among the important components, respondents passed over specific facility options such as ‘accessible facilities for leisure activities’, ‘accessible facilities for life long education’ and ‘recurrent funding for the management of a community centre’(one mention each). ‘A range of sporting facilities’ and ‘integration of low cost housing’ did not rate at all among the top six components. ‘The messages contained in the hierarchy of uses (i.e. who or what gets the prime spots)’ was only ranked in the top six by two people.

By contrast, the elements that respondents thought **the planning team could always put in place** were

- Safety issues such as street lighting and surveillance (42% agreed)
- The density of the development (39% agreed)
- The mix of housing types (i.e. kind/size of dwelling) (36% agreed)
- Appearance incl. landscaping/exterior design features (36% agreed)
- Local ESD initiatives (31% agreed), and
- Solar access and orientation of buildings (28% agreed).

All these are physical initiatives. Compared with what this team of people thought most important to provide in the proposed new area, initiatives to

do with jobs and community and civic organisations have been lost and the softer design issues of legibility, permeability and human scale have been ranked lower too. As well, some initiatives which would be regarded by social policy analysts as quite important for social wellbeing (access to life long learning, access to information and communications technology and the integration of low income earners) did not rate well. This is despite the fact that Orchard Hills is adjacent to one campus of the University of Western Sydney and a college of Technical and Further Education.

On the other hand, the distribution of responses to the Orchard Hills survey compares with an analysis undertaken by Harrison (1975) of issues discussed by planners at branch meetings of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in the period 1947-1971. Leading the list of specific town and country planning issues discussed across the period were: aspects of structure, local and general development plans (35.6% of time in 1952-6, for example, but still 18% of time in 1967-71). While interest in design and landscape architecture waned across the period (to 2.8% in 1967-71), time spent discussing conservation, preservation, reclamation etc and general amenity planning in rural areas rose from 7.6% of time in 1947-51 to 17.5% of time in 1967-71. Explicit discussion of social planning issues comprised 5.1% of time in 1947-51, less than 2% of time in 1952-1966 and rose to 4% of time in 1967-71. Thomas (1999:22) notes that a 1997 attitudes survey of RTPI members 'suggests there has been no significant shift in interest towards social welfare issues'.

My exploratory survey suggested no more than a slight shift in interest and focus from the pattern Thomas reported. In the context of the development of my research it confirmed that planners have no difficulty considering the idea that they have a role to play in the establishment of a new community and, given a list to work from, they would agree that non-physical / built elements are important as are the implicit messages (metaphors) in aspects of the built environment. But these were not the areas they felt confident about putting into effect. These results were important however, because they demonstrated that the issues I was interesting in raising (eg. what, if anything, is the role of the planner in establishing community and civic organisations, or the dominant metaphor of a place) were issues with which senior planners were willing to engage and which they regarded as legitimate questions.

On the basis of this exploratory questionnaire, the interviews described in Chapter 2 and the literature review (Chapters 3-6), I drafted a questionnaire for the survey for this thesis in the summer of 2000-01. I piloted this initially with five colleagues with a planning interest or practice. Their valuable feedback led to several revisions, and in particular a reduction in size.

I then arranged to pilot the questionnaire at Sutherland (local government area) Council. Eight town planners and four social planners at this council volunteered to fill in the pilot and provide feedback. The pilot revealed that the questionnaire was still too long and other issues emerged including:

- Even more problematic than how to define a planning document, is how to define a planner. Many planners, especially strategic planners working in town planning departments, do not have town planning qualifications. Questions inviting an opinion about what 'planners' do or think tended to invite the opinion that planners are so diverse that nobody knows. However, after a review of pilot responses, I decided that while people with diverse professional backgrounds contribute to land use planning, they seem to operate within a shared understanding of what land use planning does. It is only social planners, often located in planning divisions in local government authorities, who seem to operate with a different frame of reference – one less concerned with land use and more concerned with social cohesion and network development. They seem to be the outsiders in planning departments (Roughley 1999; Gleeson and Memon: 1996) and their answers to the pilot questionnaire were distinctly different from their mainstream land use colleagues¹⁰⁹. As a result, I decided not to *invite* social planners to take part in the full survey. In the final survey, there were few social planners as such, although some 30% of respondents did not have a town planning qualification, thus indicating the widening professional base of town planning.
- Many respondents (except the social planners) were completely thrown by an initial question in the pilot about meaning of the word community in a series of contexts¹¹⁰. Several respondents could not see any difference

¹⁰⁹ They answered the questionnaire in half the time and had much less difficulty with definitional issues and with thinking of a range of ways in which planning could promote community wellbeing, but professed little understanding of technical land use planning methods and requirements.

¹¹⁰ In some community referred to territory in common and in others it referred to interests and attachments in common.

in meaning as between the examples and some people anguished over the question for 20 minutes. I abandoned the question.

- I also had a question on push and pull factors affecting planning. However, a number of respondents in the pilot responded by disputing the concept of push and pull and/or by redefining it as before and after. This led me to decide just to use a selection of statements, without raising the concept of push/pull and to ask about degree of agreement or disagreement with these statements. (Q 6 in the final survey, see Attachment 2)
- The question used in the Orchard Hills pilot was used again in the pilot and served to verify the earlier results. However, I decided that it would be more useful to explore whether some specific social initiatives were regarded by planners as readily achievable, so a question to that effect was included in the final (Q 7 in the final survey)
- It was clear that for many planners, the aspects of community building that I was raising were novel, and in some cases challenging
- In the pilot I had a number of questions about the word community that were too close in meaning to each other and there were signs of irritation among the respondents. So I collapsed these into one question (Q3)
- I prefaced the questionnaire with 2 easy to answer questions: Q1 How long have you been working as a planner? and Q2 How long have you been working here?

Overall the pilot also served to demonstrate that the propositions I wanted to examine would be best approached via a number of questions examining the issues from different points of view. This would reduce any sense of confrontation on the part of the respondent, and do justice to the complexity of the idea of community building or social wellbeing. As well, consistency of results across several questions would improve the reliability of the findings.

THE QUESTIONS USED TO EXPLORE THE PROPOSITIONS

On the basis of my experience with the pilot, I selected eight questions to explore the propositions. Each question had several sections or choices or was open. The full survey is at Attachment 2.

Question 3: When I read planning documents about a community, I **usually think of a community** as: (giving territory in common [place] and interests in common and attachments in common options).

Explores Proposition 1: Most planners think of community in terms of territory in common

Question 4: 'Imagine you are the senior planner responsible for a new release area called **NewPlace**, a coastal development which in 10 years will house 15,000 people. **NewPlace** is an experiment in new town building and you have **an open budget** to bring about the best possible outcomes in **community building**. To what initiatives for community building in **NewPlace** would you give priority? Briefly describe your top **TWO** initiatives. **Assume that impeccable community consultation and research processes are already planned or in place, so you do not need to list these here.**' (Qs 4A and 4B)

Explores Proposition 2: Planners are more likely than not to rely on physical or built initiatives; Proposition 3: Planners tend to rely on others for social outcomes, and Proposition 5: Planners' initiatives for community building are likely to be weak and indirect.

The pilot enabled me to generate an initial list of 20 codes for the wide range of responses I ultimately received to Questions 4A and 4B. The pilot questionnaire had also asked respondents for the reasons for their choices (in 4A and 4B) and I used these to develop a set of pre-coded options for a similar question in the final (Q5). I also noticed that no one in the pilot nominated either their own previous experience or research findings as a reason for their choices, so I made these specified options in Q 5 which asked about their reasons for selecting the initiatives chosen for NewPlace.

Question 6 asked whether the respondent agreed or disagreed with each of 8 statements. These particularly related to the role of planners (Proposition 4) and the kinds of initiatives they would support (Proposition 5). This theme continued in

Question 7 which asked about levels of support for specific community building initiatives (inquiring inversely about Proposition 3, i.e. testing for willingness to do things which do not rely on others) One initiative was the provision of training in community building for planners – a question related to their role and Proposition 4.

Question 8 asked respondents to report on their current skills in regard to specific tasks but offered respondents the opportunity to say that these tasks were not part of a planners' role (Proposition 4, and information relevant to Proposition 3: Planners tend to rely on others for social outcomes).

Question 9 asked what planners should do, if anything, about the decline in civic engagement (Proposition 4).

Question 10 asked respondents to pick a preferred definition of community building. Option 1 was a definition of community development (Proposition 3) Option 2 was the built response definition (Proposition 2), Option 3 bases community building on social policy, community development and urban design (the inverse of Proposition 2), Option 4 adds environmental initiatives to the built response, and Option 5 is the catch-all in which community building refers to everything 'the lot!' – an option close to 'don't know'.

The questionnaire concluded with some demographic questions which also enabled me to differentiate respondents with town planning qualifications from those with other qualifications.

The survey explored the 5 propositions both directly and indirectly, but mainly indirectly. There were numerous opportunities for comment and the principle question, Question 4, about community building in NewPlace was completely open. Indeed, I initially used 38 codes to deal with the widely varying responses I obtained. While it would have been possible to test the five propositions directly, asking whether or not respondents agreed for example with the propositions, my working and research experience strongly suggested that this would merely incite a defensive response in many people. By contrast, Chapter 8 demonstrates that the more indirect approach has yielded a rich array of responses relevant to the research questions.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The final questionnaire (Attachment 2) was administered during 2001 in the following locations:

- the University of Sydney to planners attending a course on social sustainability and social cost benefit analysis and one member of staff,
- the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning to interested planners invited by the Director General,
- Warringah Council, to interested planners invited by the Director of Strategic Planning
- Penrith Council, to interested planners invited by a senior colleague
- Liverpool Council, to interested planners invited by a senior colleague, and
- Camden Council to interested planners invited by a social planner colleague.

The four local government area councils were selected because each has large areas in which new communities are being planned. In each case the respondents to the questionnaire were invited by a planner in their organisation to attend the workshop, complete the questionnaire and participate in a discussion afterwards. Participation was voluntary and in some councils small. I take this to mean that the people who did attend were interested in the issue and that this is an important frame within which to see the results. Approaches to two others councils were declined. A total of 70 questionnaires were achieved by this method.

I decided to throw a wider net by trying to obtain responses to a shortened version of the questionnaire at the Royal Australian Planning Institute¹¹¹ annual conference in 2001. I did this by reducing the number of questions and the length of some questions and particularly by asking for only one idea for NewPlace. The shortened version was a two sided, one pager. I placed these questionnaires on the seats of the main auditorium of the conference venue for the first session of the third day of the conference (which I was attending) and also on the seats of the session where I was giving a paper.

¹¹¹ Now called the Planning Institute of Australia

I estimate that about 120 people were at the conference on that day. I received 65 responses. The short questionnaire is at Attachment 3. The data from 135 respondents to these questionnaires is analysed in Chapter 8.

In 2002 I followed up this survey with a survey of fourth year planning students at the University of NSW – the same questionnaire was used as for the main survey. This follow-up survey was done as a way of checking whether planning students (the town planners of the future) have a different understanding of the role of planning in community building from their already practising colleagues. These student respondents comprised everyone who attended class on a particular day, although it was not compulsory to complete the questionnaire. As fourth year students, most had had a year's work experience in a council, had completed a first year course in Urban Society but they were only at the start of a major course in social planning. The timing of the survey of students was managed to suit both the structure of the course and the timing of work on this thesis. However, the survey results may have differed had the questionnaire been administered at the end of the semester after the students had completed the social planning course. The results from the student survey are included in Chapter 8.

Everyone who completed the full questionnaire did so at the same time at a meeting (including, for students, class time) called by the person who had authorised the author's access to the organisation and invited interested colleagues or students to participate. The format of the meeting was that the author was introduced, the purpose of the questionnaire was described, respondents completed the questionnaire during a 20 – 45 minute period, and were then invited to reflect and comment on the questionnaire and the issues it raised in a short discussion. Half an hour was allowed for this discussion.

Nearly everyone who completed the full questionnaire stayed for the discussion and these were, with the possible exception of the students, energetic, wide ranging. Discussions in the four councils lasted for an hour.

8: WHAT PLANNERS SAY

A number of writers over the years have been critical of the use of the concept of community to exaggerate or enhance what can actually be achieved by planners (Talen 2000, Evans 1994), to confine community to place (Webber 1963, Wellman and Leighton 1979, Flanagan 1993) or more ominously to obscure the social engineering or controls which planners are in effect putting in place

'From the very earliest phases of massive urbanization through industrialization, the "spirit of community" has been held as an antidote to any threat of social disorder, class war, and revolutionary violence. "Community" has ever been one of the key sites of social control and surveillance bordering on overt social repression.' (Harvey 1997:69)

Given the length of history of these and other critiques, such as those relating to the role of planner as professional outsider and the role of social sustainability issues in managing land use, it may well be that practising planners have taken all these criticisms on board and are quietly working away, resolving these dilemmas in practical ways in real situations. The purpose of my empirical research was to find out whether planners were in fact on top of these issues or whether utopian and mechanistic solutions reign.

As described in Chapter 7, my research questionnaire was administered in 2001 in a long and a short version (Attachments 2 and 3). The short version was extracted from the long version and used to seek responses from planners at a planning conference. This means that for some questions the potential population responding to the question was the 135 respondents to both questionnaires. Where questions were only asked in the longer questionnaire, the sample was reduced to 70. In the following tables I have indicated for each variable whether N = 135 or N = 70. The responses from both questionnaires show a marked consistency.

The respondents to these questionnaires were all either working in planning departments in councils, in DUAP (now PlanningNSW), and/or were attending the Royal Australian Institute of Planning (now the Planning Institute of Australia) Conference in Canberra in October 2001. They were predominantly NSW residents. Seventy six (56.3%) were

currently employed as planners, 4 as social planners and 53 in jobs with other titles. Ninety three respondents (68.9%) held a town planning qualification. Of those who completed the longer questionnaire, 71.4% of respondents with a town planning qualification had had a social or community development component to their coursework. Most of the respondents were aged between 25 and 49 and there was an equal number of men and women, although a surprising 19 respondents refused to reveal their sex. Tables setting out the demographic composition of respondents are in Attachment 5.

In this Chapter I refer to the combined long and short surveys as **the main survey** so as to distinguish these results from a follow up **student survey**, in 2002, of 28 fourth year planning students at the University of NSW. The aim of the student survey was to see whether the views of these students, most of whom had had a year's work experience as a student planner in a local council, differed from those of respondents to the main survey. There were slightly more male than female students in the student survey and 75% were aged less than 25 while the remainder were in the 25-34 age group. Twenty eight students completed the questionnaire and their responses are shown in the course of this chapter. Student responses are identified as such. All other reported responses are for the main survey.

SURVEY RESULTS

The questionnaire tells a story largely in the order in which the questions were asked and will be reported in this order. Questions 1 and 2 were only used in the longer questionnaire and asked the respondent about the - length of time they had been a planner and how long they had been with their current employer. Most respondents (68.9%) had been a planner for less than 10 years, 18.6% for less than 2 years, but a good proportion of respondents, 30%, had been in the profession for more than 10 years, Table 8.1. Turnover appears high in the profession as 71.4% had been in their current organisation for up to 5 years. Only 11.4% had worked for the same employer for more than 10 years, Table 8.2. These questions did not apply to the student planners.

TABLE 8.1: LENGTH OF TIME WORKING AS A PLANNER

TIME	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Less than 2 years	13	18.6
2-5 years	17	24.3
6-10 years	18	25.7
11-20 years	11	15.7
More than 20 years	10	14.3
No answer	1	1.4
total	70	100.00

TABLE 8.2: LENGTH OF TIME WORKING AS A PLANNER IN THIS ORGANISATION

TIME	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Less than 2 years	23	32.9
2-5 years	27	38.6
6-10 years	10	14.3
11-20 years	5	7.1
More than 20 years	3	4.3
No answer	2	2.9
total	70	100.00

THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY

Question 3 sought to find out what planners have in their mind's eye, that is as their immediate or first frame of reference, when they read the word community in a planning document.

TABLE 8.3: USUAL CONNOTATION OF COMMUNITY WHEN READING PLANNING DOCUMENTS

WHEN I READ PLANNING DOCUMENTS ABOUT A COMMUNITY, I USUALLY THINK OF A COMMUNITY AS	MAIN NO.	SURVEY %	STUDENTS %
The residents in a place	9	6.7	14.3
The people who live or work in a place	18	13.3	42.9
Everyone connected to a place for whatever reason	43	31.9	21.4
People who are connected by their interests and attachments and who live in different places	16	11.9	7.1
A place and all the many interest groups in that place	45	33.3	14.3
Don't know	2	1.5	0
Other	2	1.5	0
Total	135	100.0	100.0

This question was pre-coded on the basis of responses to several questions in the pilot survey and numerous conversations with planners in local councils and state government agencies. The option 'people who are connected by their interests and attachments and who live in different places' was rarely offered in such conversations. However, I added this to the other options because it falls logically out of Peter Willmott's classification and I wanted to see how many respondents would select it as defining what they are *usually thinking about* when they see the word community in a planning document.

The results show that **eighty five percent of respondents to the main questionnaire, and 93% of students, usually think of community in terms of people connected to a place when they are reading**

planning documents. In this their thoughts are largely congruent with the way the term is used in planning documents (see Chapter 5).

PLANNING NewPlace

Respondents were then asked to imagine that they were the planner in charge of the development of NewPlace. In the full questionnaire, the scenario was painted in a lengthy question:

'Imagine you are the senior planner responsible for a new release area called **NewPlace**, a coastal development which in 10 years will house 15,000 people. **NewPlace** is an experiment in new town building and you have **an open budget** to bring about the best possible outcomes in community building. To what initiatives for community building in **NewPlace** would you give priority? Briefly describe your top **TWO** initiatives. **Assume that impeccable community consultation and research processes are already planned or in place, so you do not need to list these here.**' (bold and underlining in the original)

In the short questionnaire, this was reduced to:

'If you were the senior planner responsible for a new release coastal development, what is the number one initiative you would put in place to bring about the best possible outcomes in terms of community building?
ASSUME THAT IMPECCABLE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND RESEARCH PROCESSES ARE ALREADY IN PLACE' (Capitals and italics in original)

Thus respondents to the short questionnaire were only asked for one initiative. Respondents to the longer questionnaire were asked for two. This question took up the most time with most respondents to the longer questionnaire - I was able to observe this as I was present when all the longer questionnaires were completed. Many respondents struggled with their answers and it must be said that for many planners the question posed a situation with which they were not familiar, for example because they were not used to dealing with new release areas. In addition, for the conference attendees, the question may have required more thought and deliberation than the conference environment allowed.

On the other hand it could be argued that the question relates to the core business of planning¹¹² to which it could be expected that all planners would have given previous thought and that on the third day of a planning conference, respondents would be thoroughly focussed on discussing planning issues.

The question about NewPlace was open ended and I developed preliminary codes for it on the basis of the pilot. I revised these after an initial review of actual responses. In fact, the answers were so diverse that I began with an initial set of 38 codes based on the array of answers given.

I also provided a code for any response which suggested an initiative to achieve relative social and economic equality among residents of NewPlace. I did this in order to identify the extent to which this was perceived as an option by the respondents and because recent literature (eg. Wilkinson 1996, 2002, Pahl 2001) strongly indicates the importance of relative social and economic equality in social wellbeing. No responses to the main questionnaire which could have been coded in this category were received. However, one student response fell into this general area. I also provided a code for information and communications technology infrastructure as this is frequently referred to by commentators concerned with non-place related aspects of community. No respondents suggested initiatives for NewPlace which fell into this category.

In analysing the responses to this question, I aggregated some codes to create, initially 16 and subsequently, 10 discrete categories of response. Then, I amalgamated the responses to the short questionnaire with the first choice responses to the longer questionnaire and looked at these separately from the second choices. Then, because many respondents essentially said the same thing in their first and second choice in the longer questionnaire, I amalgamated all the responses into one table (Table 8.4). Student responses are provided as part of the final amalgamated table. The sequence of original tables are in Attachment 5.

¹¹² *'First, the object of town planning, at any rate as it has been (since 1947) and currently is constituted in the United Kingdom is primarily the physical environment. But second, the purpose of town planning is necessarily social – 'social', that is, in the sense that the purpose of town planning is the maintenance and enhancement of human welfare. To put this another way, the means of town planning are primarily physical but its ends are social.'* (Taylor 1999: 43)

Table 8.4 summarises the preferred initiatives that planners would use in a carte blanche / no shortage of funds situation to obtain the best possible outcomes in community building in a new development.

TABLE 8.4: SUMMARY OF ALL CHOICE RESPONSES

PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING	MAIN	SURVEY	STUDENTS	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Urban design solutions	48	23.4	14	25.0
Build social capital, community networks	30	14.6	6	10.7
Provide physical infrastructure, especially public transport	20	9.8	5	8.9
Environmental solutions	19	9.3	5	8.9
Consult the community first	18	8.8	2	3.6
Provide managed or unmanaged community facilities	16	7.8	11	19.6
Ensure timely development or mixed development	16	7.8	2	3.6
Have a plan/strategy	9	4.4	2	3.6
Promote relative social and economic equality	0	0	1	1.9
Provide ICT infrastructure or internet initiatives	0	0	0	0
Other	7	3.4	4	7.1
No answer	22	10.7	4	7.1
Total	205	100	56	100

Nearly all of these ideas are essentially ones either of physical provision (urban design, physical infrastructure, environmental solutions, community facilities [i.e. buildings]) or of processes (consultation or planning). Only in the case of timeliness and promoting social capital were respondents operating outside these two broad categories of response.

Many of the responses to this question illuminate an essentially illusory thinking connecting the proposed initiative to the outcome of social wellbeing. I deal with them in the order of frequency of mentions as shown in the table above.

URBAN DESIGN SOLUTIONS

The respondents to this questionnaire, including student planners, consistently prefer urban design solutions to community building. Within this category the majority of responses centred around the provision of a central meeting place, a town square or a central focus for the town, for example:

'A widely accessible town square that provides opportunities for both inter- and intra- generational contact. Linked to this would be commercial and non-commercial drawcards, like open café areas and specific facilities for youth (eg skate bowl with nearby seating), children (playground). It would be accessible (physically) and imaginatively and colourfully structured. Public art would be integrated.'

'A common place which would be central to the area (geographically) and would be designed (architecturally) as an open environment and not be intimidating. The common place would be owned by the people, not the Council, not the developer, but all persons living in the estate. It may have a strong relationship to the sea.'

'Integrate a system of community spaces which are flexible to allow many uses, eg network of foot and bike paths, public square for markets, art shows, celebrations or displays; a public hall for lease for functions, use by groups like scouts etc; possible free BBQ facilities to encourage use of public space; exercise circuit with instructions on boards; some sort of ecological or biodiversity conservation with explanatory signage to encourage locals to be proud of their space and possibly encourage a community environmental group.'

However, quite a number of respondents in this category were also concerned with creating a sense of place, identity, distinctive streetscapes and a well designed public domain for example:

'Innovative designing of built form and landscape to foster greater community contact. Elements such as community spaces that are there for a reason and people can easily visit by foot and want to visit'

Some respondents had social ambitions for particular forms of urban design:

'Street/thoroughfare location and design in a way that reduces the dominance of the private vehicle so people come out of their homes and interact with each other informally on the street. Also encouraging kids to play which often brings the adults together.'

'Public open space and access ways, i.e. to beach area.'

'Not allow fences. The absence of fences and a new urban form would provide the context for new dialogue and participation opportunities.'

'Wide tree lined streets, no fences, garages at the back of the house, front verandas, medium density blocks that are attractive, accessible and frequent public transport.'

And there was also some reference, though by no means a majority of references in this category (9 of 48 responses) to other urban design measures such as controls on density, permeability, and a concern with convenience as an issue and with good urban design in general:

'My first aim is to achieve a high level of convenience – this is achieved through the design of movement networks. I put myself in the shoes of future residents and I 'live' in the place by thinking of their trips – to work, to school, to shop etc. I think it essential to do this to ensure a good level of 'livability'. My other first aim – they are iterative in concept not linear is to achieve a good fit with the 'natural' environment with the slope of the land, with orientation and to ensure that the set of activities that are intended to sit on the land are accommodated in the best possible manner on sites that are as good as can be achieved for the different uses. So houses would be located in areas that are very attractive for housing so that people will enjoy living in them.'

A primary finding of my research is, therefore, that when planners are invited to imagine themselves in the position of having all the resources and authority needed to pursue strategies for social wellbeing in a new development, urban design initiatives are mentioned more often than any other.

One way of interpreting this preference for urban design initiatives as a way of building community is to think that planners are still wedded to physical or spatial determinism – and there is some evidence from the

responses that this is the case, for example in the idea that some kinds of street design will encourage neighbourly interaction.

A second interpretation, which can co-exist with the first, is that planners are not sure what to do to build social wellbeing in a new suburb or place so they mention things they do know about and which, if done badly, may be inconvenient, unattractive, infelicitous, or in some circumstances (the use of left over vacant areas at the foot of public housing towers as public space, for example) have some negative social consequences.

BUILD COMMUNITY NETWORKS, SOCIAL CAPITAL

The second largest category of responses covered an array of ideas for creating social networks among the residents once they have arrived. In a few instances, this also involved establishing structures and organisations for civic and democratic participation with the intention of building social capital.

COMMUNITY NETWORKS

The minimalist approach was a once-off early intervention:

'Community Development Initiative: welcome program providing community information eg. schools, bus timetables etc to new residents (package of information).'

There were also a number of respondents who proposed to build community by having a short series of events: welcome seminars, sausage sizzles, and other leisure based activities. Others proposed longer term art and cultural programs, specific process interventions such as community gardens and bush regeneration programs as

'Community gardens – shared plots of land that would be facilitated by a management protocol that would allow for all willing participants to be involved in vegetable gardens and native/biodiversity trails etc. The gatherings of community would be leveraged by cultural events etc on both formal and informal basis.'

'community development program (3-4 years) focusing on the development of playgroups, resident groups etc'

'What's the use of building a community hall if there are no clubs formed to use it, having a main street focus if there's

no community ownership – this plan would be about establishing programs/support programs to work with the existing population and arriving population to build up the social network in the area and promote it to outside the area. This would help form the network for further consultation / participation as the area evolves.'

'Facilitate the formation of a neighbourhood (or a couple of) committee/network that meets to be involved in community issues and planning by the council in terms of other services for the area. Also would be important to provide some budget to this group for some kind of community fair/street part or even just information provision to the rest of the neighbourhood(s).'

'Organise a number of community festivals, open-air shows and performances etc which will appeal to a range of ages and types of people within the town. Accentuate this with promotion of mixed use activities etc which will operate during night to keep the areas... from becoming "dead" and unsafe.' (Student)

or the employment of a community development worker or place team to do the community building on behalf of the planner

'Include a highly skilled community planner/developer on the team.'

'Employ a "community development officer" to generate community focus, sporting, craft, educational groups etc. Such a person is needed in a new area to link people and create opportunities for interaction.'

'Engage a place team right from inception to guide development and work with new residents and residents-stakeholders affected by the new place.'

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Some respondents were specifically concerned with establishing organisations and structures for civic and demographic participation and to build social capital in the sense of mutual trust and reciprocity:

Bringing people together to enhance their knowledge of other groups working in the same area. This will help to build relationships between groups. Building trust between existing services should be a starting point for building trust with and between residents.'

'Ensure that local decisions are taken by local decision makers and then developed in a true commitment to collaboration.'

'Enable structured participation of present and future stakeholders in forward/strategic planning, project initiatives and development proposals. The structure to be integrated into the corporate and community approach to governance so that participation is required on all aspects of the council operations.'

'Provide a planning framework, not as a blueprint for "community structure", but as a flexible assortment of grass-roots based processes which allow the capacities of local citizens to be exercised whilst fostering continual engagement between the community and planning bureaucracy. Further to this productive engagement, there should be a place for (and an intellectual space for) a constant critique of current practices, so that there is no illusion that any one framework can and always will provide the best means for community building.'

Students suggested:

Create a resident association that looks after (i.e. is responsible for) the strip of natural ocean front reserve that is held in community title'.

'Create a community run surf life saving club for the use of residents and their guests. This club would contain a function centre where residents could meet on a regular basis.'

'Establish a system of local area precincts which meet on a regular basis to discuss local issues with local officials such as council officers, police, politicians.'

Many of the responses which suggested long term social process interventions, whether through community gardens, bush regeneration or community development processes or workers/place managers

demonstrated a view that one must wait for community building in NewPlace to emerge slowly. There were some elements of this in the social capital suggestions too, although some of these concerned the ‘up-front’ establishment of organisations or decision making processes.

There is a lot to be said for some of these ideas. Social networks do need to be encouraged and built, and organisations, decision making structures and community development workers are part of this. But the facilitation of actual networks is largely work to be done once the residents are present. In the scenario of planning ahead for NewPlace it is difficult to see why this work would have first priority.

Further, some of these approaches were very tentative and minimalist (sausage sizzles and welcome packs) while others were small interventions over quite a long period (eg. programs of events or employment of a community worker for several years, or a local committee). In reality these too are quite minimalist either because they are intermittent, or because they take a long time to get started and/or only impact a few people – the few people on the committee for example.

Question 4 asked the planner what she would do up front, as a planner, to achieve social wellbeing for the residents of NewPlace, but these answers sidestepped this issue, citing post residency initiatives which would be likely to be partial in their reach and impact.

Unlike the urban design approaches, the builders of social networks and social capital were concerned with non-spatial, non-physical solutions, but most of these were located in a post-spatial planning timeframe.

PROVIDE PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, ESPECIALLY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Twenty responses (9.8%) (and 5 student responses, 8.9%) concerned the provision of physical infrastructure other than community facilities, such things as public transport, pedestrian networks and the provision of community transport. For example:

‘Free and accessible and useable/flexible public transport around and outside “NewPlace”. If people can move around easily, its easier to meet/work/play.’

'Access including pedestrian and adequate public transport infrastructure leading to minimising the dissection of places by car transport and maximising access by all community internally with the community and external to the community.'

'to ensure that the movement system is appropriately linked to land use and adequately prioritises pedestrians, cycles, buses/trains and private cars.'

'Community based public transport: - reduce private vehicle access to core areas, - community based mini bus operating at call, - personal public transport, - cycles/pedestrian networks with end-or-rank facilities i.e. lockers/showers.'

'Transport to shopping centres and the city is of high importance. An infrastructure for transport needs to be established such as a rail link and feeder bus service.'

'Ensure that all new housing has adequate "access" (i.e. public transport, walking or riding) to entertainment, shops and some employment opportunities.'

These things are important from a number of points of view ranging from air quality to the sheer logistics of day to day life. However, there is quite a step between acknowledging these functional facets of modern living to being able to say that they build community or social wellbeing. It could be argued that good provision of these kinds of social infrastructure make people's lives easier and reduce some levels of stress and stress reduction improves health and social wellbeing (see a good account of these relationships in Wilkinson 2001).

However, planners already have good environmental and economic reasons for introducing effective public transport systems, so these responses are merely saying in effect 'and its good for social wellbeing too'. They do not introduce anything new or specifically directed at social outcomes to a planning scheme like that required for NewPlace.

At the coding stage, I provided a category for the provision of information and communications technology infrastructure such as broadband fibre optic cable or wireless connection to the internet for homeowners in NewPlace. There have been several experiments with neighbourhood based internet systems which have been shown to increase contact between residents of local areas and mutual reciprocity (baby sitting,

exchanges of goods etc) (Wellman 1999 and 2001). Internet connections are also important for maintaining non-local networks as well as for accessing information and services. However, there were no responses in this category.

ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

Nineteen respondents (9.3% of the main survey) thought that environmental activities, designs or systems would build community. These do not include the three suggestions that involvement in coast care, or other conservation activities would foster community interaction as these were coded as community development initiatives. Some typical responses included

‘Encourage ecologically sustainable built environment and conservation of natural environment through strategic plan and appropriate zoning’

‘to ensure that the development conserves and respects the environmental assets of the place so that a sense of identity is created as well as pride and lifestyle opportunities’

‘Sustainability – environmental, cultural/social, economic. Being on the coast, environmental principles would be my main focus.’

‘Think holistic. Integrate sustainable design principles into the Plan, i.e. passive solar, water sensitive design, non-reliance on vehicles, good civic spaces, alternative energy etc.’

‘Protection of the environmental, social, cultural or heritage features that had been identified through the consultation as being important to the place.’

‘Protection of large areas of the natural coastline and development for passive recreation of areas of the coastline. Links from residential areas to the coast – walkways, cycleway. Some areas of coast to have private facilities such as restaurants, life saving clubs etc. Protection of other features of the natural environment and setting up of committees to manage them.’

One respondent elaborated at length on her or his idea of an ecologically sustainable development, presenting a compelling picture of a new release area, enriched with a diversity of resources, good quality services and a felicitous and integrated management of density, social mix, economic opportunities and environmental controls. However, the environment came first:

'ensure that "NewPlace" is totally sustainable, i.e. it embraces the concepts and ideals of ESD; Ensure that community facilities are provided ahead of growth so that community needs are provide up front; Limit the scale of development along the immediate coastal areas to protect the coastline, conserve the national view-scape and provide a guaranteed "character" for the future; Promote medium density development that will utilise infrastructure; Create useable natural space corridors that are protected from future development; Ensure that commercial/industrial development occurs to create jobs and a commercial basis for the future population; Ensure that the area promotes a sound social mix; Only use "renewable" energy and technology in the development of "NewPlace"; Ensure that "NewPlace" develops its own unique character based on its coastal setting; Promote a total mix of residential development that caters for all age cohorts; Promote "NewPlace" so it becomes a tourist destination thereby creating jobs and economic investment; Cap the population and extent of the development; Have good public transport and provide incentives for non-use of cars; Provide support services and community infrastructure on a needs basis and based on the level of growth; Limit the range of environmental impacts in the development phase – Environment is first priority.'

The kinds of initiatives coded as environmental solutions all involved a leap of faith, namely that a built environment where aspects of the natural environment had been conserved or protected, or a place developed on ecologically sustainable principles would, somehow, build community for the residents. The lengthy vision quoted above was somewhat idealistic. In the other examples, a level of wishful thinking can be seen in these

initiatives. Environmental and conservation issues can bind the residents of an area, but they can just as easily be highly divisive¹¹³.

The problem with the ecological approach to social wellbeing is that there is no research directly linking good ecological outcomes with good social outcomes¹¹⁴. Where, however, the planner is relying on sustainability principles which include intra-generational equity and social justice, an ecologically sustainable development profile could be developed for somewhere like NewPlace. However, if this were the case, the planner in charge ought to be able to single out the key initiatives that were focused on social outcomes rather than relying on wished-for social outcomes from conservation and good management of the ecological environment.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESSES

Despite the fact that both questionnaires emphasised that the respondent should *Assume that impeccable community consultation and research processes are already in place*¹¹⁴ some 10% of respondents answered the question about what initiatives they would introduce at NewPlace by saying that they would ask local residents:

'Undertake community consultation and implement whatever initiative is required by the local residents within constraints (economic etc) existing with respect to the proposed development.'

'Consultation with residents currently living in the area and nearby. The inclusion of facilities/spaces/services that they identify as lacking in the broader area means that the new community will not be built from scratch, but can build on an existing community. This is also relevant in the context of the research that indicates that the majority of people who buy into new developments in fact live in the vicinity already.'

'Working with people to identify skills and qualities and strengths in the community and using these to implement the 'vision' – taking the time and providing the support

¹¹³ For example, I recently prepared an Economic Strategy for a community committee on the Tilligerry Peninsula of Port Stephens, a large inland waterway on the coast of NSW. A number of residents wrote to tell me that their economic problems were, inter-alia, the result of the conservation efforts of "greenies".

¹¹⁴ Beyond the acknowledged social benefits of survival, disease management, food supply etc

(including \$) for people to connect with each other and to value each other and build trust and cooperation and achieve their own outcomes'

'Depends on the outcome/responses to community consultation. Possibly a meeting place- could be a community centre or shop/common space.

Reliance on what local residents had to say was more often a first than a second choice response. Only two students gave this response.

One of these responses revealed the dilemma in which planners who adopt the ask-the-residents solution find themselves:

'Consultation meetings with existing and potential residents, businesses and industries re. what they value in a place. Then ensuring these values (if appropriate) are reinforced in the layout of the new town.'

viz. the tricky business of dealing with racism, or NIMBYism, or any of many other vested interests which can emerge in a consultation process and ought not be reinforced in the layout of a new town.

I have already discussed the shortcomings of the community consultation approach to planning for social wellbeing in Chapter 6. Suffice it to say here that this approach:

- places the locus of responsibility with the residents of the place,
- assumes that residents of an area have the time, information and knowledge to scan all the options
- assumes the residents of an area have the willingness and skills needed to arrive at a decision which takes account of residents not present in the room including minority group members, and,
- sidesteps the once-only opportunity which the planner-in-charge has to install or introduce things at the outset which would make a difference.

Respondents' recourse to community consultation may also have been due to not knowing what to do. As one person said,

'(I would) Appoint someone to give me appropriate advice.'

PROVIDE MANAGED OR UNMANAGED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

In the main survey, sixteen (7.8%) responses concerned the provision of community facilities of one sort or another. As these are the kinds of facilities usually included in the social and/or section 94¹¹⁵ plans of councils, it is perhaps surprising that these initiatives comprised a relatively small proportion of responses.

These responses were difficult to classify because they tended to refer to buildings with an assumption that appropriate services would be provided within them. In the case of community centres, however, this is quite an assumption. In many local council areas community centres are 'managed' passively through a booking clerk (who simply takes whatever bookings come in) rather than actively and creatively by a centre manager (who develops and manages a program of diverse activities)¹¹⁶.

As well, it was sometimes difficult to ascertain whether the primary emphasis was on providing the building or making sure that the building was managed. Because some of these coding decisions may be open to interpretation, the following analysis presents and then aggregates groups of responses to provide an overall picture. There was a building focus

'1)include in development places where communities meet and develop (i.e. schools, sporting facilities etc.); 2) community centre providing various activities and functions...'

'A building which is functional and meets the expectations of the community for the long-term benefit of the community.'

'Linked to the town square would be shops catering to a wide cross section of people and multi-functional community space. This might be a community centre incorporating a seniors centre, youth health centre, council customer service and other community services, plus flexible space for events, classes and other social/recreational/educational

¹¹⁵ Section 94 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act permits councils to levy developers for contributions to a range of physical infrastructure including community facilities. Social plans are required under the NSW Local Government Act 1993.

¹¹⁶ This has been my experience as a consultant to a number of urban and rural councils in NSW. See also Ziller (2002)

activities. The town square and “community centre” would feed into and “address” each other.’

‘Resources and support for the cultural, social, recreation activities/infrastructure that had been identified through consultation as being most important.’

‘Community facilities to support NewPlace that relate to the population, i.e. targeted to the age groups or range of age groups. These may be “traditional” community facilities such as libraries, sports fields, youth clubs, aged day care services or less “structures” such as well located, connected spaces for community use and casual meeting – parks, gardens, picnic areas. These need to come first not later as an afterthought.’

However within this grouping 4 responses specified that the facility should be managed, for example:

‘Community neighbourhood centre and coordinator/facilitator.’

‘ Multifunction, staffed, community resource centre/grounds including space for community groups, health and information services (library internet etc) retail, transport coop resources of some kind.’

and a further 4 responses referred not to community centres but to schools and libraries which once constructed are generally occupied and managed.

To some extent these responses could be regarded as a subset of the main urban design response to the challenge of building community at NewPlace. Placing the community centre in the town square and identifying the place at which community facilities, libraries and so on should be built are as much urban design as facility-led responses to social wellbeing. Adding these responses to the urban design category would make urban design by far and away the first choice of planners responding to the NewPlace question – 31percent of all responses.

From another point of view, if it can be taken that these responses all *implied* well managed facilities, these responses could be added to the category of ‘Build social capital and social networks’, making the

combined responses in that category 22 per cent of all responses to this question.

The first interpretation emphasises the spatial solution and second the network development solution. Both are important. The network development aspect makes the spatial allocation and design decisions effective and the latter can facilitate the former through positioning and street presentation.

I present this group of responses as a separate category here because either interpretation could be valid and several respondents seemed to mingle them. Not included by any respondent, however, was any suggestion about the role which a planner could play in ensuring that the vision, rather than an empty under-utilised hall, eventuated. The kinds of things which planners could have referred to here include:

- including shops at street level and/or offices within the complex and/or unallocated/extra parking spaces whose rent would provide an income stream to the centre, or
- tying the income stream from a facility somewhere else (eg. the town square car park) to the management of the community facility, or
- including a space suitable for child minding (the service could be provided on a cost recovery basis and its presence would increase attendance at other parts of the centre), or
- including a range of rooms/spaces for diverse uses so as to increase the likelihood that these can be let successfully to hirers as well as used on a no/peppercorn rental basis by some community groups (eg. wet spaces, studios with good light, dark rooms, music practice rooms), and so on.

Not all centres can include all these elements, but they are the elements which can make or break a successful facility and their inclusion often depends on the foresight and willingness of planners.

A good community centre can be a powerful local service provider and leisure centre in a new suburb. However, it only provides these benefits to those who use it. No community centre could meet the interests and social requirements of everyone in a suburb nor cope with a high level of demand from all the residents. Nor is a well run community centre the answer to structural problems in society such as class and income divisions, or racial segregation and discrimination, for example. A well

resourced, well run, well placed, community centre is one tool and there seems to be a shortage of other tools in the planner's kit.

TIMELINESS AND MIX

TIMELINESS

Eight responses in the main survey (3.8%) concerned the timely provision of physical infrastructure:

'Where possible infrastructure should be planned up front following consideration of physical constraints of the land.'

'Development which is staged to include employment, public transport and community services appropriate to the numbers of residents at any time. Avoid situations where there are houses and nothing else for 5 or 10 years.'

'a program that ensured the timely provision of schools, community facilities such as community centres and sporting facilities and initiatives like a 'Main Street' initiative that focused on community spaces/public domain and the links required between them eg bus ways, cycle ways etc'

'Community infrastructure and services built/established from beginning not after 'x' number of house/lots sold.'

Lack of sync in the provision of major pieces of infrastructure is a well worn and well justified planning theme. It points to the fact that planners are the managers of a development not the capital investors and these, whether they are other public agencies, private companies or political parties, have their own agendas for construction and staging (Forsyth 1999). It has become such an issue that the NSW Government in announcing its Structure Planning process for the Western Sydney Growth Area at an information session for developers (13 December 2002) announced that there would be *'no rezoning unless infrastructure costs and funding mechanisms have been secured'*¹¹⁷ – a commitment to have the financing in hand although not to actual infrastructure provision.

¹¹⁷ Noted by the author as a member of the audience

MIX

A further 8 responses (3.8%) to the main survey were concerned with mix, either mix of uses:

'Housing: design options should make for a number of housing options; higher density near commercial centres and public transport links; variable lot sized; mixture of apartments (varying in height and scale) and town houses and dwellings (detached); well planned road network with accessible small scale shops and open spaces – all leads to a more diverse group of residents.'

or mix of residential, environmental and commercial areas:

'getting the balance right – people/environment/economy'

'appropriate mix and quality of residential, commercial and rural areas'

or mix of housing types:

'a mix of single family houses through to one-bedroom apartments'

'design options should make for a number of housing options; higher density near commercial centres and public transport links; variable lot sizes; mixture of apartments (varying height and scale) and town houses and dwellings (detached); ... – all leads to a more diverse group of residents'

Mostly references to mix were really, once again, subsets of urban design. Add these (6) responses to the ever accumulating bank of urban design responses and their representation creeps up to 34% of all responses. However, two respondents referred to mixing

'housing forms and tenures to maintain a supply of affordable housing'

and one student suggested

'Ensure a good and diverse mix of socio-economic groups are encouraged to move in. This can be achieved through "silent" affordable housing. This can better allow for a mix of

social “classes” and ensure exclusivity does not exclude people.’

Reference to affordable housing was the closest any respondent came to finding a role for planning in fostering relative equality. For many planners, mix is a very simple concept, a bit like tossing the salad. Only the student linked affordable housing to inclusion and pointed out the need for a very skilled touch in managing mix so that it can be done without leading to labelling and stigmatisation.

The timing of major infrastructure, rezoning for diversity and mix and the supply of affordable housing require political commitment if not government funding. Perhaps the relatively small number of responses in these two categories was due to the relative helplessness of a planner in these matters even if she is the senior planner in charge of the project with an open budget. The issue of helplessness emerged several times during my research and is referred to in later parts of this chapter.

MAKE AN ASSESSMENT, HAVE A PLAN

Another nine (4.4% of the main survey) responses (and two students) sidestepped the question completely by saying they would prepare a plan or strategy. In many cases the plan or strategy was also dependent on (almost another version of) community engagement processes.

‘Bring together all stakeholders and scope what is to be done. Undertake needs assessment and determine what facilities need to be in the place before the first residents /community members arrive.’

‘A strategic plan that builds community development into the principles underpinning the strategic plan – without the notion of community built into the overall planning direction it will not have the necessary guidance and strength in planning terms.’

‘Assess the productive resource base’

‘Environmental assessment’

‘Develop strategies for development.’

‘Define the issues.’

DO NOTHING

Two respondents (no students) stated that they would do nothing to foster community building.

'Set the principles for steering development but let it evolve incrementally as the community needs become apparent.'

'Encourage the community to build their own facilities rather than expect the state to build them, eg schools, pre-schools, meeting rooms.'

These responses suggest a belief that community processes must not be the subject of social engineering, or that people should not expect to be spoon fed by the government.

DON'T KNOW / NO ANSWER

Twenty two respondents did not answer the question and this was a 10.7% non-response rate for the question.

A 10.7% non-response rate is quite high, however, 16 of these 22 people were answering the short questionnaire in the conference environment. Four students did not answer this question. Possibly they were the four students who came late to class!

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION ABOUT NewPlace

Question 4 about planning for community building NewPlace took many respondents a long time to answer. **The preponderance of answers to the main survey 117responses (57%) favoured physical or built solutions to community building** either through

- urban design solutions (48) and issues of mix (6) (but not including affordable housing), or
- the provision (20), including timely provision (8) of physical infrastructure, or
- environmental designs and systems (19) (but not including environmental care programs)
- the provision of various buildings (16) (including libraries, schools and community centres).

By contrast, **active promotion of social networks through post-occupancy community and civic development initiatives (30) comprised 14.6% of responses.** Adding the network development capacity of community facilities to this category (16)¹¹⁸ increases this category of response to **22.4%**. Two people mentioned affordable housing. Twenty seven people responded to the question by saying they would consult people, prepare a plan or carry out an assessment. Two people said they would do nothing. Only one respondent, a student, incorporated the idea of social inclusion as an important aim for the senior planner in charge of NewPlace.

These responses indicate a strong reliance by planners on physical solutions at the pre-occupancy stage, when most of the planning is done, and more program and service related solutions at the post-occupancy stage, which solutions would not be carried out by planners. This balance of responsibilities leaves planners dealing with physical issues of design and infrastructure provision with some consultation along the way.

At the same time, the array of responses indicated considerable creativity on the part of respondents, as well as their commitment to the public good and to democratic processes, and they showed a strong and consistent interest in achieving long term sustainable social outcomes through the practice of planning.

RESPONDENTS' JUSTIFICATIONS

People who filled in the longer questionnaire were asked for the reasons behind their choice of community building initiatives for NewPlace (N=70). There was no significant difference in the pattern of response between people's first and second choices.

¹¹⁸ note this is double counting the 16 responses included under the provision of various buildings above, however, this may appropriately represent the dual intentions of the respondents

TABLE 8.5: REASONS FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR REASONS FOR SELECTING EACH INITIATIVE FOR NewPlace?	MAIN SURVEY		STUDENTS	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
This initiative would provide the facility or amenity within which community building could take place	39	27.9	10	17.9
I believe this initiative would encourage social contact/networks/mutual support	33	23.6	22	39.3
I've had first hand experience with this and it worked	19	13.6	1	1.8
This initiative would provide essential physical infrastructure without which the community could not function	16	11.3	6	10.7
Research findings indicate this would have good community building impacts	8	5.7	0	0
I believe this initiative would create community pride	8	5.7	8	14.2
I believe this initiative would develop community/voluntary organisations	4	2.9	2	3.6
Other	5	3.6	1	1.8
No answer	8	5.7	6	10.7
Total	140	100	56	100

Only 5.7% of respondents' choices for community building at NewPlace were based on research findings and only 13.6% on personal experience. The number of responses based on research were too small for cross tabulation. Most of the choices based on personal experience were made by people with a town planning qualification (79% of these responses), and more than 50% were made by people in the 25-34 age group. It is hard to interpret this result. Town planners were slightly over represented in the 'based on experience' group but these responses tended to come from younger town planners. Perhaps the experience on which they were relying was not gained in their town planning work.

In any event, by far the greater proportion of reasons, 39.3%, were based on the view that the physical infrastructure would provide either a physical infrastructure '*without which the community could not function*', or the envelope (perhaps shell) within which community building could take place. This view could also be accorded the status of a belief, and the remaining 32.2% were overtly based on various beliefs.

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENT JUSTIFICATIONS

The data suggests that more respondents to the main survey based their **community building choices n beliefs than on personal experience and few were relying on research findings**. Nearly all the student responses were belief based.

CONSTRAINTS AND PULL FACTORS

In my early conversations with planners about what planners can and could do to promote social wellbeing and good societal outcomes, I came across several themes which I decided to explore in the questionnaire. I used a series of questions each of which is a paraphrase of actual statements made in these early conversations.

These questions are shown in Tables 8.6 and 8.7. The themes have been roughly classified into factors which get in the way or limit what a planner might do (constraints) and considerations which might help planners promote social wellbeing outcomes by exerting a pull on the direction of their work.

Table 8.6 sets out the results for possible constraint factors for the main survey. Not all questions were asked in both questionnaires so N is shown for each question.

CONSTRAINTS

TABLE 8.6: FACTORS WHICH MAY LIMIT WHAT A PLANNER CAN DO WITH RESPECT TO SOCIAL WELLBEING

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ✓ BOX CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL	AGREE		DISAGREE,		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
There are some lessons from the past which are easy to turn into best practice guidelines, such as how to build safe streets, what size population will support a bus service. Planners and developers have their work cut out just trying to comply with all the best practice guidelines that are around. N=70 (n.a.=1)	52	74.3	13	18.6	4	5.7
The market dictates where developers will build and if there is a market for the housing then that's the rationale for the development. N=70 (n.a.=1)	31	44.3	38	54.3	0	0
The problem with a strategic, or master, plan is that its just ideas. In reality most strategies have to pass the developer profit test or the government funds test. These tests can transform a plan so that what gets built is not what was planned at all. N=135 (n.a.=1)	87	64.4	44	32.6	3	2.2
Physical infrastructure and buildings come first, social structures come later N=135	45	33.3	88	65.2	2	1.5
The opportunity cost of putting community buildings in town centres is often just too high. N=70 (n.a.=1)	17	24.3	47	67.1	5	7.1

There was considerable agreement with the view that planners already have too much to worry about. Fifty two of 70 respondents (74.3%) agreed that *'Planners and developers have their work cut out just trying to comply with all the best practice guidelines that are around.'* Eighty seven of 135 respondents (64.4%) agreed that *'the problem with a strategic plan or master plan is that its just ideas'*, ideas which don't become reality because of lack of money or political will. This result reflects the concerns about timeliness in some responses to the NewPlace scenario.

But there was less agreement about the inevitability of market based outcomes. Thirty one of 70 respondents, (44.3%) agreed that *'the market dictates where developers will build and if there is a market for housing then that's the rationale for the development'* while 38 (54.3%) respondents disagreed with this. Forty seven (67.1%) of 70 respondents also disagreed that *'the opportunity cost of putting community buildings in town centres is often just too high'* a view which had been fervently put to me by a public sector developer. So while planners tend to agree that the volume of work and the gap between a master plan and its implementation are impediments, they did not feel so disempowered by market pressures regarding the location of housing or of community buildings.

All respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: *'Physical infrastructure and buildings come first, social structures come later'*. Eighty eight respondents (65.2%) disagreed, most of them strongly, with this proposition. Only 10.4% of respondents agreed strongly with the proposition and only 33.4% agreed with it at all. This result is in marked contrast to the emphasis on physical infrastructure and buildings which the question about NewPlace elicited – suggesting to me that when the issue is stated baldly, planners are more clear about their position than when they are asked a very open ended question.

Student responses (in Attachment 5) showed a similar profile although they were slightly more inclined to agree with the proposition that *'the opportunity cost of putting community buildings in town centres is often just too high'*.

PULL FACTORS

The pull idea is about the leading influence which a strongly held vision or an agreed direction expressed in a strategic plan can have on a development. Some of the responses to the questions about ideas for NewPlace suggested that some planners believe that well developed strategic plans should lead (pull) a development process. Nine respondents relied on the development of a strategic plan as the basis for community building and for others it was to be the focus of their short term community development or consultation processes:

When the role of strategic planning was put explicitly, there was consistent and strong support for it as a pull factor.

TABLE 8.7: THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ✓ BOX CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL	AGREE		DISAGREE		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Unless you have a vision for a place, it is difficult to decide what to put where, i.e. what the relationship between various structural elements should be N=70	66	94.3	3	4.3	1	1.4
The strategic elements tend to get forgotten during implementation. If you want them to survive, you have to give them a very deliberate and consistent emphasis. N=70 n.a.=1	63	90.0	5	7.1	1	1.4

This is an important finding because much day to day planning does not involve strategic planning. Strategic planning is not taught in most planning schools and is only at the White Paper and piloting stage on the NSW Government's planning agenda¹¹⁹. Students had more reservations about these strategic factors, and perhaps less experience with them.

SUMMARY OF CONSTRAINTS AND PULL FACTORS

CONSTRAINTS

- **74% of respondents thought that their work was already cut out for them**
- **64% thought funding uncertainties make strategic and master plans problematic**
- **44% thought that market dictates were all important.**

However, only

- **24% thought that opportunity costs prevent community buildings being located in town centres, and**

¹¹⁹ In June 2002, the NSW government agreed to only limited implementation of its White Paper (PlanningNSW 2001) with a modest budget (\$4.4 million) and without legislative backing.

- **65% disagreed that physical infrastructure should precede social structures.**

PULL FACTORS

- **94% thought a vision essential to deciding the relationships between structural elements in a place, but**
- **90% also said that strategic elements tend to get forgotten unless they are given 'a very deliberate and consistent emphasis'.**

The results show that planners think that strategic planning is helpful but difficult to turn into reality, but they are reasonably confident that planning can constrain market forces.

CANVASSING SOME SPECIFIC IDEAS

While the questions about NewPlace asked respondents to come up with their own ideas, Question 7 in the longer questionnaire and Question 2 in the shorter questionnaire put up some specific suggestions for comment. Each of these canvasses an initiative within the traditional domain of planning which might deliver benefits in terms of community building or social wellbeing. Seven suggestions were proposed in the longer questionnaire and 6 in the shorter one. Planners were asked whether they thought these suggestions were a good idea.

All these propositions received more support than rejection and they all received more unqualified support than qualified support. Care is needed, however, in interpreting this pattern of responses. First, these are technical planning questions and 40 respondents (29.6%) were working in planning departments but did not have a town planning qualification. Not all of these people ticked the don't know column, so it is possible that some of them thought some propositions were a good idea without the benefit of actual town planning experience to guide their answers.

When respondents whose main qualification was not in town planning qualification are excluded from this table, however, the level of endorsement for these ideas rises. Student planners had a similar profile to qualified town planners. The views of all respondents to the main survey are shown in Table 8.8. Results for qualified town planners and student planners are in Attachment 5.

A second problem in interpreting these results is that the initiatives being proposed are either unusual or would be new in NSW or Australia. So unless respondents were familiar with the operation of these suggestions elsewhere or had happened to come across a community facility with a tied source of income¹²⁰, they were having to operate outside their experience in responding to these questions. Results from the earlier question about the basis for their ideas about NewPlace suggest that planners don't mind doing this, but perhaps that response is specific to questions about community building in general and not to more technically based town planning questions.

Overall, planners responding to these questions demonstrated a high level of interest in and support for a quite diverse range of suggested initiatives.

¹²⁰ Such as the Glen Street Theatre in Warringah local government area which is part-subsidised by the income from the leased squash court premises built as part of the venue

TABLE 8.8 REACTIONS TO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS: MAIN SURVEY

WOULD ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY BUILDING BY PLANNERS?	A GOOD IDEA ✓		A GOOD IDEA BUT NOT REALISTIC		NOT A GOOD IDEA		DON'T KNOW	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Through S94 or developer agreements, developer contributions are extended to include buildings (such as shops and flats) that will yield rental income tied to contributing to the salary for a manager of the community facility, eg a community/cultural/adult learning centre. N=135 (n.a.=5)	74	54.8	24	17.7	20	14.8	12	3.7
Town fringe & out of town shopping malls are banned (as in UK). N=135 (n.a.=1)	67	49.6	35	26	22	16.3	10	7.4
A new State Planning Policy identifies criteria for locating community facilities, including community centres. (eg lonely buildings on the edges of reserves/non-commercial space without windows etc would not make it). N=135 (n.a.=2)	79	58.5	24	17.7	21	15.5	9	6.7
DUAP ¹²¹ prepares guidelines on community building for planners (eg. similar to DUAP's urban design guidelines) as part of State Planning Policies. N=135 (n.a.=1)	85	63.0	28	20.6	12	8.9	9	6.7
New town centres are designed to include spaces suitable for markets for locally made/grown products N=135(n.a.=5)	108	80.0	16	11.8	6	4.4	5	3.7
The EPA Act is changed to limit progress in a development beyond a threshold number of houses/ households until a basic service infrastructure is in place. N=70 (n.a.=1)	42	60.0	14	20.0	11	15.7	2	2.9
DUAP ¹²² offers training for planners in partnership development with community organisations, the establishment of Development Trusts and the fostering of other social and community enterprises. N=135 (n.a.=2)	106	78.5	11	8.1	8	5.9	10	7.4

These results are examined more closely below.

¹²¹ In the short questionnaire, this reference to DUAP was removed and replaced with 'A State Planning Authority'.

¹²² In the short questionnaire, this question just asked about the provision of this kind of training without specifying the training sponsor.

TIE INCOME SOURCES TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES.

Despite the general level of support for the idea (98 respondents or 72.6% said it was a good idea), of these 24 (17.7%) had reservations about its practicality, many fearing that the mechanism might be misused or fail.

'Who is going to enforce/police the agreement? The community/council bears this cost (legal fees) which cannot be recouped.'

'I wonder if government instruments (local and state departments) can manage real estate to yield sufficient profit that would realise a wage. I suspect it would be lost in the internal inefficiencies, cost-shifting and competitiveness.'

'I can see there could be difficulties in the management of the income/market rate and the salary of the person.'

Half of the respondents who thought this was not a good idea were not in favour of public monies going to the management of community facilities. They thought that building management should be funded by users. This is an area where experience might have delivered a different response. For example, a large number of state and federal government grants go to providing the management capacity of a range of community buildings such as neighbourhood centres, youth centres, aged person centres without which these facilities would become mere halls for hire. There was also a view that the present legislation would not permit this idea:

'The nexus between S94 contributions and the subject community facility are such that the contributions need to be directly benefiting that community. The employment of someone to manage that facility is a secondary requirement to providing direct benefit to the community. Unless the EP&A Act is changed, this would be difficult to progress.'

'It seems to me that the "developer" is being hit for six... to be required to provide commercial buildings is a bit rich.'

'There are better uses this money could be put to.'

'Running businesses should be left to the private sector.'

But others were more optimistic

'If this is tied to market products I can't see the nexus. If, however, management can be built into capital cost, it will work.' (town planner)

And as noted, most respondents supported the idea.

BAN TOWN FRINGE AND OUT OF TOWN SHOPPING MALLS

The UK Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs (1999) noted that objections about the commercial non-viability of high street supermarkets evaporated once town fringe development became very difficult. In France local authorities are empowered to veto any major retail development and some USA towns are able to, and do, veto theme or chain restaurants (Simms et al. 2002)

In this survey 76.6% of respondents thought that banning town fringe and out of town shopping malls was a good idea. However, there were a few provisos. Two people pointed out that it is much too late in some towns and six mentioned that in some urban fringe areas, it is easier to get to a shopping mall than to deal with the traffic in the town centre. Eight respondents said they thought this wasn't a good idea precisely for this reason. Some respondents thought that such controls interfered with the market and/or with people's rights to drive to do their shopping:

'Australia has a lot of land to waste and like America we love the convenience that cars give us, particularly for shopping.'

'They provide choice for consumers and convenience. But they could be limited in size so that the town centre remains viable and sustainable.'

This policy would disadvantage people who live on the fringe or out of town. It would encourage people to drive to the centre.'

'Traditional town centres do not provide sufficient land area (vacant) that will enable development of such proposals, also \$ market values of land in the town centres would make such a project unprofitable to the developer.'

'People shouldn't be forced to travel into the centre of town just as they shouldn't have services removed from the centres of towns. Neither nub nor doughnut.'

'Why would this be a good idea when we have poor public transport and an expanding metropolitan area and a retail hierarchy concept accepted in town planning teaching that promotes exactly this? Why shouldn't a person be able to develop a shopping centre on the fringe if it will serve a population?'

'Consumer preference is too strong. People like being able to get everything under one roof, i.e. in a mall.'

A STATE PLANNING POLICY ON COMMUNITY FACILITIES

One hundred and three respondents (76.2%) supported this idea, but six respondents thought it was a good idea but not an appropriate subject for a state planning policy.

'A single policy is unlikely to deal effectively with the multiplicity of applications that arise. A SEPP¹²³ is the wrong tool.'

'State Planning Policies should remain focused on policy directions at the macro level. Local government would be better placed to work out the detail on this sort of direction.'

Ten respondents thought that the siting of community facilities should be left to local communities to decide, and on this basis six of them thought a policy with criteria was not a good idea.

'Such a policy is not required. Throughout the planning process, community participation and other consultation provides for a "shopping list" of which such facilities are required and best located and for what purpose.'(town planner)

'the location of community facilities should be identified at a local level through local planning and consultation.'(town planner)

'Each area is different and should be left to local communities and agencies to decide.'(town planner)

¹²³ A SEPP is a State Environmental Planning Policy

I have to assume that these ten respondents have not travelled extensively through NSW looking at community buildings¹²⁴. However, these ten responses should also be seen as part of two continuing minority concerns that ran through the survey results. One is that social issues are not the role of planners, a theme I will explore in more detail in the next section. The other is the theme of self determination by 'the community', an issue I dealt with in Chapter 6.

Perhaps part of the problem may lie in not envisaging what such a policy might state. As well, among the non-supporters, three people thought it was beyond the state planning agency to get the policy right.

'I have little confidence in DUAP getting it right.'

'State policies rarely hit the mark.'

GUIDELINES ON COMMUNITY BUILDING

A similar suggestion was that a state planning body could prepare guidelines for planners on community building. One hundred and thirteen respondents (83.7%) thought this would be a good idea, but twenty seven had reservations. They thought it wasn't the planning authority's role and that the guidelines wouldn't work. One person thought it was outside a planner's role.

Among those who disagreed with the idea, five thought that DUAP would not get these guidelines right and in particular that the Department would emphasise design over other aspects.

'the emphasis would be on a flash building not its functionality.'

'The staff of DUAP have no credibility in the real world.'

'DUAP does not have the expertise, track record of guideline preparation poor.'

¹²⁴ Many of which are unimaginatively constructed, inappropriately located and poorly maintained.

'Planners tend to be a bit conservative. I would think achieving this through education rather than prescription (initially at least).'

'By the time DUAP has written it things will have changed!'

Other concerns amounted to a difficulty in seeing that general principles and criteria apply just as much to decisions affecting social outcomes as to traditional planning decisions.

'I think all communities are different. Very general guidelines may be OK but cannot be tied to the guidelines.'

'These standards will vary from place to place.'

'Guidelines are great but the real test is in the implementation. The guidelines need to come with training. Some planners will never get their heads around community building.'

'Such a system generalises community and reduces it to a certain ideal that can be reproduced in any situation. This also reduces heterogeneity between communities.' (student planner)

SPACE FOR MARKETS IN NEW TOWN CENTRES

This idea concerns designing 'new town centres to include spaces suitable for markets for locally made/grown products'. This too had overwhelming support (92%). Nine people were concerned that the new residents might not want a market or might not be engaged in producing anything which could be sold in a market. However most respondents understood the question to be about designing in options rather than requiring the options to take place.

'Not every town will want this kind of activity, however, the inclusion of a suitable space for events in general would be good.'

TIMELINESS OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Respondents to the longer questionnaire were asked whether the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act should be 'changed to limit progress in a development beyond a threshold number of

houses/households until a basic service infrastructure is in place. As I noted in regard to responses about NewPlace, the timing of infrastructure provision is a perennial issue in NSW and is also a matter in which town planners are at the behest of other planners (transport and education planners for example) and more particularly NSW Treasury. These difficulties are reflected in the lower rate of unequivocal agreement with this idea. Of the 70 respondents, 12 thought it was too difficult an idea to enforce or achieve and four other people pointed out the catch 22 nature of the problem, viz that government agencies generally like to provide expensive infrastructure when the demand for its use is already in place.

'Catch 22: eg re. public transport. There would be no impetus to build a public transport system until there are people to use it.'

The problem is of course that before the numbers are present to establish this demand, residents are establishing other means of transport or education which they are likely as not to continue after the railway or school is provided. I included this question more as a logical option than necessarily a viable one and was surprised that it got the support that it did. It also touched a few nerves:

'This is extremely important in fringe areas like the Rouse Hill development in NW Sydney which has extremely poor infrastructure.'

'This would be an enormous change to the Act and practice of residential development strategies. This gets to the heart of integrating infrastructure provision by the State Government with local residential strategies. It is very sensible, however, politically, planning legislation is heavily influenced by key lobby groups such as the housing industry which is obviously a key economic driver. Performance indicators for infrastructure may be a way of achieving this?'

'I'd go further. No infrastructure, no development.'

'Too much like social engineering and control. The history of human settlement needs to continue to have room for chaos, spontaneity, community/social activities, through which innovation, invention and surprise can emerge.'

This last view seems to be inherently in conflict with the idea of planning, but as my survey consistently showed, some planners feel reluctant to apply planning to social issues.

TRAINING FOR PLANNERS

The final idea was that a state planning agency provide *'training for planners in partnership development with community organisations, the establishment of Development Trusts and the fostering of other social and community enterprises'*. It was not suggested that universities take on this role. This was because it is the planning agencies which are already seeking partnership arrangements in regard to the development of strategic plans (eg through the Living Centres program) and the provision of affordable housing. So in NSW, it is PlanningNSW which already has an interest in the capacity of planners to participate in this. The question adds to these existing developments by suggesting that partnering with community organisations, setting up Development Trusts and finding ways to foster social and community enterprise¹²⁵ are skills which can be learned.

One hundred and seventeen (86.6%) respondents agreed with this proposition, but 5 thought that DUAP (subsequently PlanningNSW) would not get this training right, or that it was outside the department's role,

'I don't have any faith in DUAP being able to deliver anything like this thought.'

'DUAP does not have the hands on development expertise to offer training.'

'DUAP is not inspiring in its capacities and willingness to do this.'

'I don't know that it is DUAP's direct role to retrain the profession, maybe we need to redefine what a planner does and see this reflected across DUAP, Councils, in the universities, in tenders etc.'

¹²⁵ Social enterprise is defined as the trading activities of charities, mutuals and co-operatives, community enterprises and development trusts (Sattar and Fisher 2000, Social Enterprise London 2001)

and five thought that the idea was simply unrealistic. Two people thought that these skills were not within a planner's role.

'Consultation yes, partnership no, as often interest at community groups may railroad decision making process, a political process planners must stay removed from.'

'I don't know if planners should become 'social planners'. I think there should be a degree of input from a social planner to the planner dealing with a matter, eg a release area.'

'Partnerships are built by all levels of organisations not just planners within it. The emphasis on targeting particular groups will ultimately be counter-productive. All are responsible.'

And one person thought that these initiatives were not in themselves sufficiently viable to warrant a training program.

'Community interest is high at the inception of such programs but tends to die out over time, this system is not sustainable over the longer term.'

Finally, one student planner observed

'Social issues while important are often the last to get considered no matter much training a planner gets, due to economic issues taking priority over others.'

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC IDEAS

The following percentages refer to all respondents to the main survey.

- **73% thought tied income sources for community facilities a good idea**, but comments showed their inexperience with this and the recurring idea that communities should do this for themselves.
- **77% agreed that out of town shopping malls should be banned**, and comments referred to real issues of traffic, parking and convenience for residents on the suburban fringe.

- **76% supported a state planning policy on locating community facilities**, but some people had reservations and thought that communities should do this for themselves.
- **84% agreed that guidelines on community building would be helpful**, but some respondents questioned the capacity of PlanningNSW (then DUAP) to write these.
- **92% supported spaces in new town centres for local markets**
- **80% agreed with legislative requirements to ensure timely provision of infrastructure**, and
- **87% supported training for planners** in partnership development with community organisations, the establishment of development trusts and the fostering of other social and community enterprises. However not everyone thought this should be done by the state planning agency.

Overall, these responses demonstrated a high level of support from planners for a range of specific initiatives which might enhance the profession's capabilities in community building.

A PLANNER'S ROLE

The issue of what is within and what is beyond a planner's role was present in my earliest encounters with the issue of town planning's relationship to social wellbeing, and it emerged regularly as an issue in the survey results, whether or not it was directly asked, and in post-survey discussions. As I noted above, a few individuals proposed that preparing guidelines for planners on community building and offering training in partnership building and social enterprise went beyond a planner's role.

I asked about a planner's role directly in several other questions. In this section I bring together these various explorations in the survey to examine what respondents thought about the role of planners in regard to various aspects of community building. Several survey questions concerned the skills that planners have. For example I asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: *'People who are good at planning the physical elements of a place are*

not necessarily the people who can build the social elements of place – that requires different skills and different people. Ninety nine respondents (73.3%) agreed with this statement. Student planners show the same profile.

TABLE 8.9: BELIEFS ABOUT A PLANNER'S SKILLS

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ✓ BOX CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL	AGREE		DISAGREE		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
	People who are good at planning the physical elements of a place are not necessarily the people who can build the social elements of place – that requires different skills and different people. N=135	99	73.3	34	25.2	2
Student responses N = 28	20	71.4	7	25.0	1	3.6

Two questions later I picked up this theme asking about '*a list of skills a planner might need for community building*'. Table 8.10 shows the distribution of responses regarding respondents' assessments of their current skill levels vis-à-vis specific activities that might relate to community building. These activities were:

- being able to plan for the social/community infrastructure of a new release area
- being able to demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to the private sector
- being able to document and support social impact arguments
- being able to plan for the development of social networks, local acquaintanceship and mutual support among neighbours in a new development
- being able to start the processes needed to build community organisations and a civic infrastructure.

I selected these items on the basis that a planner might easily be in a situation where such skills are called for, whether or not the detailed work might be put out to a specialist. For example, a planner might find herself

- working on a structure plan in which the location of a range of social infrastructure should be indicated
- on site with a developer who can't see any business benefits from social investment
- in an assessment discussion which is skating over potential social impacts
- writing an urban design brief which requires the design to encourage acquaintanceship in a variety of ways
- specifying the contribution levels for a community facility, and ensuring that the community facility incorporates revenue raising opportunities and a meeting space for the management committee
- contributing to the development of a well structured and stable management for a significant community facility by including likely stakeholders in consultation processes and assisting these to focus on sustainable management options.

In each example, the planner finds herself in a bona fide planning situation of potentially timely influence. Table 8.10 indicates, however, that in regard to each of these only between 10% and 19% of survey respondents felt they 'could already do this effectively'.

Ten respondents (14.3% of 70) said they could already plan effectively for social and community infrastructure. Seven of these respondents were town planners. Twenty one respondents (30%) thought they could be effective in this area with some training, eleven (15.7%) thought legislation was necessary and sixteen (22.9%) thought that training *and* legislative support would be needed for them to be effective in planning for social and community infrastructure. A further seven (10%) thought this area of work was outside a planner's role. There was a similar profile for 'being able to document and support social impact arguments'.

By contrast, while few respondents (10.4%) thought they could already demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to developers, most (90 of 135 or 66.7%) thought they could do this effectively 'with some training' and only 6.7% thought it outside a planner's role.

TABLE 8.10: RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SKILL LEVELS

HERE IS A LIST OF SKILLS A PLANNER MIGHT NEED FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING. WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT EACH OF THESE SKILLS?	I ALREADY DO THIS EFFECTIVELY		I COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA WITH SOME TRAINING		I COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA IF THERE WERE ADEQUATE LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT IT		I COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA WITH SOME TRAINING AND ADEQUATE LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT		THIS IS OUTSIDE A PLANNER'S ROLE		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Being able to plan for the social/ community infrastructure of a new release area, eg. the development of a range of social and cultural facilities, services N=70 (n.a.=2)	10	14.3%	21	30%	11	15.7%	16	22.9%	7	10.0%	3	4.3%
Being able to demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to the private sector (business and developers) N=135 (n.a.=1)	14	10.4%	90	66.7%	3	2.2%	11	8.1%	9	6.7%	7	5.2%
Being able to document and support social impact arguments N=70	13	18.6%	27	38.6%	7	10.0%	12	14.3%	7	10.0%	4	5.7%
Being able to plan for the development of social networks, local acquaintanceship and mutual support among neighbours in a new development. N=70 (n.a.=2)	11	15.7%	30	42.9%	3	4.3%	3	4.3%	15	21.4%	6	8.6%
Being able to start the processes needed to build community organisations and a civic infrastructure N=135 (n.a.=2)	20	14.8%	68	50.4%	4	3.0%	9	6.7%	23	17.0%	9	6.7%

When it came to planning for the development of social networks or building community organisations and civic infrastructure the pattern of relatively low levels of confidence in being able to do this already continued, although many thought that training was all that would be needed (42.9% and 50.4%). However, even larger proportions of respondents (21.4% and 17.0%) thought that these last two areas of activity were outside a planner's role.

Looking across the table, it seems that respondents were more likely to think legislative backing was needed for them to be able to plan for social and cultural facilities and services and for the documentation and support of social impact arguments than for other activities. On the other hand, there were quite significant levels of doubt about whether nearly all these activities, except *'being able to demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to the private sector'*, fall within the role of planners, and this particularly applied to activities having regard to networks, acquaintanceship and community and civic organisations.

Student planners were much less confident that they already had any of these skills, but most thought that this could be remedied either by training or by training and legislative change (results in Attachment 5). In contrast to the respondents to the main survey, none of the students thought that *'being able to plan for the social/community infrastructure of a new release area'* or *'being able to document and support social impact arguments'* were outside a planner's role and all but three students thought it would be within their role to be *'able to start the processes needed to build community organisations and a civic infrastructure'*. However, they were less confident that planning for social networks and local acquaintanceship or demonstrating the market benefits of social investment to the private sector is within a planner's role.

The question of what planners could or should do in regard to civic engagement, the degree to which individuals in a society participate in civic and civil organisations, was also canvassed. The question describes some research outcomes (Putnam 2000 chs. 2-7) and asks how planners should respond to these findings. Several options are given:

- 1 trying to counter the trend
- 2 carrying on as usual
- 3 trying to do both of the above

4 doing neither of the above because its not a planner's role.

By a small majority, respondents to the longer survey plumped for trying to do both, but 19 of them wanted to try to counter the trend. Taking these two categories (1 and 3) together, 44 or 63% of respondents were prepared to include actions to counter this trend in their suite of initiatives. Only 8 wanted to stick to basic social and cultural service provision. However, 14 (20.0%) thought that *'its not a planner's role to deal with levels of civic engagement'*. Nineteen of 28 students were prepared to include actions to counter the trend. Only 3 students thought it is not a planner's role to deal with civic engagement.

TABLE 8.11: A PLANNER'S ROLE RE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

RECENTLY A NUMBER OF SOCIAL RESEARCHERS HAVE REPORTED THAT OVER THE LAST 40 YEARS, FEWER AND FEWER PEOPLE IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE HAVE BEEN WILLING TO JOIN ORGANISATIONS AND/OR VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME. IF THIS IS THE CASE, SHOULD (TOWN/URBAN/REGIONAL) PLANNERS: ✓ TICK ONE	MAIN SURVEY		STUDENT RESPONSES	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Try to counter this trend by supporting the establishment of innovative community associations, partnerships, cooperative enterprises etc which are more responsive to social conditions in the 21 st century, <i>or</i>	19	27.1	7	25.0
Assume the trend will continue and concentrate on basic social and cultural service provision, <i>or</i>	8	11.4	4	14.3
Do both of these things, <i>or</i>	25	35.7	12	42.9
Do neither of the above – its not a planner's role to deal with levels of civic engagement.	14	20.0	3	10.7
Don't know	3	4.3	2	10.7
Other, please specify	1	1.4	0	0
Total	70	100	28	100.0

In the previous question (Table 8.10) 23, or 17% of, respondents to both surveys thought that *'being able to start the processes needed to build community organisations and a civic infrastructure'* was outside a planners role and 21.4% of respondents to the longer survey thought that being able to plan for the development of social networks etc was outside

a planner's role. So across the two surveys there is a consistent level of concern among between 17% and 21% of respondents about planners' role dealing with the related issues of civic infrastructure, social networks, and civic engagement. However, student planners are consistently less likely to think that a planner's role should exclude these kinds of social initiatives.

On the other hand, there is a countervailing and equally consistent interest among planners, including student planners, in countering current trends in civic engagement (Table 8.11), and being prepared to consider specific ideas about how planning could contribute to community building (Table 8.8).

As well, many planners are prepared to take a very broad view of the role of planning in community building when offered a range of definitions (Table 8.12)

Each option in Table 8.12 begins with '*Community building by planners refers to...*' and each choice, except for the working definition for this study, is in current use.

- 1 This is the UK Community Development Foundation's **definition of community development** (Community Development Foundation 2001).
- 2 This refers to scope of what many planners currently do in structure and master planning for a place. It's the **traditional option**.
- 3 This is **my working definition** of community building by planners which I prepared for this study.
- 4 This reflects the scope of a small number of recent strategic plans which include housing, including affordable housing, environmental protection issues such as re-use of grey water and efforts to get jobs into the area. I call this the **sustainable development** choice.
- 5 This is the '**hedging your bets**' option which includes everything.

TABLE 8.12: CHOICE OF DEFINITIONS FOR THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS BEST APPLIES TO THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN COMMUNITY BUILDING? PLEASE TICK ✓ THE DEFINITION WHICH YOU PERSONALLY PREFER	MAIN SURVEY		STUDENTS	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
1. Community building by planners refers to a range of practices dedicated to increasing the strength and effectiveness of community life, improving local conditions and enabling people to participate in public decision-making	15	21.4	4	14.3
2. Community building by planners refers to putting the key social/community infrastructure (buildings + services, eg schools, hospitals, libraries, community centres etc) into a place	2	2.9	3	10.7
3. Community building by planners refers to the application of urban design principles, community development best practice and social policy research to the urban and regional policies and plans whether these are new release areas, areas of urban regeneration or areas undergoing significant levels of rebuilding	14	20.0	7	25.0
4. Community building by planners means putting all the essential <i>physical and economic</i> components necessary to sustain healthy lifestyles into a place – this includes housing, schools and hospitals but also solar energy systems, waste recycling, public transport, local jobs etc	13	18.6	8	28.6
5. Community building is a shorthand way of referring to everything that goes into making a new or redeveloped area a success –the physical structures, the social services, the community development activities, the lot!	21	30.0	6	21.4
I am not sure which definition best applies	4	5.7	0	0
Other, please specify	1	1.4	0	0
Total	70	100.00	28	100.00

This was the last substantive question. Only after considering how they thought about community, what they would do in NewPlace and why, what they thought about specific ideas that could be introduced, what skills they already have and might need and what a planner's role might be in regard to civic engagement, were respondents to the longer questionnaire invited to pick a definition. And, at this point, respondents overwhelmingly rejected the definition in traditional usage (2 above), preferring, the following order:

- 1 the 'hedging-your-bets' definition (5),
- 2 the definition of community development (1),
- 3 the working definition for this study (3) and then
- 4 the sustainable development definition (4)
- 5 the traditional definition (2)

While these results indicate a considerable interest on the part of planners in abandoning the limitations of traditional practice, this is only in favour of hedging bets (perhaps understandable after such a confronting questionnaire), which suggests that planners are not clear what they have abandoned the traditional definition for.

A definition which includes 'the lot' is meaningless in practice (because of the lack of boundaries and priorities) and is difficult to defend. A definition which limits community building to community development excludes important initiatives which are the prerogative of planners, some of which were suggested in the ideas put up in Question 7 (providing rental income to community facilities and limiting out of town shopping malls, for example). The sustainable development definition puts grey water into the definition of community building but leaves out social networks, civic engagement and civic infrastructure.

Only 20% agreed with my working definition – the only definition on offer which brings together social policy research, urban design principles and community development best practice, almost certainly three key elements of community building by planners.

The student planners showed a different profile preferring the *sustainable development definition* by a narrow lead over the working definition. They were not particularly interested in the traditional definitions, including the community development definition, although six of them plumped for 'Hedging your bets'.

These results reveal that the profession of planning does not have a definition of community building which it could call its own. I watched many of the respondents struggle with this question apparently finding it difficult even to sort out the differences between the definitional options they were offered. I formed a strong impression that many respondents confronted the question of how to define the role of planning in community building for the first time when they reached Question 10 in my questionnaire:

'I kept on thinking of it (community building in the questionnaire) as a building'

'I find community building is not easy to define and therefore (it is) difficult to enter into a dialogue about it'

THE PLANNER'S ROLE: SUMMARY

Several approaches to the question of how planning can affect community building in this survey have yielded a picture of planners' unease with and lack of clarity about their role.

- 73% agree that 'people who are good at planning the physical elements of a place are not necessarily the people who can build the social elements'.
- Fewer than 18% feel able to plan effectively for social infrastructure of a new release area, demonstrate market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure, document and support social impact arguments, plan for the development of social networks in a new neighbourhood or start the processes to build civic infrastructure.
- Only 10% of respondents feel it is not their role to plan for social infrastructure or to document and support social impact arguments.
- But 17% feel it is not their role to start processes to build civic infrastructure,
- and 21% feel it is not their role to plan for the development of social networks in a new development.
- 20% feel it is not a planner's role to deal with levels of civic engagement.

While 97% of respondents are prepared to abandon traditional definitions of community building, this is mainly (30%) in favour of hedging their bets with an all-inclusive definition, or in favour (21%) of a community development definition emphasising participation in public decision making, i.e. social network building and civic engagement (matters which some 20% of their colleagues feel is outside a planner's role).

The results show that the profession itself has no clear working definition of community building, is confused about its role and that most practitioners feel insufficiently skilled to accomplish basic planning-for-social outcomes tasks. Student planners had a broader view of their role and a more adventurous approach to civic engagement, but they too showed no clear preference (small numbers) for a definition of community building by planners.

AFTER THOUGHTS

Some respondents wrote extra notes on their questionnaires and people who completed their questionnaires in a meeting stayed on for about half an hour of unstructured discussion – sometimes this stretched to an hour of very animated discussion. The notes written on questionnaires have been transcribed. Notes taken by the author have been written up. These sources of extra material are at the end of Attachment 5. In this section, I discuss three key themes which emerged from these notes and discussions. The first theme is concerned with the position of planners, the second with the position of local government in planning and the third with the low standing of social issues in the profession. Other themes mentioned were:

- the size of planners' existing workload,
- the perceived size of the additional task if planners were to take on community building (at every post survey discussion, at least one person would say the words: 'we can't do everything you know'),
- the narrow training and skills base of the profession, and
- the pressure of day to day operational requirements eg. to process development applications, which gets in the way of new thinking.

THE POSITION OF PLANNERS

By far the most comment related to the position of planners. There were a number of components to this: the general role of town planners in their day to day work, their position in the planning system as a whole, political pressures and effects of political interventions.

THE PLANNER AS HANDMAIDEN OR SIR HUMPHREY

According to my dictionary, a handmaiden is 'a person or thing that serves a useful but subordinate purpose' (Hanks 1979). While the

metaphor may seem at odds with the often ‘blokey’¹²⁶ culture of the planning profession, the definition is not at odds with what planners had to say about where they stood in the scheme of things. They said planners:

- *‘work within a narrow paradigm’*
- *‘generally are not called upon to provide creative input’*
- *can’t deliver, ‘they only steer the ship’*
- *‘There’s an assumption that we have our hands on all the levers but we don’t’*
- *are ‘low on the pecking order’ and its too scary to try to apply weak sections of the Act (eg those relating to social impacts)*
- *‘In the 7-8 years that I have been a planner, I have formed the view that at a strategic and statutory level, planners whether creating social infrastructure or built forms, only tinker around the edges and make minor changes in the scheme of things. The reasons for this in my opinion are: (1) power and dominance of global capital and its impacts, (2) decline in leisure time (less time for the development of social capital), (3) short term vision of most politicians and an election cycle related to funding of political parties by powerful political lobby groups, (4) DESIRE FOR A CAPITAL RETURN!!!’.*

These comments reflect a simple reality about planning. Most planners, and town/urban planners are no exception, when they are in their planning role, as distinct from their assessment role, are acting as expert advisors and facilitators not decision makers. This is especially the case where professional planners are preparing strategic planning documents such as *Melbourne 2030* (Victorian Government 2002) or regional strategic plans like the ones discussed in Chapter 3. In this role, they may do their best and put forward what they consider will be in the best public interest for the long term. However, the final document does not belong to the planner but is owned by the relevant government. Thus *Melbourne 2030* was prepared by planners in the Victorian Department of Infrastructure¹²⁷ but published as a document authored by the Victorian

¹²⁶ Another thesis could be written in justification of this adjective. For my purposes I point to the gender balance among planners in most councils I have visited, at the planning conference at which I distributed my questionnaire and in the membership of the Planning Research Centre at the University of Sydney. The fact that the survey respondents were relatively evenly balanced in terms of gender I take as a reflection on its subject matter not of the distribution of the sexes in the profession, especially at its senior levels.

¹²⁷ In cooperation with other public servants and independent specialists in a range of areas.

Government. In this scenario – a scenario increasingly envisaged by proposals to move planning more towards strategic planning functions (PlanningNSW 2001, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2001), the planner serves ‘a useful but subordinate purpose’ (Hanks op cit).

When planners perform their more technical roles such as assessing development applications, advising whether these meet regulatory requirements, preparing amendments to planning instruments, they still only act as decision makers within strictly proscribed limits. Thus the dilemma facing planners thinking about what to do at NewPlace or what planning as a profession should be thinking about in regard to community building, is first of all that planners are not in a position most of the time to decide anything.

That said, however, the idea of planner as handmaiden sits uncomfortably because many a planner exercises enormous power behind the scenes, as a virtual ‘Sir Humphrey’¹²⁸, pronouncing on what is legal, what is technically possible, choosing the words which go into the document, exercising judgement about just where to draw a line and about the fine detail of what to include or exclude. This was recognised by one respondent who said: *‘Most things are in the planners’ control’*.

Is the planner a handmaiden or Sir Humphrey? Well it probably depends on where they are in their organisational hierarchy, but in this they are no different from most other public servants¹²⁹ and many public servants wield considerable power.

So on balance, while these comments were heartfelt, they do not represent the necessary position of practising planners. Even relatively junior planners have the opportunity to influence senior planners, and in local government, frequently their elected representatives, about the kinds of things that planning can do for the social wellbeing of an area. However, in order to do this, they have to have some idea about what they could be arguing for and know what evidence there is to back them up.

¹²⁸ The archetypal, manipulative senior civil servant in the long running BBC television series *Yes Minister*.

¹²⁹ Eg. except those who are statutory appointees perhaps.

As the survey results show, few planners are in this position. Even if they wanted to exercise this influence and were in a position to do so, it does not appear that they have the skills, conceptual frameworks or research base to apply to the task.

THE POSITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PLANNING

A particular version of this concern with the position of planners had to do with the distribution of planning responsibilities and authority between state agencies in NSW and local government authorities. Respondents had a great deal to say about this:

- *'Local government doesn't plan, its all done at state level which develops major place policies and major infrastructure rollout, local government has a residual role to deal with site specifics and all the implementation detail'*
- *Planner's greatest role is within the development at Development Application stage and 'they can protect some areas – unless the state government intervenes'*
- *'All the responsibilities get devolved to council, council does all the work, enforces the regulations and gets compliance',*
- *For example, the state passed the Threatened Species Act and required Council to implement it, but 'Council has to use its own money to prepare an EIS and if it wants to defend assessments under this state legislation in court. National Parks and Wildlife Service never contributes, it could, but it never has'*
- *'The whole problem with local government is that we have to do it on a piecemeal basis' we have to enforce standards on small sites while the state government overrides standards on large scale sites*
- *DUAP won't make a decision, even if it is an OK decision if there is huge local opposition, they are 'comical in their dealings with the community' and often they are out there consulting when they are 'already preparing a draft bill so the consultation is pointless'.*
- *Politicians influence the end planning decision, 'they have many interests which are brought to bear, including wanting to stay in office'*
- *It is mainly the government that doesn't come to the party, there isn't 'any real commitment to community involvement or to early provision, the words are there but the actions aren't'*
- *'Its all about money from the sale of land' what happens is that the state rezones land and plans are drawn up for social infrastructure but 'the state government won't deliver'.*

THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

This was not all. Not only did these planners feel excluded from strategic discussions and left to do the implementation work with too few resources, they also felt hamstrung by the impact of this on their elected representatives – the decision makers in some important local planning decisions. They said:

- It is easier to have an impact at small scale level of each development application/site but to do so consistently means there have to be policies which can be applied
- *‘Councillors and council staff don’t believe that they can stop big box shopping development, so they don’t try and this belief is backed up by the decisions of the Land and Environment Court’*
- *‘Councillors often don’t have the guts to refuse and also some councillors just don’t know what would be a better thing to do’*
- *‘In our council there is no leadership and no money’*
- There are only 40 days to respond to a development application, its *‘trench warfare’*, there is no support from Council.

None of these issues were raised by participants in the survey workshop held in PlanningNSW (then DUAP).

It is true that many big-impact strategic decision making arenas (such as coastal development¹³⁰) have been withdrawn from local councils by PlanningNSW. This kind of apportionment of planning responsibilities can promote consistency and strengthen the arm of some councils. As well by providing a framework within which local government planners work, it can contain some of the local debate¹³¹ leaving them a clearer arena within which to focus their efforts. However, this does not deal with the impact of piecemeal legislation and regulation by different departments and levels of government and the fact that it is frequently at local government level that these have to be integrated.

The more general issue of too much implementation being passed by both other levels of government to local government is widely recognised. It applies in a range of professional areas, notably social service delivery and environmental management, as well as planning, and the impact of significant levels of devolvement is particularly noticeable in the context

¹³⁰ Eg. the NSW Coastal Policy www.coastalcouncil.nsw.gov.au

¹³¹ This is only useful if the debate being contained is pernicious or narrowly self interested

of rate pegging¹³² and where the responsibility is devolved without additional funding for its implementation or the administrative overheads¹³³. In December 2002, the UK government announced increased and redistributive¹³⁴ funding to local councils *'while keeping council tax rises to "reasonable" levels'* (Parker 2002) in response to this kind of situation. Similar adjustments have not been proposed in NSW.

Insufficient resources, inconsistent sets of requirements, mixed messages about the power of local councils to effect controls over local development and hovering innuendos about political interests and influence all undermine the capacity of public servants to be effective in their jobs and this is not particular to planners. What it does mean, however, is that any steps to introduce new ways for planners to work with community building would have to be done in a way which takes account of how planners feel about their existing working environment.

THE POOR COUSIN STATUS OF SOCIAL ISSUES

Such an introduction will be all the more difficult because of the low status afforded social issues by the profession. This problem extensively canvassed in earlier chapters was also of concern to many respondents:

- *You can 'only apply social sustainability criteria if there is a vision in the council which would create a space into which planners could raise issues'*
- *'Social stuff is low status, you can't measure it and its not tangible, its not seen as important and its not a priority'*
- *'Social planning has been the poor cousin of urban planning'*
- *'There is a cultural ethos that best use in areas of high land value is the highest (monetary) value use'*
- *'Everyone thinks they are an expert on social issues'*
- *'At the local government level, social planners and urban planners have not been working together'*
- *Planners 'do not like to have conversations about the social role of the built environment'*
- *'Social impacts are considered last, if at all'*

¹³² In NSW, councils cannot raise rates without the permission of the Minister for Local Government

¹³³ A number of local level social services in NSW are grant funded by state or federal governments and delivered through councils however, frequently the grants do not contain allocations for administrative overheads.

¹³⁴ Larger increases in funding to poorer councils in the north of England

- *'Social issues are not among the criteria used in early stages of plan development'*
- Social aspects of planning bring on a fear of the unknown in planners, its *'too scary', 'not core business'*, they are not interested and they are *'afraid to innovate'*
- *'The planning profession has been more reactionary than visionary because it have been trying to accommodate the growth needs of NSW'*

Respondents at one council noted that the whole statutory planning framework in NSW is structured *'so that some will be better off and some will be worse off; it is not set up to focus on relative equality'*. In addition, the returns on social investment are often difficult to see, relatively slow to eventuate or at the least take some years to measure:

'There is no return to DUAP from providing social infrastructure up front'

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

At every post-survey workshop, someone said *'we can't do everything you know'*. Behind this comment were planners' concerns with their relatively weak position particularly in councils, the size of their workload, various frustrations with the statutory planning framework in NSW and a range of political considerations and influences.

But perhaps the bigger challenge they identified is the poor cousin status of social issues in planning. History has shown that planners can and do take on new responsibilities and new issues, but generally they do this with more success where the issue is currently being given priority, status and importance, either by a funding body or by a popular social movement, or both. Their take-up of environmental responsibilities in the context of the post-1970s environmental movement is a prime example. The big challenge for planners interested in the role of planning in community building is that the overworked profession is not likely to make room for a low status issue.

* * *

The survey of 135 practising planners and 28 students

- canvassed their understanding of the word community in planning documents,
- asked to what community building initiatives they would give priority in a new coastal development,
- sought their responses to various constraints and pull factors in planning new developments and to a range of specific ideas which could be applied to community building by planners,
- invited comment on the role of planners in regard to potential aspects of community building, and
- asked for their preferred definition of the role of planning in community building.

Some clear patterns emerged in the responses which are summarised here:

IS THE COMMUNITY A PLACE?

85% of respondents think about place, or territory in common, when they read the word community in a planning document.

GIVING PRIORITY TO COMMUNITY BUILDING AT NewPlace

Even with an open budget and authority to make decisions, the most frequently preferred community building initiatives (57%) involved the provision of physical infrastructure either various forms of urban design, or community facilities, schools, hospitals, roads and pedestrian networks and public transport, or environmental designs and systems. A further 14 – 22% of responses gave priority to social network development, but mostly this would be achieved by someone other than the planner.

BELIEF, EVIDENCE OR EXPERIENCE

80.7% of these community building choices in the main survey were based on the personal beliefs of the respondent. Only 5.7% of respondents said they were relying on research findings and only 13.6% on their personal experience of what works.

CONSTRAINTS AND PULL FACTORS

Planners think strategic planning is helpful but difficult to turn into reality, however, they are reasonably confident that planning can constrain market forces. Despite the number of respondents relying on physical infrastructure or buildings to promote community building, a majority of

respondents (65.2%) rejected the proposition that physical infrastructure should precede social infrastructure provision.

RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

There were high levels of support for a number of specific suggestions for ways in which planning could contribute to community building.

THE PLANNER'S ROLE

Several approaches to the question of how planning can affect community building in this survey yielded a picture of some planners' unease and unfamiliarity with their role in community building. However, many planners were interested in acquiring the skills to undertake a range of new tasks which would have a strong bearing on the social outcomes of planning.

DEFINING COMMUNITY BUILDING

While 97% of respondents are prepared to abandon a traditional definition of community building, there is no clear view in the profession about what should replace it. Student planners had a broader view of their role and a more adventurous approach to civic engagement, but they too showed no clear preference for a definition of community building by planners.

Discussions with respondents to the main survey uncovered planners' concern with their relatively weak position particularly in councils, a range of political considerations and influences and the poor cousin status of social issues in planning.

9: REVISITING THE PROPOSITIONS

The specific propositions to be explored were established in Chapter 7 and are as follows:

- 1 **When planners in NSW think of community they are usually thinking of people connected by territory in common**, that is, this is their conceptual framework of first resort.
- 2 **Planners are more likely than not to rely on physical or built initiatives** to achieve social wellbeing or community building outcomes. They are optimistic about how much these physical initiatives can achieve.
- 3 **Planners tend to rely on others for social outcomes**, especially other staff such as community development workers and the residents and other stakeholders they consult.
- 4 **Most planners think that community building is not the role of town planners.**
- 5 **Planners' initiatives for community building are likely to be weak and indirect .**

The survey addressed these propositions in a variety of ways. The survey findings are applied to each of the propositions below.

THE RESULTS

PROPOSITION 1: WHEN PLANNERS IN NSW THINK OF COMMUNITY THEY ARE USUALLY THINKING OF PEOPLE CONNECTED BY TERRITORY IN COMMON

The literature review strongly suggested that planners think about community in terms of place and territory in common. This was particularly evident in the discourse analysis of planners' use of community as a noun. The survey confirms this proposition.

Eighty five percent of respondents think about the people in or connected to a place when they read the word community in a planning document and this does not look set to change because the figure for graduating students at the University of NSW was 93%.

The import of this particularly relates to the inward-looking way in which planners discuss place which I identified in earlier chapters and which can be seen again in the initiatives proposed for community building at NewPlace. It is not merely that connection in terms of territory, especially small area territory, is generally weaker than connection in terms of interest and attachment (Willmott 1989; Wellman 1998), but that this focus seems to encourage a lack of attention to the social impacts of the status relationships between places.

While built and civic infrastructure at NewPlace are important and relevant, what was not mentioned is equally significant. For example, no respondent mentioned providing broadband cable or wireless infrastructure to the town, or links to external education providers or specialist medical services, and only one mentioned bus access to the nearest fast train link to the city. However, the transport and communications links between NewPlace and Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane would be critical for such a new town in order to sustain many business activities and provide access to specialist services and the resources (creative, intellectual etc) of the city.

The NSW coast tends to be characterised by small towns with large retiree populations on relatively low fixed incomes. While membership of local and informal networks within the town would contribute to social wellbeing in NewPlace, relative poverty as compared with the metropolitan areas along with relative social and economic isolation would act as a counterweight (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003).

In my experience as a consultant in small coastal communities on the coast of NSW, low income and distance from the amenities and resources of larger urban centres, exacerbated by the lack of broadband capacity and inadequate transport links are frequently mentioned as a source of social isolation and economic difficulty. Again in my experience¹³⁵ these significant difficulties are perceived by local residents' as undermining their capacity to bring about social and economic improvements, viz. their sense of being in control of their destinies. Relative status and a sense of control are major contributors to health and thus to social wellbeing (Wilkinson 2002).

¹³⁵ Consulting experience in the following NSW coastal towns: Coffs Harbour, Macksville, Grafton, Taree, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taniilba Bay, Nelson Bay, Eden and Nowra.

The initial benefits of new housing, town squares, parks and reserves etc arising from the establishment of NewPlace would be likely to attract relatively well off first residents – another relative status issue particularly for nearby settlements and particularly for Aboriginal settlements – but this initial influx of capital would be unlikely to sustain NewPlace without good communication and transport links to a city¹³⁶.

The planners who responded to the survey wrote about NewPlace as if it not only could but should be designed to meet, if not all, then most of the social needs of its residents, while research shows that such solidary communities scarcely exist and that most people maintain fragmented social networks not depended on place (Wellman 1998). The problem is not that the initiatives proposed ought not to take place but rather that the success of NewPlace will depend as much on its connections to and relative status viz-a-viz other places as on its internal structures, physical, civic and social.

The risk with thinking about community in terms of place and territory in common is that social networks that relate to interests and attachments in common that extend beyond the place are overlooked and the sense of inclusion and self respect that being well connected to the resources of the society you live in are only taken into account within the place being discussed.

PROPOSITION 2: PLANNERS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN NOT TO RELY ON PHYSICAL OR BUILT INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

The survey yielded strong support for this proposition. In response to the question about NewPlace, 117 of 205 responses (57%) favoured physical or built solutions to community building either through

- urban design solutions (48)¹³⁷ and issues of mix (6) (but not including affordable housing), or
- the provision (20), and timely provision (8) of physical infrastructure, or
- environmental designs and systems (19) (not including environmental care programs)

¹³⁶ Coffs Harbour on the mid-north coast of NSW is an excellent example of this.

¹³⁷ Note: figures in brackets refer to number of respondents.

- the provision of various buildings (16) (including libraries, schools and community centres).

If the non-responses and the responses which proposed to leave it to someone else are excluded from the calculation, the proportion of these responses rises to 75%. Either way, the proposition is demonstrated.

While 22% of responses were concerned with building social networks, for example by providing information to new residents, applying a management protocol to community gardens, facilitating clubs, playgroups, neighbourhood/precinct committees, a residents association, and organising community events such as festivals, these responses were in the minority. Even if non-responses and responses which proposed to leave it to someone else are excluded from the calculation the proportion only rises to 29%.

Graduating planners showed a similar profile except that they were significantly more likely to suggest the provision of managed or unmanaged community facilities than were practising planners.

In Chapter 5, I proposed, on the basis of a discourse analysis, that planners use the word community as a qualifier in ways which suggest a level of access, inclusion, participation and ownership greater than that which will or can actually occur. This usage allows the writers of reports to suggest that the provision of physical infrastructure and buildings will somehow result in equal access, democratic processes or a consensus of views when this is not warranted by the limited steps being proposed. The survey results bore this out demonstrating an over-optimism about what these physical initiatives can achieve. As well, the cosy stereotypes that predominate in the literature about the village and neighbourhood (Chapter 4) seem to be at the back of assertions made in the survey such as

'A widely accessible town square that provides opportunities for both inter- and intra- generational contact. Linked to this would be commercial and non-commercial drawcards, like open café areas and specific facilities for youth (eg skate bowl with nearby seating), children (playground). It would be accessible (physically) and imaginatively and colourfully structured. Public art would be integrated.' and

'Street/thoroughfare location and design in a way that reduces the dominance of the private vehicle so people come out of their homes and interact with each other informally on the street. Also encouraging kids to play which often brings the adults together.'

Sometimes this optimism seemed close to fantasy

'Not allow fences. The absence of fences and a new urban form would provide the context for new dialogue and participation opportunities.'

In addition, 39% of responses to a question about the basis for the proposed initiatives at NewPlace indicated that the respondent was only aiming to provide the envelope or shell within which social relationships could take place: *'This initiative would provide the facility or amenity within which community building could take place'* and *'This initiative would provide essential physical infrastructure without which the community could not function'*.

The only countervailing result was that 65% of respondents (75% of students) disagreed with the proposition that physical infrastructure should precede social infrastructure. However, important as this acknowledgement is, there was little evidence in the survey results to suggest that the respondents understood social infrastructure as more than buildings or in a small number of instances as clubs and other community organisations or civic groups such as precinct committees.

In particular, there was almost no evidence that respondents perceived relative social and economic equality as a form of social infrastructure. Only two respondents to the main survey mentioned affordable housing and only one student proposed:

'Ensure a good and diverse mix of socio-economic groups are encouraged to move in. This can be achieved through "silent" affordable housing. This can better allow for a mix of social "classes" and ensure exclusivity does not exclude people.'

However, as I have described in previous chapters, there is a substantial body of social and epidemiological research demonstrating that relative deprivation results in a range of social costs (ill health, crime etc) while

relative equality makes for a healthy society in the broadest sense of this term.

The research evidence is important and relevant because it does not support the idea that a building or a square or a conserved foreshore are the critical issues for social wellbeing. Rather relative income inequality in the society as a whole, the relative status of the place compared with other places, the level of provision for people on low incomes especially in regard to the quality of their educational opportunities, affordable housing and nutrition all have much greater impact on social wellbeing than whether or not there is a town square¹³⁸.

Many aspects of relative inequality are amenable to improvement through town planning. For example, the way in which planning zones are defined (lot size, density, use etc) will affect the relative status of neighbourhoods in a place, that is, they will directly influence the geographic distribution of income status in the place and thus they will directly influence its social infrastructure.

But the responses to the question about NewPlace skirt around these issues. A small percentage of responses do talk about social mix, housing mix and provision of transport. But they don't address the main issues which have to do with comparative equity of provision and its geographic distribution. It is in this absence, as well as in the direct finding that the majority of respondents rely on physical or built provision of facilities and amenities, that the proposition is demonstrated.

PROPOSITION 3: PLANNERS TEND TO RELY ON OTHERS FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES

This proposition was developed from the discussion of community development and community consultation in Chapter 6 and addressed in a range of ways in the survey.

First, responses to the question about NewPlace were an opportunity for planners to say outright that they would rely on others to achieve community building outcomes and 13% of responses (7% of students) fell

¹³⁸ Wilkinson and Marmot 2003, Wilkinson 1996 and 2001- are among the many works which review the relevant literature.

in this category. These respondents were either going to rely on community consultation or would '*appoint someone to give me appropriate advice*' or felt that they could not nominate a community building initiative without first preparing a plan which would usually involve stakeholders, and/or residents. But in addition most of the 15% of responses (11% of students) concerned with building networks and social capital were also relying on others, whether the efforts of local residents and other stakeholders or the various council or other staff who would put together the management protocol for community gardens, organise festivals, start up resident associations and so on. Only four responses indicated that social network development would begin with the planning process itself – these are quoted on page 173. Excluding these four responses, but adding the two responses which said they would 'do nothing' to build community at NewPlace – the ultimate form of relying on others for social outcomes – brings the proportion of these relying-on-others responses to 26% (17% of students).

However, many of the respondents who were going to rely on physical and built initiatives were also, directly or indirectly, relying on others for the actual implementation their proposal. This was particularly the case with those proposing to rely on the provision of staffed or managed community buildings and programs (community workers, neighbourhood coordinators), environmental design and systems (provided by specialists in these areas) and physical infrastructure especially public transport (requiring the assistance of a transport planner). Adding these responses to the category of 'relying on others' brings the proportion of responses relying on others for social outcomes to 55% (55% of students also) - thus demonstrating the proposition.

I am not asserting here that planners should not consult, engage, cooperate or collaborate with other stakeholders, service providers and with current and future residents. Nor am I asserting that establishing neighbourhood centres or surf clubs or bicycle paths or even town squares are in and of themselves poor practice. Rather, I am pointing to the fact that when it comes to community building, planners readily perceive what others can do but underestimate what they as planners can directly contribute, for example through planning instruments, developer agreements, guidelines etc.

In this regard, I noted in my analysis of planners responses to some specific planning initiatives which might deliver benefits in terms of

community building (Table 8.8) that the ideas being proposed were either rare or not in place in NSW and so respondents would be unfamiliar with them (p187). Although more planners supported these ideas than not, their comments did suggested unfamiliarity with what was proposed.

For example, 33% of respondents thought making built provision for tied income agreements to support a community facility unrealistic or not a good idea. Their comments showed an unfamiliarity with such arrangements and a lack of interest in contributing to funding arrangements concerning its management. Respondents anxious about the idea of banning out of town shopping malls were concerned with convenience issues but not with the question of how to maintain town shopping centres. The idea of a state policy identifying criteria for locating community facilities was rejected by 15% of respondents and another 18% thought the idea unrealistic. Their comments showed a confusion about the relationship between a policy at state level and local application of such a policy, and several people misread the proposal to design in space options for markets in town centres as a requirement to *have* markets.

All these responses suggested an unfamiliarity with dealing with social issues. And this was borne out by respondents' self assessments of their skills in a series of relevant areas:

- only 14% thought they could already plan the social infrastructure of a new release area
- only 10% thought they could demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to the private sector
- only 19% thought they could document and support social impact arguments
- only 16% felt able to plan for the development of social networks and
- only 15% felt able to start the processes needed to build community organisations and civic infrastructure.

In other words, in all these fairly straightforward areas in which a planner might be called on to participate or provide a substantive professional contribution, only a minority of planners felt competent to do so. Student planners were even less confident, almost none of them felt they could currently undertake any of these tasks, although this may have been due to the fact that they had not completed their social planning coursework. Nonetheless, the proposition that planners tend to rely on others for

social outcomes is demonstrated by both the choices of planners' initiatives for NewPlace and their low levels of self reported skills in some areas of planning relevant to community building or social wellbeing. For a profession whose '*ends are social*' (Taylor 1999:43) this finding has serious implications.

PROPOSITION 4: MOST PLANNERS THINK THAT COMMUNITY BUILDING IS NOT THE ROLE OF TOWN PLANNERS

In a similar vein I submitted a fourth proposition that planners believe that community building is not their role. This proposition, initially suggested by the experiences described in the introductory story and planners' relatively uncritical use of 'warmly persuasive' (Williams 1976) words such as community and village, also grows out of the previous propositions. Perhaps, if planners prefer to rely on physical, built and place-based solutions to community building and to rely on others rather than themselves, they actually think that community building is outside their role.

This proposition was also explored in a range of ways in the survey, but was not demonstrated by the survey results. While 73% of respondents agreed that '*people who are good at planning the physical elements of a place are not necessarily the people who can build the social elements*' (Table 8.9) and fewer than 19% felt they had effective skills in a number of relevant areas (discussed above), this did not translate into a majority of planners agreeing that various aspects of community building was outside a planner's role. Specifically:

- only 10% of respondents (0 students) felt it was not their role to plan for social infrastructure or to document and support social impact arguments
- only 17% (18% of students) felt it was not their role to start processes to build civic infrastructure
- only 21% (25% students) felt it was not their role to plan for the development of social networks in a new development, and
- only 20% (11% of students) felt it was not a planner's role to deal with levels of civic engagement.

While these are not insignificant proportions, they cannot be said to demonstrate the proposition, which therefore fails. However, it was shown that

- the profession, including fourth year students, has no clear definition of what community building by planners might mean (Table 8.12), and
- has a significant skill shortfall in relevant areas (described for the previous proposition), and that
- 80.7% of responses regarding NewPlace were based on beliefs rather than research findings (5.7%) (0 students) or personal experience(13.6%)

so that on the basis of these findings it can be said that while planners do think that community building falls within their role, they are not well equipped or prepared to carry out some aspects of their professional responsibilities.

PROPOSITION 5: PLANNERS' INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING ARE LIKELY TO BE WEAK AND INDIRECT

This proposition grew out of the discussion in Chapter 3 in which I identified that many of the social initiatives in three NSW regional strategic plans and in one NSW Local Government Strategic Plan were more indirect and less purposive (as demonstrated by the content and verbs used) than the economic and environmental actions or strategies in the same plans.

However, the proposition is also demonstrated by the findings of the survey, particularly by the kinds of initiatives that planners proposed in regard to NewPlace. Even with an open budget and the authority to spend it, only 21% opted for the provision or timely provision of physical infrastructure (mainly transport) or community facilities. Only four responses referred to schools and libraries and one to provision of a hospital. Their main preference (60% of responses, 63% of students), for a combination of urban design, local resident-generated solutions and initiatives which are implemented or facilitated by other people, is a recipe for weak and indirect strategies. That is, putting in a town square, holding a festival, running programs from a local community centre and protecting a beach reserve are weak and indirect ways of approaching social outcomes. On this basis the proposition is demonstrated.

The problem for planners is that the things which would constitute direct and strong initiatives are difficult to achieve, and it is here that the spontaneous discussions by participants that occurred after each survey contribute to this proposition. These discussions, (like the informal

interviews I reported in Chapter 2) focused on the capacity of planners to achieve social outcomes when they find it difficult to exercise any real power in regard to the delivery of key pieces of social infrastructure (such as schools or affordable housing or a public transport service). As well, since the socio-epidemiological research shows that it is relativity which counts, a planner wanting to promote social well being has to argue the case not only for schools, houses, buses and medical services, but for the quality, timeliness and geographic distribution of these services in a way which will not convey a message of neglect or disregard. Planners in local councils who participated in the survey workshops were sceptical about their capacity to have any impact on this. They reported being unable to gain support for affordable housing provision and feeling more powerful and able to act in regard to development applications for individual sites than in regard to broader planning for larger areas.

However, the survey also demonstrated that planners are not well equipped to act imaginatively or strongly in regard to community building at the small site level. For example, as discussed, they mostly supported but were not familiar with different ways of tying income streams to community buildings¹³⁹ and were unfamiliar with combining building a building with establishing its management in ways which would be stable and effective. In fact most (90%, and 100% of students) said they could not mount the arguments to demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure, nor could most (81%, and 96% of students) confidently put social impact arguments. This is a very weak position to be in, in regard to the primary aims of one's profession.

The survey results show that, even given carte blanche,¹⁴⁰ fewer planners would commit themselves to timely provision of physical infrastructure than to the softer more indirect options noted above. This can be read as a first choice or, in the context of the pre-and post survey discussions and the profession's skill bank and repertoire of tried and researched options, as a weary accommodation with reality. In either case, the proposition stands.

¹³⁹ This was also borne out in the workshop discussions in which a number of respondents wanted to know what was meant by 'buildings that will yield rental income tied to contributing the salary of the manager of the community facility'

¹⁴⁰ The money and the authority to spend it

OTHER IMPLICATIONS FROM THE SURVEY

Perhaps the most significant finding of all was that planners found the question about NewPlace difficult to answer. As I was present when all the long questionnaires were completed I was able to observe that this question stumped quite a number of people. Others read, and some completed, the rest of the questionnaire before they came back to it. Many respondents spent up to 20 minutes on the question – most of it thinking time.

Despite all this time and effort, the results show not only that most of the research propositions are well founded but that there is a big gap in the knowledge of planners. Although relative income inequality and social exclusion are well documented as the primary issues in social wellbeing, these issues were scarcely addressed. Survey participants did not propose any of the town plan mechanisms put up for comment in other questions, even though many of them were endorsed by respondents. Those who emphasised a well managed community centre did not propose that it was their role to ensure that this centre had some financial viability. No one proposed that it was important to avoid big box shopping mall developments – despite a noticeable emphasis on town squares.

A major outcome of the survey is, therefore, the finding that put in the hypothetical position of being in charge, having enough money and being in on the start of the project, planners had neither the skill nor knowledge base to acquit this opportunity other than in a very limited way. They were heavily reliant on the idea that territory in common is the basis for social well being, paying little attention to issues of distribution and equity. This finding is clearly reflected in the data: only 14% of respondents (and one student) said they already had the skills to plan the social infrastructure of a new release area, and roughly the same proportion felt able to plan for social network development or the start up of civic organisations.

On the other hand, the results also show that most planners believe that community building is part of their role and they had a considerable interest in acquiring new skills and knowledge. Eighty four percent would welcome guidelines on community building for planners and 87% supported the proposal that training be provided for planners '*in partnership development with community organisations, the establishment of Development Trusts and the fostering of other social and community enterprises.*' (Table 8.8).

As well,

- 53% (79% of students) thought they would be *'able to plan for the social/community infrastructure of a new release area'* if they had some training – although 16 of these respondents (and 12 students) thought they would also require *'adequate legislative support'*.
- 75% (64% of students) thought they could *'demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to the private sector (business and developers)'* with some training (11 of these respondents (and 7 students) wanted legislative support too)
- 56% (79% of students) thought they would be able to *'document and support social impact arguments'* with some training, although 12 (and 8 students) wanted some legislative backing too
- 47% (57% of students) thought they would be able to *'plan for the development of social networks'* with some training – only 3 (and 3 students) wanted legislative support as well, and
- 57% (68% of students) thought that training would equip them to *'build community organisations and a civic infrastructure.'*, although 9 (and 3 students) wanted legislative backing too.

In addition, 63% of respondents to the long questionnaire (68% of students) said that town planners should respond to the decline in social capital (joining organisations and volunteering, Table 8.11) by trying *'to counter this trend by supporting the establishment of innovative community associations, partnerships, cooperative enterprises etc which are more responsive to social conditions in the 21st century'*¹⁴¹.

To add to this picture, 20% of respondents (and 25% of students) thought that community building should incorporate not only the application of urban design principles and community development best practice but also *'social policy research to the urban and regional policies and plans whether these are new release areas, areas of urban regeneration or areas undergoing significant levels of rebuilding'*.

In other words, while the survey identified a knowledge and practice shortfall it also exposed a strong and consistent interest among a good

¹⁴¹ includes those who wanted to both counter the trend *and* continue to support social and cultural service provision.

proportion of current and future planners responding to the questionnaire in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to fill the gap.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1, I proposed two broad propositions from which the 5 more specific propositions discussed above were derived.

The first proposition was that a number of much used but little examined beliefs, a prevailing professional self image, a set of professional boundaries and a comfort zone, the impact of related professions and a continuing set of political realities have operated concurrently to sanction, and possibly obscure, the gap between stated aims and actual practice by practising planners – at least in NSW.

The second proposition was that this has resulted in a situation in which a century of aspirations to ‘make a difference’ to social wellbeing through planning is not matched by a professional body of work about how to do this.

My review of the literature and survey of practicing planners has demonstrated several aspects of the gap between the stated aims and current practice of planners. And, by specifying more detailed propositions for examination through a survey, I have been able to show a number of processes which operate to achieve this outcome. As well, my survey results clearly show that planners in NSW have, on the one hand, clear aspirations to achieve social benefits, focus on the public good and support democratic process and good practice, but, on the other hand, they are undermined by their current skill set and the traditional repertoire of socially focused planning initiatives.

I conclude this chapter with some suggestions to counter the knowledge and practice shortfall I have identified and by pointing to some of the resources readily available for this purpose. I suggest that there is a role in this regard for universities, for state planning agencies and for individual planners.

A ROLE FOR UNIVERSITIES

To get social outcomes on the agenda of practising planners in an informed and discursive way requires the already inter-disciplinary schools of planning in Australia to bring in the social disciplines and give them the same status that architecture, economics and the natural sciences have. Planning is in many ways a vocational course, it delivers graduates with skills relevant to identifiable jobs and the accreditation requirements of professional bodies. This has led curriculum reviewers and other commentators (Phibbs, Gurran and Mead 2002) to seek the views of employers of planners and of recent graduates about the adequacy and relevance of current academic curricula.

The problem with this approach in regard to expanding the quality of what planners do for social wellbeing, is that these questions about relevance and adequacy tend to be asked and answered within the frame of current practice and professional boundaries. My research suggests that what is within the frame does not assist planners to find an answer. Outside the frame is a very substantial body of work highly relevant to planning which is being held, Tampa-like,¹⁴² offshore. Unlike the Tampa, this body of knowledge is not all in one boat and does not have a captain; it will not dock itself. It must be invited to the quay along side the flotillas docked at wharves reserved for urban design, land economics and environmental management. The role that universities need to play is to create the berth, provide the labour for unloading and ensure the quality of the goods to be disembarked. Translated, this means locating a place in planning curricula for learning social analytical concepts and methods, identifying recent, valid and reliable research outcomes to include as content or as the framework for self-directed learning, and a research base within the faculty dedicated to refining questions for further systematic review and research.

I have shown that planners would be receptive to educational and training opportunities in a range of areas, and I now provide the following list to demonstrate that information and resources are also available to meet that need.

¹⁴² The Tampa was a Norwegian cargo vessel carrying refugees who had been rescued at sea. The Australian government tried to keep the vessel in international waters off Christmas Island in September 2001 in order to prevent the refugees from arriving in Australia.

- There is a substantial body of knowledge about **social constructionism** and how this has been applied to the definition of, and policy responses to, social problems. There are a number of texts (eg. May et al. 2001) which review trends in social problem definition, especially since the 1950s, and provide a good introduction to the ways in which social constructionism has moulded, and distorted, social policy. Planners are often asked to provide planning solutions to these problems (eg. crime and vandalism). They need to know to what extent these problems are creations of definitional or media and political construction, in what ways they are real and what is already known about the efficacy of various policy responses.

- There is an increasing number of **systematic reviews of social research**. These reviews endeavour to locate all the research relevant to a particular question, select those studies which are methodologically valid and reliable and review their results to see what light they shed collectively on social policy issues. Already available examples include a systematic review of neighbourhood impacts of gentrification (Atkinson 2002), a systematic review of survey evidence about neighbourhoods and social networks (Bridge 2002), a systematic review of the health effects of housing improvement (Thomson, Petticrew and Morrison 2001), a systematic review of crime trends and punishment policy (Roberts, Stalans, Indermaur and Hough 2003) – all topics of relevance to planners.

- There is already a well established body of **social epidemiological research** on the relationship between health and various social indicators, particularly social and economic inequality (Wilkinson 1996, 2001, 2002; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003; Kawachi, Kennedy and Wilkinson, 1999) and between health and residential segregation by income (Kawachi 2002, Lobmayer and Wilkinson 2002). This research shows that public health and crime rates are directly related to the degree of income inequality in a society. For example there are now more than 45 data sets which show that crime rates vary directly with relative income inequality. For planners, this information should take its place along side claims for the efficacy of street surveillance and lighting in crime reduction. Further, this research should be of particular interest to planners because they deal with land and land is a form of wealth. Planning policies affect the distribution of wealth though their impact on the price of land. These policies can also bring into effect residential segregation by wealth or promote residential integration of diverse

income groups. Initial studies, cited above, suggest that the residential segregation effect on health is powerful either in reinforcing income inequality or possibly in its own right. This information and research program is directly relevant to planners. It could shed light on the indirect impacts of standard planning practice, for example, the common practice of zoning areas, eg. by lot size, in ways which encourage residential segregation by income.

- The move to systematic reviews is associated with a renewed interest in **evidence based policy** which had its beginnings in medicine, (Black 2001) but now extends to education (Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre (CEM) at Durham University) and more generally to other social issues via the UK Evidence Network. The UK *government's mantra of "what counts is what works"* (Wiggins and Tymms 2001:1) should be applied to the social outcome claims made for consultation and urban design, and to new policies designed to apply the results of well conducted social research and systematic reviews of social research to land use and spatial planning.
- The concern with evidence is also seeing, in the UK at least, a renewed interest in prospective evaluations such as that established to research the impact and efficacy of the UK Government's New Deal for Communities Program¹⁴³. My experience as a consultant suggests that there is a reluctance on the part of some state and local government agencies in Australia to engage in evaluation. As one senior officer put it, *'your report is Council's first positive experience of an evaluation and as a result there's a chance they might undertake other evaluations in the future'*¹⁴⁴. Planners should understand the difference between **prospective, formative and evaluative assessments**, know how to do each of these and be encouraged to see evaluation as a resource rather than a stick.
- Meanwhile there is an established literature on **valid and reliable sociological research methods**, and a growing discussion about the roles that randomised experiments, probability sample surveys and qualitative evaluation (Hedges 2001, Black 2001, Rist 2000) play in policy

¹⁴³ being managed by Professor Ian Cole, Director of Housing Research, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

¹⁴⁴ Personal communication from the Director of Corporate and Community Services, Bega Valley Shire Council.

development, implementation and evaluation. Planners need to understand these terms and this discussion so that they can assess the relevance and utility of research results and know what kinds of methodologies should be applied in research and reports they commission or are offered by colleagues, applicants, contestants etc..

- There is already a context for the presentation of this research – the Environmental Impact Assessment. Planning authorities are required to receive and assess these in regard to specified kinds of development application and social impacts are required to be included. To date, as I noted, **social impact assessments** have tended to be narrow and insubstantial and the lions share of research and evaluation has gone to environmental and economic issues. However, a focus on social outcomes in planning would change this. Such a change can already be seen in the gaming industry in NSW. After the NSW Gaming Machines Act was amended in 2001 to require applicants for more than four gaming machines to submit a social impact assessment with their application, and after those initially submitted were found to be inadequate, the adequacy of social impact assessments suddenly became an important issue¹⁴⁵. Further the change to the Gaming Machines Act has demonstrated is that it is difficult to submit an adequate social impact assessment if the preparer is not well versed in social policy, research or analysis. Currently there is nothing in the training of most planners which would enable them adequately to review a social impact assessment, much less to write one, and this should be rectified.

There are other important roles for universities in supporting the role of planning in social wellbeing. What is required is in many respects a **paradigm shift** and paradigm shifts in disciplines typically happen at universities, usually in response to disgruntled students or a new cohort of academics seeking a niche (Milicevic 2001). Facilitating these challenges and responding to them sustains intellectual energy and universities should embrace these challenges as their lifeblood. As well, universities and research institutes have a special role to play on behalf of practising planners, namely to formulate, and periodically refine and update, the research agenda for systematic reviews and for research and evaluations. Their role should be to report on which questions relevant to the role of planning in social well being seem to have been answered or

¹⁴⁵ Editorial, The Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday January 29 2003, page 12

partly answered and **which questions should be being addressed now** (Burrows 2000:9).

My research, for example, suggests that planning faculties and research institutes should move beyond asking whether various designs/layouts reduce social inequalities *between neighbours*, or whether various designs increase acquaintanceship *between neighbours*, (eg. clustering versus pepper-potting affordable housing (Tiesdel 2003)). The advantages of designs which permit street surveillance are already established, and it also clear that within-neighbourhood relationships are few, very local and less important to social wellbeing than the role of the neighbourhood in establishing a person's relative status and access to resources. On that basis the questions to be asked include:

- 1 What are the impacts of current town planning practice on relative social inequality, in particular, does current town planning practice exacerbate or ameliorate unequal distributions of income and wealth through its management of land use and the effect of different policies and allowable uses on the price of land?
- 2 Can planning (as distinct from fiscal policy, for example) reduce status differentials between neighbourhoods and reduce residential segregation by income, and if so what planning strategies seem to work best?
- 3 What planning and design strategies reduce *perceptions of* relative social inequalities between neighbourhoods?
- 4 How can planning tools contribute to building networks *between* neighbourhoods and across cities and regions, both physical networks and networks of communication and access to resources, knowledge and cultural life? Which ways work best and in what circumstances?
- 5 Can planning, both as a process and in the application of knowledge, technical skills and legislative requirements, assist in building the organisational and civic structures which maintain distributions of relative equality, social networks and civic infrastructure. For example can planning contribute to the financial and constitutional stability of civic or cultural organisations, and if so, what works best in various situations?
- 6 What is the role of place in network facilitation? There are plenty of assertions about the benefits of coffee shops, bus interchanges and optic fibre installations, but research is needed to show the actual relationship between these and social networks.
- 7 What is the role of place in safety net provision? Currently the aim of planners is to make nice places and pleasant neighbourhoods. Since research suggests that the people whose lives are most confined to a

place are those in poverty, or with a disability, or the very old or young, one might extrapolate from that to consider whether it is primarily these people who require a local, place-based safety net and how planners might facilitate these (with more priority than playing fields for example).

The function of universities should be to ask these questions with rigour and clarity. For example, the question of reducing status differentials between neighbourhoods is not just about what proportion of housing should be 'affordable'¹⁴⁶ and where public and affordable housing should be located – the usual response when this question is posed. Rather, the question concerns relativities between all kinds of housing and between all kinds of lots. It is about relationships across the whole, not about where to slot in¹⁴⁷ the 'poor', or how to introduce 'mix' in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Uitermark 2003). Such limited and mechanistic responses miss the point. The questions listed above require planners to think afresh and to notice habitual blind spots which enable such narrow interpretations to be made without objection.

Universities are currently hard pressed financially, but they are still the sites of critical access to new ideas. It is difficult for state agencies to lead a paradigm shift of this sort because of the politicisation of the public sector in Australia, and it is difficult for practising planners in consulting firms to manage a paradigm shift that confronts the established and vested interests of clients. While planning faculties have consulting arms and depend on governments for research grants, they nonetheless operate in a well established framework of academic freedom which creates the environment in which rigorous analysis and criticism are the norm. It is up to the universities to take the lead on this issue.

A ROLE FOR STATE PLANNING AGENCIES

The state planning agencies which set broad planning policy and make important planning decisions have a role to play too. While the universities are undertaking systematic reviews and reporting what is known, managing valid and reliable prospective evaluations and teaching new skills to new generations of planners, the state agencies need to

¹⁴⁶ A euphemism which usually means housing owned by not for profit housing associations

¹⁴⁷ the 'pepper-pot' versus clustering argument (Tiesdell, 2003)

deal with social issues currently presenting as aspects of state and regional planning policy and in regard to strategic plans currently being prepared.

The broad question of how to ameliorate relative social and economic inequality applies to these activities, but the first step for the planning agencies could be to identify the forms of relative social inequality relevant to state and regional policies and plans *currently in preparation* as well as other social impacts of policy and plan options before the agency. For example, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) formerly PlanningNSW has a coastal policy which addresses environmental protection issues but not social inequality issues. DIPNR is also supporting the preparation of a number of regional strategic plans. Each of these could address social outcomes with the same level of priority and interest that environmental, transport, and employment generating initiatives receive.

To undertake these steps State agencies need only utilise existing mechanisms to raise the level of debate on these issues and prepare the ground for a wider range of initiatives than are currently considered (see Chapter 3). These existing mechanisms are:

- Social impact assessment
- Social sustainability criteria
- Social auditing
- Social planning
- Prospective, formative and retrospective evaluations .

Each of these mechanisms is already available, either as a formal but little used planning requirement (social impact assessment) a formal but narrowly conceived form of planning (social planning) or as optional and little used planning tools (social sustainability criteria, social auditing and the use of evaluations).

In the first instance if all that planning agencies were to do was to increase their level and serious use of these mechanisms, this in itself would have a profound impact on the profession and act as a signal that the poor cousin status of social sustainability and social well being issues had changed. Because these mechanisms are already provided for in legislation or are in limited use, their increased use only requires a slight

shift in budget allocations to reflect a shift in serious intentions. This makes such a change feasible even in a climate of politicisation.

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Rabel Budge (2002) notes that social impact assessment has the status of an optional sub-component of Environmental Impact Assessment. There is frequently little funding for this poor cousin of assessments, standards of practice and guidelines have not become familiar through repeated use, and an assumption has arisen that a community consultation process will do instead. I have also come across a further assumption that a social impact assessment is a massive undertaking requiring volumes of research and a long report¹⁴⁸.

These practices and assumptions need to be challenged. A social impact assessment in regard to a development application should be a separate, adequately funded exercise and in particular not one commissioned by the proponent of the development. The idea that a consultation process constitutes an assessment process will not stand examination, although the former can contribute to the latter. Further, there are a number of established guidelines for social impact assessment (Burdge 1994, Vanclay and Bronstein 1995, Office on Social Policy 1995). These guidelines cite an array of potential variables and suitable methodologies including data sources and sample survey methods. In addition, the number of potential variables does not necessarily mean a huge report. The assessment itself can be often be summarised in a succinct and accessible way – for example by using an integrated cost benefit matrix to present projected social and economic impacts (Ziller and Phibbs 2003, Ziller 2003).

Finally, the practice of preparing and considering social impacts would help practising planners, over time, to see what social impacts are. It would add to their social vocabulary in the same way that experience with environmental impact assessment has added to their portfolio of natural science-based concepts. This would help to reduce reliance on code words like community and enable planners to be more specific about ways in which they are making their contribution to social outcomes.

¹⁴⁸ Used as a reason not to commission a social impact assessment by the project manager of one of the Living Centres Programs – personal communication.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA

Another approach would be to apply social sustainability as decision-making criteria. For example, a good strategic plan or a good development assessment could apply the precautionary and intra-generational equity principles to social outcomes. As a matter of routine, planners might ask questions such as these

- *'Will a proposed development increase relative social and economic inequality in the area? For example, does the proposal add to the proportion of amenities or facilities (such as housing, sports facilities, basic food outlets) available or more available to relatively advantaged socio-economic groups?'*
- *'Will the proposed action result in increased experience of social exclusion?'*(adapted from Australia Street Company 1999:28)

and adjust their planning strategies to minimise the number of 'yes' answers to these questions. To apply the criteria, planners would either have to commission studies by social policy specialists and/or gradually learn enough about social policy and social issues to be able to answer these questions themselves on the basis of researched information.

Planning instruments could also be subject to social sustainability criteria, and these criteria could guide how planners determine zones or character statements, negotiate with developers and inform their own organisation's development proposals.

SOCIAL AUDITING

Planning is a largely public sector activity and the public sector should be accountable for what it does. So for this reason, as well as to establish a feedback loop for practitioners who accept the challenge to explore new territory, it is a good idea to audit performance in the planning-for-social-wellbeing arena.

Social auditing is performance measurement against indicators and there are a number of sources from which planners could begin, notably the UK

based Institute of Social and Ethical AccountAbility¹⁴⁹ which has prepared a set of standards as well as training programs and accreditation. Other UK sources include the New Economics Foundation¹⁵⁰ and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which has a Best Value Performance Indicators Website¹⁵¹ and the UK Audit Commission¹⁵². Alternatively, planners could develop a social version of State of the Environment Reports¹⁵³.

There is always a risk with social auditing that the audit itself gobbles up resources that would be better applied to identifying policies and other initiatives which would deliver social wellbeing from planning. However, even the process of asking the question *Which indicators of social wellbeing from planning should we audit?* would stimulate discussion, and if planning agencies reported against even a few such indicators in their annual reports, this would be an advance.

SOCIAL PLANNING

Social planning has acquired a narrow meaning through its virtual confinement to local government in Australia. Recently issued guidelines in NSW emphasise target groups and allow the social plan to have the status of recommendation rather than committed intention (see discussion in the Introductory Story and the section on Environmental Responsibilities in Chapter 6).

However, all state government planning agencies have strategic corporate plans, and their social plans could be contained within these. Having a social plan within the corporate plan, would require planning agencies to specify more precisely the social aims of planning. Instead of stating general aims such as the creation of '*vibrant liveable communities*' (DIPNR 2004) in regard to which a limited range of strategies or actions

¹⁴⁹ The Institute of Social and Ethical AccountAbility Unit A, 137 Shepherdess Walk, London, N1 7RQ, United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0) 20 7549 0400 / Fax: +44 (0) 20 7549 0400 Email: secretariat@accountability.org.uk

¹⁵⁰ www.neweconomics.org, see also Walker et. al. 2000

¹⁵¹ www.bvpi.gov.uk/home.asp

¹⁵² www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/audit/index.htm

¹⁵³ For example Fairfield Council published a *State of the Community Report* in 2003. This can be viewed at www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au

appear to be tied¹⁵⁴, planners would have one the one hand to consider a wider range of issues and on the other to be much more specific about both their aims and their strategic actions. This would promote discussion within agencies, more focused actions and more evaluation of these.

For example, among the aims which planning departments and agencies could consider are to:

- 1 Install the foundations of social infrastructure in a given area for the benefit of future generations
- 2 Improve relative social and economic equality in the (state/region/subregion/LGA)
- 3 Facilitate the equitable provision of essential social infrastructure across the (state/region/subregion/LGA).

Aims such as these are more ambitious than 'pleasant neighbourhoods' and more challenging than 'vibrant liveable communities'.. They require a well informed strategic approach and more purposeful and detailed actions than either

- general statements about what the agency believes will be the social outcomes arising (somehow) from urban design, or
- reliance on the delivery of the relatively blunt instruments of large-scale physical infrastructure (railways, schools) by other agencies.

EVALUATIONS OF SOCIAL STRATEGIES

Another role of state agencies is to commission or undertake policy and program assessments and evaluations as a matter of course so as to develop standards regarding their conduct, expertise in their use and a more relaxed and receptive attitude to feedback.

Systematic reviews can only deliver so much in regard to social policy because in the past much social survey research was not undertaken with the requirements of a systematic review in mind (Burrows 2000) and because of the very tangential role that social research has tended to

¹⁵⁴Viz.: Improving house and urban design; Urban renewal in transport corridors and town centres; Establishing a mix of uses at the neighbourhood level; and Promoting a social mix

play in policy making (Black 2001). Demands by policy makers and government to know 'what works' now need to be met by well constructed prospective studies including survey research (Hedges 2001) and qualitative analysis (Rist 2000: 1001-15). As Rist notes

'There is no broad-based and sustained tradition within contemporary social science of focusing qualitative work specifically on policy issues, especially given the real time constraints that the policy process necessitates. Yet it is also clear that the opportunities are multiple for such contributions to be made' (Rist op cit, p1015)

Planning agencies can influence this situation by commissioning well conducted evaluations which focus intellectual rigour on questions to which policy makers want answers. Over time, a planning agency which engaged regularly in evaluations of its social strategies would begin to refine the foci of its evaluations and could even set up some experiments to challenge conflicting theories and/or results.

To utilise these tools effectively, planning agencies need to become familiar with the role of evaluations in

- generating ideas (Weiss 1977:544),
- providing enlightenment about the social construction of social problems (Clarke 2001:13), and
- helping planners chose between planning tools, contributing to the formulation of policy, monitoring the effectiveness of policy in its implementation phase and providing opportunities to re-view and re-shape policies and programs by assessing what happened and what the impacts were (Rist: 2000).

Ideally, agencies would share the results of many of these evaluations (making the grey literature available) so as to contribute to a body of practitioner knowledge, although this may be difficult in regard to policies and programs which are politically more sensitive.

A ROLE FOR INDIVIDUAL PLANNERS

Meanwhile, the individual planner in the university, state agency, council or consulting firm has a responsibility to ground their practice in valid and reliable research findings and good quality intellectual analysis.

Apart from utilising the ideas proposed above for academic and public sector institutions, I suggest that individual planners could also make a major contribution by practising planning as a community free zone. By this I mean that they should try banning the word community from their vocabulary in the interest of clarity. Not using the word community would simply mean that other words would be used to make the same point. This would make many communications clearer. For example consider the following passage

Sound mechanisms for community consultation are available and we intend to ensure that community involvement happens earlier in the planning process. Early engagement of the community will make plan making more collaborative and give the community a greater sense of ownership of the resulting plan. As well community input will assist our planners to decide where key community facilities should be located and to identify the range of community organisations interested in using them.

and how it might appear if the word community were replaced. To make it make sense some clarification is needed:

Sound mechanisms for *consulting a proportion of local residents and other stakeholders* are available and we intend to ensure that *as many local residents and other stakeholders as possible are invited to be involved at an early stage* in the planning process. Early discussions with *local residents and other stakeholders* will make plan making more collaborative and give *these people* a greater sense of ownership of the resulting plan. As well input *from organisations, businesses, schools, interest groups and individuals* will assist our planners to decide where key facilities (*such as a library, a multi-purpose centre and arts complex*) should be located and to identify the range of *eligible* organisations (*eg. not for profit groups and arts practitioners*) interested in using them.

Exactly how the first paragraph might be translated to the second would depend on the circumstances, however the hypothetical example shows how deleting the word community results in greater specificity and often a narrower but more realistic meaning. This can especially be seen in the sentence about community ownership. Only the people who actually take part in the consultation are likely to feel any sense of ownership. Community organisations could be translated as eligible not for profit organisations and it is usually the case that there are only so many kinds of community facility actually on the shortlist for consideration at any one time, so these could be mentioned.

The translation makes for more words and this is because community is shorthand. However, its ubiquitous use has allowed it to become more than shorthand, it allows the writer to lay claim to more layers of meaning than are actually available. Ideally, other code words such as engagement and diversity would also be dropped. For example,

'WORKING PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY....

The concept of social diversity will be embedded...in the planning and development of the West Kembla Grange area.' (PlanningNSW 2002b:10)

might become

The planning process and the development plan for West Kembla Grange will take account of social differences and will promote relative equality. Social differences include differences in income, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, age and interests. The plan will particularly focus on promoting relative equality in terms of these characteristics.

This level of specification then makes clear what the plan has to do and provides some content to an otherwise relatively meaningless yardstick.

The wider point is that any word can become meaningless jargon and any profession has to be on the lookout for a word which has become overused to the point of meaninglessness. But in the case of community, its overuse in planning has now had a long history, the process of replacing it would engender debate as to what exactly was meant and this in itself would be a very useful and productive outcome.

* * *

In this chapter I have demonstrated that my research supports four of my five specific propositions. I have shown that there is a substantial knowledge and skill shortfall among planners but that they believe they have a role in community building and are interested in rectifying the shortfall.

I have suggested that universities, state planning agencies and individual planners each have important roles to play in meeting and rectifying this shortcoming. I have pointed to an abundance of resources, including published material and existing mechanisms, with which planners in universities and state agencies could respond to this interest. I have proposed a number of questions that could be taken up in future research. And I have suggested the strategy of avoiding using the word community as a way of bringing its misuse and overuse to conscious attention and starting the process of finding a more specific and relevant vocabulary.

10: OVERVIEW

This thesis tackles an issue at the core of planning practice, namely the social impacts of town planning. It is a core question because, as I have shown, town planning was inspired in its earliest days by social aims, and since then the mission statements of planners show a continuing concern with questions of social outcomes.

My contribution is to examine the work and the thoughts of planning practitioners to see what these can contribute to an understanding of the role of town planning in fostering social wellbeing.

A review of the literature suggested that a range of mechanisms were operating to create a gap between the social aims of town planning and the actual practice of the profession, and these mechanisms included a reliance on the idea of community as a place or as people with territory in common, and an overuse of the village as a concept. I also pointed out that planners had embraced community development, community consultation and many aspects of the environmental movement but that all these had tended to confirm the place-based approach to social issues long after this was appropriate. One of the impacts of this appeared to be that it limited the way in which planners saw their role as evidenced in plans which have recently been produced.

On the basis of this review I formulated five specific propositions which I explored by surveying practising planners and student planners. The propositions sprang from a more basic question as to whether planners who are currently practising still hold the kinds of views which the literature review suggested. I also surveyed a class of graduating planners at the University of NSW to see whether they demonstrated a different set of views.

The work is limited by being the effort of only one person. This particularly limited the range of documents examined and the size of the survey. My work experience, on which I also drew, as well as my location in Sydney has also meant that what I have discovered may be a particularly NSW phenomenon, although I have not discovered literature, white or grey, which suggests that there is a very different situation in other places.

My research has demonstrated that planners, whether currently practising or about to practice, hold views consistent with those expressed in four out of five research propositions. They still consider the social construct community as embedded in place, they tend to pose physical solutions to social issues, they do not work with ideas of social networks, social systems or social constructs, and they are confused about their role in these regards. They tend to rely on the work of other specialists and, as a result of all these factors, their initiatives for community building are mostly indirect and weak.

However, the research also shows that most planners believe they have a role to play in community building. And a majority state that they could carry out this role with training and/or additional legislative support. My survey showed that, when it is put to them as a bald proposition, a good proportion of practising and future planners do not support the idea that physical infrastructure should precede social infrastructure. They demonstrate a high level of interest in, and support for, a range of new ideas for addressing the social responsibilities of town planning. While they appear confused about definitions of community building and about their role in relation to it, what the survey shows is a diversity of views and relative flexibility, not a fixity or rigidity about these matters. As well, they show no tendency to overstate their skills but their self assessments suggest an openness to learning new skills – although some are nervous about the idea of applying these without some legislative support.

If there is a fixity, it is in planners' habit of relying on belief when it comes to social issues, and on the physical - their reliance on defining the social geographically and in terms of place. The big challenge is for planners to find the relevance of physical planning skills to social structures which are not tied to place, geography or buildings. In this they will be assisted by the evidence based, systematic reviews of urban sociologists and social epidemiologists and by the more thorough application of existing planning mechanisms which call for social issues and impacts to be taken into account. The contribution of this thesis is to show that planning conceived as the management of physical elements in a place for a place-based community cannot deal with this particular challenge which now awaits planners' urgent intellectual attention.

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ATTACHMENT 1: THE ORCHARD HILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

WHICH ARE THE CRITICAL COMPONENTS FOR A NEW COMMUNITY? RAW SCORES / ORCHARD HILLS WORKSHOP: 29 MAY 2000. N=36

COMPONENT TICK WHICH APPLIES	WHICH ARE IMPORTANT?			WHICH CAN THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM PUT IN PLACE?			PLEASE RANK THE SIX MOST IMPORTANT							
	Don't know	Not so imp	Critical	Always [A]	Sometimes [S]	Not at all [N]	1 = most important]; T = total number of mentions ✓ = unranked mention	1	2	3	4	5	6	✓
The density of the development	1	8	11	14	5	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	✓	8
Solar access and orientation of dwellings	1	9	10	10	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	1		2
Ease of access to public transport for residents	0	0	20	6	13	0	2	0	5	2	2	2	✓	14
Local employment opportunities for residents	0	5	15	1	16	2	1	3	2	3	3	1		13
The meaning or metaphor of the place	1	5	13	6	10	2	2	1	1	1	0	1		6
The mix of housing types [ie kind/size of dwelling]	0	4	15	13	6	0	2	3	0	1	0	2	✓	9
The messages contained in the hierarchy of uses [ie who or what gets the prime spots]	1	11	8	8	11	1	0	0	2	0	0	0		2
A design approach which minimises socio-economic differentials among residents	1	8	12	6	12	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	✓	7
Accessible facilities for leisure activities	0	4	15	6	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		1
Accessible facilities for life long education	0	11	8	1	14	3	0	0	1	0	0	0		1
Access to a range of sporting venues	0	9	10	5	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0

Appearance incl. landscaping /exterior design features	0	6	12	13	6	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	5
Safety issues such as street lighting and surveillance	0	1	18	15	5	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	✓ 9
Integration of low cost housing	1	6	10	8	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The raison d'être of the place	1	9	9	5	11	4	2	1	0	0	1	1	✓ 6
Local ESD initiatives eg grey water recycling, cycle tracks	0	3	15	11	7	0	1	3	2	0	2	0	8
Recurrent funding re management of a community centre	1	6	13	3	11	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
The messages contained in the legibility, permeability, human scale of the development	1	5	13	8	10	1	3	0	3	1	2	0	9
A basic core of community and civic organisations	0	4	15	2	16	0	0	2	1	2	1	2	8
Capacity of dwellings to accommodate changes of use, [such as micro businesses, extended families]	1	7	11	4	13	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	5
Capacity of dwellings to be adapted for future electronic communications developments	1	8	9	8	10	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2

Other, please specify: community involvement in development process; Basic small business within walking distance; Inclusion of natural environment in design; Developing and maintaining an integrated accessible and accountable development team; Links to established human capital and places

small bus. (Ranked 1)
nat. environ (Ranked 1)
nat. environ (Ranked 1)
human capital (Ranked 1)
development. team ✓

Some details about you:

I currently work in the following sector: please ✓

I am a: planner 5; architect 3; University 4, State Government 3, Council 5, community/health professional 4; Community / not for profit 1; Business/private sector 0; other 1; no answer 6 .

ATTACHMENT 2: THE LONG QUESTIONNAIRE

ATTACHMENT 3: THE SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE

ATTACHMENT 4: COMMUNITY AS
ADJECTIVE, TABLES 5.11 – 5.16

TABLE 5.11: COMMUNITY AS ADJECTIVE, DUAP ANNUAL REPORT, 1998-9, PAGES 3-48

NOT FOR PROFIT, INTEREST OR AREA BASED	REPRESENTING/ INVOLVING PEOPLE IN LOCAL AREA	REPRESENTING /INVOLVING PEOPLE IN WIDER AREA EG THE STATE	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN LOCAL AREA	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN WIDER AREA, EG THE STATE	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/ AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE	FREE / CHEAP	FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT	BASIC HUMAN [SERVICES AND FACILITIES]
community & indigenous groups, 12 community groups, 12, 48 community and environmental groups, 18 local community groups 26 <i>community based Eden regional forest forum, 30</i> <i>community views 38</i> <i>community complaints 34</i>	<i>community plan 7,46</i> <i>community & indigenous groups, 12</i> community representatives 20,48 <i>Local community groups 26</i> community based Eden regional forest forum, 30 community input 32 community consultation 40, 44,48 community events and festivals, 44 <i>community groups, 48</i> at the community level 46 <i>community expectations 46</i> community workshops 48 community input 48 <i>community based activities 48</i> community support 48	<i>community & indigenous groups, 12</i> <i>community groups, 12</i> <i>community and environmental groups, 18</i> community input 32,48 community representatives 34,48 community views 38 community complaints 34 community consultation 40, <i>community support 48</i>	<i>community plan 7,46</i> <i>community events and festivals, 44</i> <i>long term sustainable community outcomes, 15</i> community goals 40 community expectations 46 community needs 46 community life 46 <i>community support 48</i>	<i>long term sustainable community outcomes, 15</i> community goals 40 community support 48	<i>community complaints 34</i> <i>community events and festivals 44</i> <i>community projects 45</i> <i>community consultation 40, 44 [maybe]</i> <i>community workshops [maybe]</i>	community based activities 48	<i>community life 46</i>	community plan 7,46 long term sustainable community outcomes, 15 community projects 45

Page numbers show each usage. Italics indicate a secondary or other possible meaning

TABLE 5.12: COMMUNITY AS ADJECTIVE, DUAP STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 1999-2000

NOT FOR PROFIT, INTEREST OR AREA BASED	REPRESENTING /INVOLVING PEOPLE IN LOCAL AREA	REPRESENTING /INVOLVING PEOPLE IN WIDER AREA EG THE STATE	BELONIGNG TO EVERYONE IN LOCAL AREA	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN WIDER AREA, EG THE STATE	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/ AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE	FREE / CHEAP	FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT	BASIC HUMAN [SERVICES AND FACILITIES]
community groups, 4 <i>community input</i> , 3	community participation, 3	community input, 3 community participation, 4		community needs, 4				community development 3

Page numbers show each usage. Italics indicate a secondary or other possible meaning.

TABLE 5.13: COMMUNITY AS ADJECTIVE, THE DRAFT GREEN SQUARE MASTER PLAN[1997]

NOT FOR PROFIT, INTEREST OR AREA BASED	REPRESENTING /INVOLVING PEOPLE IN LOCAL AREA	REPRESENTING /INVOLVING PEOPLE IN WIDER AREA E.G THE STATE	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN LOCAL AREA	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN WIDER AREA, E.G THE STATE	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/ AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE	FREE / CHEAP	FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT	BASIC HUMAN [SERVICES AND FACILITIES]
community organisations 14,50,57 community housing sector 57 community cultural service providers 59	<i>community organisations</i> 14,50,57 community consultations 49,52 community activities 54 community functions of the school 57		community culture 49 <i>community resources</i> 51,60		<i>community infrastructure</i> 15 <i>community consultations</i> 49,52 <i>community services provision</i> 49 <i>community services</i> 50 <i>community facilities</i> 40,51, 52,53,59,84 <i>community activities</i> 54 <i>community health care</i> 54 <i>community health facility</i> 54 <i>community health initiative</i> 55 <i>community health functions</i> 56 Community uses 76	<i>Community housing sector</i> 57	<i>community functions of the school</i> 57	community infrastructure 15 community services provision 49 community services 50 community facilities 40,51, 52,53,59,84 community resources 51,60 community health care 54 community health facility 54 community health initiative 55 community health functions 56 <i>community cultural service providers</i> 59

Page numbers show each usage. Italics indicate a secondary or other possible meaning.

TABLE 5.14: COMMUNITY AS ADJECTIVE, DUAP'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY BACKGROUND PAPER 2000

NOT FOR PROFIT, INTEREST OR AREA BASED	REPRESENTING/ INVOLVING PEOPLE IN LOCAL AREA	REPRESENTING /INVOLVING PEOPLE IN WIDER AREA EG THE STATE	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN LOCAL AREA	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN WIDER AREA, EG THE STATE	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/ AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE	FREE/CHEAP	FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT	BASIC HUMAN [SERVICES AND FACILITIES]
<i>community housing sector, 6</i>			community understanding, 7		<i>community activities, 5</i>	community housing sector, 6	community activities, 5	

Page numbers show each usage. Italics indicate a secondary or other possible meaning.

TABLE 5.15: COMMUNITY AS ADJECTIVE, DUAP'S AREA ASSISTANCE SCHEME POLICY AND PROCEDURE GUIDELINES, 1999, PP 3-12

NOT FOR PROFIT, INTEREST OR AREA BASED	REPRESENTING/ INVOLVING PEOPLE IN LOCAL AREA	REPRESENTING/ INVOLVING PEOPLE IN WIDER AREA EG THE STATE	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN LOCAL AREA	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN WIDER AREA, EG THE STATE	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/ AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE	FREE/CHEAP	FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT	BASIC HUMAN [SERVICES AND FACILITIES]
community organisations, 4,8,10,11,11,11 <i>community – based management,6</i>	community –based management,6 community participation, 9 community planning 10,12 community profiles 11 community networks 12		<i>community development 4,5</i> community issues 4,11 community needs 4,6,9 <i>community plans 9</i>		community facilities 5,5,7 community services 5,6,6 community halls 5 community education and awareness programs 6 community resources 7	<i>community education and awareness programs 6</i>		community development grants 3, community development 4,5 community plans 9

Page numbers show each usage. Italics indicate a secondary or other possible meaning.

TABLE 5.16: THE COMMUNITY AS ADJECTIVE, POLICY ACTION TEAM NO. 4'S REPORT ON NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT; CHS. 1-3

NOT FOR PROFIT, INTEREST OR AREA BASED	REPRESENTING/INVOLVING PEOPLE IN LOCAL AREA	REPRESENTING / INVOLVING PEOPLE IN WIDER AREA EG THE STATE	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN LOCAL AREA	BELONGING TO EVERYONE IN WIDER AREA, EG THE STATE	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/ AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE	FREE/ CHEAP	FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT	BASIC HUMAN [SERVICES AND FACILITIES]
community sector 1.14 <i>community forum 1.18</i> community businesses 1.18 community organisations 1.47 community groups 1.48 community health trust 1.55 community planning partnership 2.2 community development budget 3.8 community fund 3.9, 3.10	community commitment 1.3 community participation 1.3 community leadership 1.3, 1.9 community involvement 1.3,1.9,1.11,1.16,1.18,3.20 community -based management 1.5 community forum 1.18 the community voice 1.18 <i>community development 1.19</i> community planning 1.19 community capacity building 1.27 community-led 1.39, 1.52 community regeneration activities 1.44 community entrepreneurs / leaders 1.48,2.6 community consent 2.3 community professionals 2.6 community practitioners 2.6 community representatives 3.8 community support 3.9		<i>community commitment 1.3</i> <i>community involvement 1.3,1.9,1.11,1.16,1.18,3.20</i> <i>community -based management 1.5</i> <i>community forum 1.18</i> <i>the community voice 1.18</i> <i>community-led 1.39, 1.52</i> <i>community consent 2.3</i> <i>community professionals 2.6</i> <i>community support 3.9</i> <i>community fund 3.9, 3.10</i>		<i>community forum 1.18</i> <i>community health project 1.19</i> <i>community health project 1.19</i> <i>community centres 1.19</i> <i>community buildings 1.19</i>	<i>community health project 1.19</i> <i>community transport 1.27</i>	<i>community regeneration activities 1.44</i>	community health project 1.19 community centres 1.19 community development 1.19 community buildings 1.19 <i>community capacity building 1.27</i> community transport 1.27

Paragraph numbers show each usage. Italics indicate a secondary or other possible meaning.

ATTACHMENT 5: DETAILED RESULTS FROM THE MAIN SURVEY

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 4

FIRST CHOICE INITIATIVES TO BRING ABOUT THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOMES IN COMMUNITY BUILDING AT NewPlace

PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING: 1 ST CHOICE	NO.	%
Urban design solutions including provision of a town square, central meeting place/focus, other meeting places eg for young people; create a sense of place/identity/well designed public domain, safe streets, provide open space, parks, public access to foreshore, no fences, porches or verandas, good urban design such as controls on density, permeability, convenience	30	22.1
Hold consultation workshops with intending/nearby residents	15	11.1
Environmental solutions: use ecologically sustainable designs/systems, retain forests/bush	14	10.4
Provide infrastructure such as public transport, local employment sources	12	8.9
Provide short term community development processes such as events, festivals, sausage sizzles, welcome program, information, and/or long term community development processes such as community/cultural programs and services, community gardens, bush regeneration programs, appointment of a community development worker/team, place manager/team	11	8.1
Provide community buildings eg community centre recreation. facility	8	6.0
Have a plan/ strategy	7	5.2
Ensure timely staging of development so that houses don't precede infrastructure provision	5	3.7
Provide managed community facilities such as a managed community centre, but also library, school, health centre	3	2.2
Build social capital, start up civic groups or community orgs., set up democratic structures for direct involvement in decision making	3	2.2
Achieve social or economic diversity through mix of housing, affordable housing or mix of residential, environmental and rural areas	3	2.2
Do nothing: let it evolve as community needs become apparent	2	1.5
Other (this category included single word entries such as 'sustainability', 'equity' 'marketing' and 'self-contained' as well as "a totalitarian approach is needed to implement a clear vision'	2	1.5
Promote relative social and economic equality through...	0	0
Provide ICT infrastructure or internet based strategies	0	0
No answer	20	14.8
Total	135	100

SECOND CHOICE INITIATIVES TO BRING ABOUT THE BEST POSSIBLE
OUTCOMES IN COMMUNITY BUILDING AT NewPlace

PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING: 2 ND CHOICE	NO.	%
Urban design solutions including provision of a town square, central meeting place/focus, other meeting places eg for young people; create a sense of place/identity/well designed public domain, safe streets, provide open space, parks, public access to foreshore, no fences, porches or verandas, good urban design such as controls on density, permeability, convenience	18	25.8
Provide infrastructure such as public transport, local employment sources	8	11.4
Provide short term community development processes such as events, festivals, sausage sizzles, welcome program, information, and/or long term community development processes such as community/cultural programs and services, community gardens, bush regeneration programs, appointment of a community development worker/team, place team/team	9	12.8
Build social capital, start up civic groups or community orgs., set up democratic structures for direct involvement in decision making	7	10
Hold consultation workshops with intending/nearby residents	3	4.3
Achieve social or economic diversity through mix of housing, affordable housing or mix of residential, environmental and rural areas	5	7.2
Environmental solutions: use ecologically sustainable designs/systems, retain forests/bush	5	7.1
Provide community buildings eg community centre, recreation facility	4	5.7
Ensure timely staging of development so that houses don't precede infrastructure provision	3	4.3
Have a plan/ strategy	2	2.9
Provide managed community facilities such as a managed community centre, but also library, school, health centre	1	1.4
Promote relative social and economic equality through...	0	0
Provide ICT infrastructure or internet based strategies	0	0
Do nothing: let it evolve as community needs become apparent	0	0
Other (this category included single word entries such as 'sustainability', 'equity' 'marketing' and 'self-contained' as well as "a totalitarian approach is needed to implement a clear vision'	3	4.2
No answer	2	2.9
Total	70	100

SUMMARY OF FIRST CHOICE RESPONSES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING AT
NewPlace

PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING	NO.	%
Urban design solutions	30	22.1
Hold community consultations	15	11.1
Build social capital and social networks	14	10.4
Environmental solutions	14	10.4
Provide infrastructure, especially public transport	12	8.9
Provide managed or unmanaged community facilities	11	8.2
Ensure timely development or mixed development	8	5.9
Have a plan/strategy	7	5.2
Other	4	3
No answer	20	14.8
Total	135	100

SUMMARY OF SECOND CHOICE RESPONSES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING AT
NewPlace

PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING	NO.	%
Urban design solutions	18	25.8
Build social capital and social networks	16	22.9
Ensure timely development or mixed development	8	11.5
Provide infrastructure, especially public transport	8	11.4
Environmental solutions	5	7.1
Provide managed or unmanaged community facilities	5	7.1
Hold community consultations	3	4.2
Have a plan/strategy	2	2.9
Other	3	4.2
No answer	2	2.9
Total	70	100

REASONS FOR CHOSING FIRST AND SECOND CHOICE COMMUNITY BUILDING INITIATIVES:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR REASONS FOR SELECTING EACH INITIATIVE FOR NewPlace?	1 ST CHOICE		2 ND CHOICE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
This initiative would provide the facility or amenity within which community building could take place	20	28.6	19	27.1
I believe this initiative would encourage social contact/networks/mutual support	16	22.9	17	24.3
This initiative would provide essential physical infrastructure without which the community could not function	11	15.7	5	7.1
I've had first hand experience with this and it worked	8	11.4	11	15.7
I believe this initiative would create community pride	4	5.7	4	5.7
Research findings indicate this would have good community building impacts	4	5.7	4	5.7
I believe this initiative would develop community/voluntary organisations	2	2.9	2	2.9
Other	1	1.4	4	5.7
No answer	4	5.7	4	5.7
Total	70	100	70	100

FACTORS WHICH MAY LIMIT WHAT A PLANNER CAN DO WITH RESPECT TO SOCIAL WELLBEING

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ✓ BOX CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL	AGREE STRONGLY		AGREE, SOME RES- ERVATIONS		DISAGREE TO SOME EXTENT		DISAGREE STRONGLY		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
There are some lessons from the past which are easy to turn into best practice guidelines, such as how to build safe streets, what size population will support a bus service. Planners and developers have their work cut out just trying to comply with all the best practice guidelines that are around. N=70 (n.a.=1)	7	10.0	45	64.3	10	14.3	3	4.3	4	5.7
The market dictates where developers will build and if there is a market for the housing then that's the rationale for the development. N=70 (n.a.=1)	6	8.6	25	35.7	22	31.4	16	22.9	0	0
The problem with a strategic, or master, plan is that its just ideas. In reality most strategies have to pass the developer profit test or the government funds test. These tests can transform a plan so that what gets built is not what was planned at all. N=135 (n.a.=1)	34	25.2	53	39.3	30	22.2	14	10.4	3	2.2
Physical infrastructure and buildings come first, social structures come later N=135	14	10.4	31	23.0	35	25.9	53	39.3	2	1.5
The opportunity cost of putting community buildings in town centres is often just too high. N=70 (n.a.=1)	7	10.0	10	14.3	19	27.1	28	40	5	7.1

FACTORS WHICH MAY LIMIT WHAT A PLANNER CAN DO WITH RESPECT TO
SOCIAL WELLBEING: STUDENT RESPONSES

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ✓ BOX CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL	AGREE STRONGLY		AGREE, SOME RESERVATIONS		DISAGREE TO SOME EXTENT		DISAGREE STRONGLY		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
There are some lessons from the past which are easy to turn into best practice guidelines, such as how to build safe streets, what size population will support a bus service. Planners and developers have their work cut out just trying to comply with all the best practice guidelines that are around. N= 28	4	14.3	14	50.0	9	32.1	1	3.6	0	0
The market dictates where developers will build and if there is a market for the housing then that's the rationale for the development. N= 28	7	25.0	15	53.6	4	14.3	2	7.1	0	0
The problem with a strategic, or master, plan is that its just ideas. In reality most strategies have to pass the developer profit test or the government funds test. These tests can transform a plan so that what gets built is not what was planned at all. N= 28	7	25.0	15	53.6	4	14.3	2	7.1	0	0
Physical infrastructure and buildings come first, social structures come later N= 28	2	7.1	4	14.3	13	46.4	8	28.6	1	3.6
The opportunity cost of putting community buildings in town centres is often just too high. N=28	1	3.6	9	32.1	7	25.0	6	21.4	5	17.9

PULL FACTORS: THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ✓ BOX CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL	AGREE STRONGLY		AGREE, SOME RESERVATIONS		DISAGREE TO SOME EXTENT		DISAGREE STRONGLY		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Unless you have a vision for a place, it is difficult to decide what to put where, i.e. what the relationship between various structural elements should be N=70	43	61.4	23	32.9	3	4.3	0	0	1	1.4
The strategic elements tend to get forgotten during implementation. If you want them to survive, you have to give them a very deliberate and consistent emphasis. N=70 n.a.=1	42	60.0	21	30	4	5.7	1	1.4	1	1.4

STUDENT RESPONSES:

Unless you have a vision for a place, it is difficult to decide what to put where, i.e. what the relationship between various structural elements should be N=28	13	46.4	6	21.4	6	21.4	2	7.1	1	3.6
The strategic elements tend to get forgotten during implementation. If you want them to survive, you have to give them a very deliberate and consistent emphasis. N=28	10	35.7	12	42.9	3	10.7	1	3.6	2	7.1

REACTIONS BY **TOWN PLANNERS** TO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS: MAIN SURVEY

WOULD ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY BUILDING BY PLANNERS?	A GOOD IDEA ✓		A GOOD IDEA BUT NOT REALISTIC		NOT A GOOD IDEA		DON'T KNOW	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Through S94 or developer agreements, developer contributions are extended to include buildings (such as shops and flats) that will yield rental income tied to contributing to the salary for a team of the community facility, eg a community/cultural/adult learning centre. N= 93 (n.a.=3)	56	60.2	11	11.8	18	19.4	5	5.4
Town fringe & out of town shopping malls are banned (as in UK). N= 93 (n.a.=1)	57	61.3	17	18.3	16	17.2	2	2.2
A new State Planning Policy identifies criteria for locating community facilities, including community centres. (eg lonely buildings on the edges of reserves/non-commercial space without windows etc would not make it). N= 93 (n.a.=1)	65	69.9	7	7.5	15	16.1	5	5.4
DUAP ¹⁵⁵ prepares guidelines on community building for planners (eg. similar to DUAP's urban design guidelines) as part of State Planning Policies. N= 93 (n.a.=1)	67	72.0	9	9.7	9	9.7	5	5.4
New town centres are designed to include spaces suitable for markets for locally made/grown products. N= 93(n.a.=4)	77	82.9	8	8.6	4	4.3	4	4.3
The EPA Act is changed to limit progress in a development beyond a threshold number of houses/households until a basic service infrastructure is in place. N=42 (n.a.=1)	34	81.0	1	2.4	5	11.9	1	2.4
DUAP ¹⁵⁶ offers training for planners in partnership development with community organisations, the establishment of Development Trusts and the fostering of other social and community enterprises. N= 93 (n.a.=2)	74	79.6	5	5.4	6	6.5	8	8.6

¹⁵⁵ In the short questionnaire, this reference to DUAP was removed and replaced with 'A State Planning Authority'.

¹⁵⁶ In the short questionnaire, this question just asked about the provision of this kind of training without specifying the training sponsor.

REACTIONS BY STUDENT PLANNERS TO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

WOULD ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY BUILDING BY PLANNERS?	A GOOD IDEA ✓		A GOOD IDEA BUT NOT REALISTIC		NOT A GOOD IDEA		DON'T KNOW	
	NO. %		NO.	%	NO. %		NO. %	
Through S94 or developer agreements, developer contributions are extended to include buildings (such as shops and flats) that will yield rental income tied to contributing to the salary for a team of the community facility, eg a community/cultural/adult learning centre N= 28	20	71.4	0		5	17.9	3	10.7
Town fringe & out of town shopping malls are banned (as in UK). N= 28	16	57.1	0		9	32.1	3	10.7
A new State Planning Policy identifies criteria for locating community facilities, including community centres. (eg lonely buildings on the edges of reserves/non-commercial space without windows etc would not make it). N= 28	25	89.3	0		0		3	10.7
DUAP ¹⁵⁷ prepares guidelines on community building for planners (eg. similar to DUAP's urban design guidelines) as part of State Planning Policies. N= 93 (n.a.=1)	26	92.9	0		1	3.6	1	3.6
New town centres are designed to include spaces suitable for markets for locally made/grown products. N= 93(n.a.=4)	28	100	0		0		0	
The EPA Act is changed to limit progress in a development beyond a threshold number of houses/households until a basic service infrastructure is in place. N=42 (n.a.=1)	23	82.1	0		2	7.1	3	10.7
DUAP ¹⁵⁸ offers training for planners in partnership development with community organisations, the establishment of Development Trusts and the fostering of other social and community enterprises. N= 93 (n.a.=2)	24	85.7	0		0		4	14.3

¹⁵⁷ In the short questionnaire, this reference to DUAP was removed and replaced with 'A State Planning Authority'.

¹⁵⁸ In the short questionnaire, this question just asked about the provision of this kind of training without specifying the training sponsor.

STUDENT PLANNERS' ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SKILL LEVELS

HERE IS A LIST OF SKILLS A PLANNER MIGHT NEED FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING. WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT EACH OF THESE SKILLS?	I ALREADY DO THIS EFFECTIVELY		I COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA WITH SOME TRAINING		I COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA IF THERE WERE ADEQUATE LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT IT		I COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA WITH SOME TRAINING AND ADEQUATE LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT		THIS IS OUTSIDE A PLANNER'S ROLE		NOT SURE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Being able to plan for the social/community infrastructure of a new release area, eg. for the development of a range of social and cultural facilities, services N =28 (n.a.=1)	1	3.6	10	35.7	4	14.3	12	42.9	0		0	
Being able to demonstrate the market benefits of social investment and community infrastructure to the private sector (business and developers) N= 28 (n.a.=1)	0		11	39.3	3	10.7	7	25.0	5	17.9	1	3.6
Being able to document and support social impact arguments N=28 (n.a.=1)	1	3.6	14	50.0	4	14.3	8	28.6	0		0	
Being able to plan for the development of social networks, local acquaintanceship and mutual support among neighbours in a new development N=28 (n.a.=1)	0		13	46.4	1	3.6	3	10.7	7	25.0	3	10.7
Being able to start the processes needed to build community organisations and a civic infrastructure N= 28	1	3.6	13	46.4	2	7.1	6	21.4	3	10.7	2	7.1

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

AGE GROUP	MAIN NO.	SURVEY %	STUDENTS	
			NO.	%
Under 25	7	5.2	21	75.0
25-34	56	41.5	7	25.0
35-49	45	33.3		
50 and over	26	19.3		
No answer	1	0.7		
Total	135	100.0	28	100.0

SEX OF RESPONDENTS

SEX	MAIN NO.	SURVEY %	STUDENTS	
			NO.	%
Female	58	43.0	13	46.4
Male	58	43.0	15	53.6
No answer	19	14.1		
Total	135	100.0	28	100.0

MAIN QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

QUALIFICATION	NO.	%
Town planning qualification	93	68.9
Other qualification	40	29.6
No answer	2	1.5
Total	135	100.0

SOCIAL COMPONENT IN TOWN PLANNING DEGREE?

SOCIAL COMPONENT?	NO.	%
Yes	35	71.4
No	9	18.4
No answer	5	10.2
Total	49	100.0

N=49 i.e. of the 70 asked this question only 49 had a town planning qualification

CURRENT OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS

OCCUPATION	NO.	%
Town planner	76	56.3
Social planner	4	3
Other	53	39.3
No answer	2	1.5
Total	135	100.0

SOURCE OF SURVEY RESPONDENT

ORGANISATION, EVENT ETC	NO	%
DUAP	11	8.1
Liverpool CC	5	3.7
Penrith CC	11	8.1
Individual	1	.7
Warringah	19	14.1
Camden	9	6.7
Sydney Uni	14	10.4
RAPI 2001 Conference	65	48.1
Total	135	100.0

RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE

STATE	NO.	%
ACT	13	9.6
NSW	89	65.9
QLD	5	3.7
SA	10	7.4
TAS	6	4.4
VIC	8	5.9
WA	1	.7
O/S	2	1.5
No answer	1	.7
TOTAL	135	100.0

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON RETURNED SURVEYS

'Community building by planners refers to bringing together the relevant skills and resources to co-ordinate and deliver all of the above. A planner is a mover and a shaker.'(male town planner aged 35-49)

'I would add to this that planners do plan for social interaction in design etc, but its implementation should be undertaken by a social planner.'(male town planner aged 25-34)

'A planner's role in community building is limited by the legislation and the political environment in which he/she finds themselves. Australia does not possess the economy of the US where all infrastructure and social requirements of a new town are in place before the community moves in. In Australia, for example, a particular new release area has waited some two years before a community shopping centres has been constructed by the developers. In this regard the various levels of Government need to play a more active role in establishing those facilities.'

The ADI development agreement is a good example of agencies and developers attempting to document what facilities will be in place before the community moves in. However, different State agencies have different priorities and commitment levels vary. What would result is a community with some of the required infrastructure but not all. The Government (State/Commonwealth) should ensure all agencies are committed to ensuring the same result. The planner is powerless to ensure this happens.'(male town planner aged 25-34)

'In the 7-8 years that I have been a planner, I have formed the view that at a strategic and statutory level, planners whether creating social infrastructure or built forms, only tinker around the edges and make minor changes in the scheme of things. The reasons for this in my opinion are: (1) power and dominance of global capital and its impacts, (2) decline in leisure time (less time for the development of social capital), (3) short term vision of most politicians and an election cycle related to funding of political parties by powerful political lobby groups, (4) DESIRE FOR A CAPITAL RETURN!!!' (male, town planner aged 25-34)

'planners should as far as possible ensure the shape of towns, suburbs, cities etc do not act as barriers to public participation and interaction. Countering the prevailing social impacts of capitalist market economies, the hollowing of our value and faith systems and increasing mobility is well beyond the influence of any single profession, including planners.' (female, other qual, aged 25-34)

'A planner or planning department can only contribute to community building. I could never infer they are key to the success of a strong community, although they can be key to its failure.' (female, other qual, aged 25-34)

'there are many types of "planners" – social, transport, land-use, strategic. A social planner could work on this outcome (civic engagement), but a strict land-use planner would be moving generally outside their job description.' (male town planner aged 25-34)

NOTES FROM SURVEY WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE TOWN PLANNER:

Town planners:

- are constrained by their original training
- *'are pigeon-holed in their jobs'*
- *'work within a narrow paradigm'*
- are constrained by their operational role of processing DAs
- *'do not like to have conversations about the social role of the built environment'*
- *'generally are not called upon to provide creative input'*
- can't deliver, *'they only steer the ship'*
- don't know how to take account of how a place feels
- are *'low on the pecking order'* and it's too scary to try to apply weak sections of the Act (eg those relating to social impacts)
- lack appropriate skills and information for the range of work being discussed, for example they often lack the skill to 'best guess' future costs so they can set a rate for section 94.

In addition

- There is a *'lack of multi-disciplinary team work in the profession'*
- *'All skills can't be in one person'*
- Social aspects of planning bring on a fear of the unknown in planners, its *'too scary'*, *'not core business'*, they are not interested and they are *'afraid to innovate'*
- Council officers lack the ability to negotiate with developments and are expected to be trying to meet the requirements of applicants
- If planners are going to try to use developer agreements to deliver social infrastructure they have to be careful to be very specific – which is what did not happen in the case of the Library at the Italian Forum in Leichhardt (a suburb of Sydney NSW)
- The status of planners in the community *'is not high'*
- *'Planning is seen as the curer of all evils'*
- *'Our role is to get building in sync with the environment'*
- *'You can't put in policies and strategies that will make people mix cohesively'*
- *'I kept on thinking of it (community building in the questionnaire) as a building'*
- *'I find community building is not easy to define and therefore difficult to enter into a dialogue about it'*
- *'Who socialises is a cultural and an individual thing'*

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID ABOUT STATUS OF SOCIAL ISSUES

- Community is no longer place based, but community membership is being defined in financial terms
- Decisions about community building are dominated by market rationale including a withdrawal of regulatory frameworks
- To get the idea of community building into the masterplan, *'it shouldn't be run by architects'*
- Community centres trying to be all things to all people end up as *'nothing to anybody'*
- It is difficult to argue social benefit, *'we have to argue for affordable housing on the basis of the mix of employees needed in the area'*
- Social sustainability has *'multiple meanings'* and anyway it may be *'a passing phase'*
- Community building is *'difficult to define and people have varying interpretations'*
- *'The cult of the individual has eroded the idea of community'*
- *'In our council there is no leadership and no money'*
- You can *'only apply social sustainability criteria if there is a vision in the council which would create a space into which planners could raise issues'*
- *'Social stuff is low status, you can't measure it and its not tangible, its not seen as important and its not a priority'*
- *'Social planning has been the poor cousin of urban planning'*
- *'There is a cultural ethos that best use in areas of high land value is the highest (monetary) value use'*
- *'Everyone thinks they are an expert on social issues'*
- *'At the local government level, social planners and urban planners have not been working together'*
- *'Social impacts are considered last, if at all'*
- *'Social issues are not among the criteria used in early stages of plan development'*

THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

- Claims for the role of urban design in community building are overstated
- *'The planning profession has been more reactionary than visionary because it have been trying to accommodate the growth needs of NSW'*

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID ABOUT THE STATUTORY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- The whole statutory framework is structured *'so that some will be better off and some will be worse off; it is not set up to focus on relative equality'*
- It is easier to have an impact at small scale level of each DA/site but to do so consistently means there have to be policies which can be applied
- *'Councillors and council staff don't believe that they can stop big box shopping development, so they don't try and this belief is backed up by the decisions of the Land and Environment Court'*
- *'Councillors often don't have the guts to refuse and also some councillors just don't know what would be a better thing to do'*
- There are only 40 days to respond to a development application, its *'trench warfare'*, there is no support from Council
- S94 is a mechanism which encourages guesstimates which often turn out wrong leading to inadequate funds being collected
- *'S94 is a mechanism of delay'*
- *'It is difficult to actually get contributions from developers because of planners' inability to argue about developers' commercial in confidence profit levels'*
- *'The only lever you can use with developers is to say that new initiatives will make their development more marketable'*
- The politics of development are complex, for example, developers try to second guess what will be required of them, their unwillingness to cooperate and profiteering are assumed and they get ridiculed if they try to do the right thing.

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID ABOUT WHERE THE POWER LIES

- *'Its all about money from the sale of land'* what happens is that the state rezones land and plans are drawn up for social infrastructure but *'the state government won't deliver'*
- Politicians influence the end planning decision, *'they have many interests which are brought to bear, including wanting to stay in office'*
- It is mainly the government that doesn't come to the party, there isn't *'any real commitment to community involvement or to early provision, the words are there but the actions aren't'*
- *'There is no return to DUAP from providing social infrastructure up front'*
- *'Planners aren't the answer, it's the whole organisation that needs to change'*
- *'Most things are in the planners' control'*
- *'There's an assumption that we have our hands on all the levers but we don't'*
- *'In the real world everything else comes before what the planner thinks'*
- *'We are also pushed by residents who want things that are not in their own interest, eg car based transport'*

THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

- *'We need support from the other 2 tiers of government otherwise we are always going to miss the boat'*
- *'Local government doesn't plan, its all done at state level which develops major place policies and major infrastructure rollout, local government has a residual role to deal with site specifics and all the implementation detail'*
- *Planner's greatest role is within the development at Development Application stage and 'they can protect some areas – unless the state government intervenes'*
- *'All the responsibilities get devolved to council, council does all the work, enforces the regulations and gets compliance',*
- *For example, the state passed the Threatened Species Act and required Council to implement it, but Council has to use its own money to prepare an EIS and if it wants to defend assessments under this state legislation in court. 'National Parks and Wildlife Service never contributes, it could but it never has'*
- *'The whole problem with local government is that we have to do it on a piecemeal basis' we have to enforce standards on small sites while the state government overrides standards on large scale sites*
- *DUAP won't make a decision, even if it is an OK decision if there is huge local opposition, they are 'comical in their dealings with the community' and often they are out there consulting when they are 'already preparing a draft bill so the consultation is pointless'.*