

THE PRACTICES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE:
A TASMANIAN CASE STUDY

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Declarations

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in this thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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This thesis incorporates the outcome of data analyses undertaken in collaboration with Dr Elaine Stratford as part of a research project under her supervision. The collaboration relates to research on local governance and citizen participation in Tasmania and pertains to sections of chapters 6 and 7. The findings of that research have been published in the journal, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geography* and the journal *Local Environment*.

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List of abbreviations

ACIR	Advisory Council for Inter-governmental Relations
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
APM	Australian Paper Manufacturers
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
Cr	Councillor
GSRG	Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group
HVC	Hon Valley Council
LGAT	Local Government Association of Tasmania
LGMAT	Local Government Managers Association, Tasmania
LUPAA	Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
NCP	National Competition Policy
NOLG	National Office of Local Government
NPM	New Public Management
RFA	Regional Forest Agreement
RMPS	Resource Management and Planning System
RPDC	Resource Management and Planning Commission
SCAG	Southwood Community Advisory Group
SRG	Streetscape Reference Group
TDC	Town Development Committee
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Chronological list of Federal and Tasmanian governments

Numerous references are made throughout the work to government policies and programs implemented over time and a chronological reference of the different Tasmanian and Federal Governments from the early 1970s to the present time is provided here for reference purposes.

Period in Government	Federal party in government	Under the leadership of Prime Minister
1972-1975	Labor Party	Gough Whitlam
1975-1983	Liberal-National Coalition	Malcolm Fraser
1983-1991	Labor Party	Bob Hawke
1991-1996	Labor Party	Paul Keating
1996-2007	Liberal-National Coalition	John Howard
2007- to date	Labor Party	Kevin Rudd

Period in Government	Tasmanian State party in government	Under the leadership of Premier
1982-1989	Liberal Party	Robin Gray
1989-1992	Labor Party (includes period of the Labor-Green Accord)	Michael Field
1992-1996	Liberal Party	Ray Groom
1996-1998	Liberal Party	Tony Rundle
1998-2004	Labor Party	Jim Bacon
2004-2008	Labor Party	Paul Lennon
2008-to date	Labor Party	David Bartlett

Abstract

In this thesis I examine how local government and community actors are managing change in local governing processes. I describe how governing is practised and document the effects of such practices for the rural township of Geeveston in the Huon Valley Council, Tasmania, Australia. The aim of the research is to apprehend the materiality of governing at the local level under neoliberal governmental regimes in order to comprehend *what happens and what is at stake* when people govern and are governed in particular ways. This project is underpinned by an interest in everyday practices and the particular experiences of individuals in communities of place and interest and grounded in a case study of township revitalisation.

The implementation of neoliberal governmental technologies has changed profoundly governing practices at all levels of government. The term *governance* is being used as a general reference for these changing conditions of governing. Of concern here are the effects of those changes on local government that occurred in Tasmania, Australia during the 1990s. This period of local government modernisation emphasised managerial and structural changes designed to increase local government efficiency and effectiveness and were accompanied by legislative requirements to enhance citizen participation in local government processes. Determining how to integrate these twin goals has generated significant challenges for local government and community actors as they negotiate what it means to govern and be governed in the new *governance* environment.

The design for the research is based on a case study approach and draws on qualitative research methods. It assumes great value in working from the particularities of people's experiences; a position central to the practice of cultural geography. The theoretical framework draws on concepts of government developed in literature on governmentality; a perspective that highlights the regimes of practices of government used in attempts to shape rationally human conduct for particular ends. In its detailed examination of the practices of government, this project addresses a gap identified in the literature calling for more empirical research to explicate theorizations of governmental practices.

This research builds knowledge about local governance with attention to its constitution through the discursive and material practices of identity, community, representation, citizenship and politics in place. The work links the empirical findings of this research with concepts of the representative claim, agonistic pluralism and governing through community to problematise, respectively, meanings and practices of representation, the role of conflict in democracy and practices of community empowerment.

Key words: cultural geography, governmentality, representative claim, agonistic pluralism, local government, representation, participation, citizenship, place-making, Tasmania

Chapter I

Introduction

Geeveston is one of five major towns in the Huon Valley municipality, the southernmost local government area on the island state of Tasmania, which is a sub-national jurisdiction in the federation of Australia (Figure 1.1). This town and its rural locale have a long association with forest industries in southern Tasmania. For decades Geeveston people have been variously managing profound social and economic changes brought about by state-wide restructuring of the apple and pear growing industry, forest industries and local government. In 1999, some Geeveston people decided to revitalise the settlement's main streets as part of a township beautification project and, to do so, entered into a partnership with the Huon Valley Council (hereafter often referred to as the council, local government area or municipality¹). The partnership was given expression through the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group (sometimes referred to as the Group or GSRG) and this model of community-local government partnership would later be implemented in other towns in the Huon Valley with varying success. The Group would contribute to Geeveston's transformation from being socially and economically depressed to 'a vibrant and attractive rural township which is environmentally and economically sustainable and promotes community pride' (Huon Valley Council 2000, no page). The community-local government partnership approach echoes projects in other places, where successful township revitalisation has been attributed to three factors: increased economic activity that results from improvements to facilities, infrastructure and overall township presentation; community participation and collaboration with council and professionals and the increased community interest and involvement that flow from such collaborations; and increased pride and quality of life in the town (Ryan, C 2000,).

¹ Throughout the thesis the word council refers to the Huon Valley Council in a general sense, while Council refers specifically to the elected members when they act as a group.

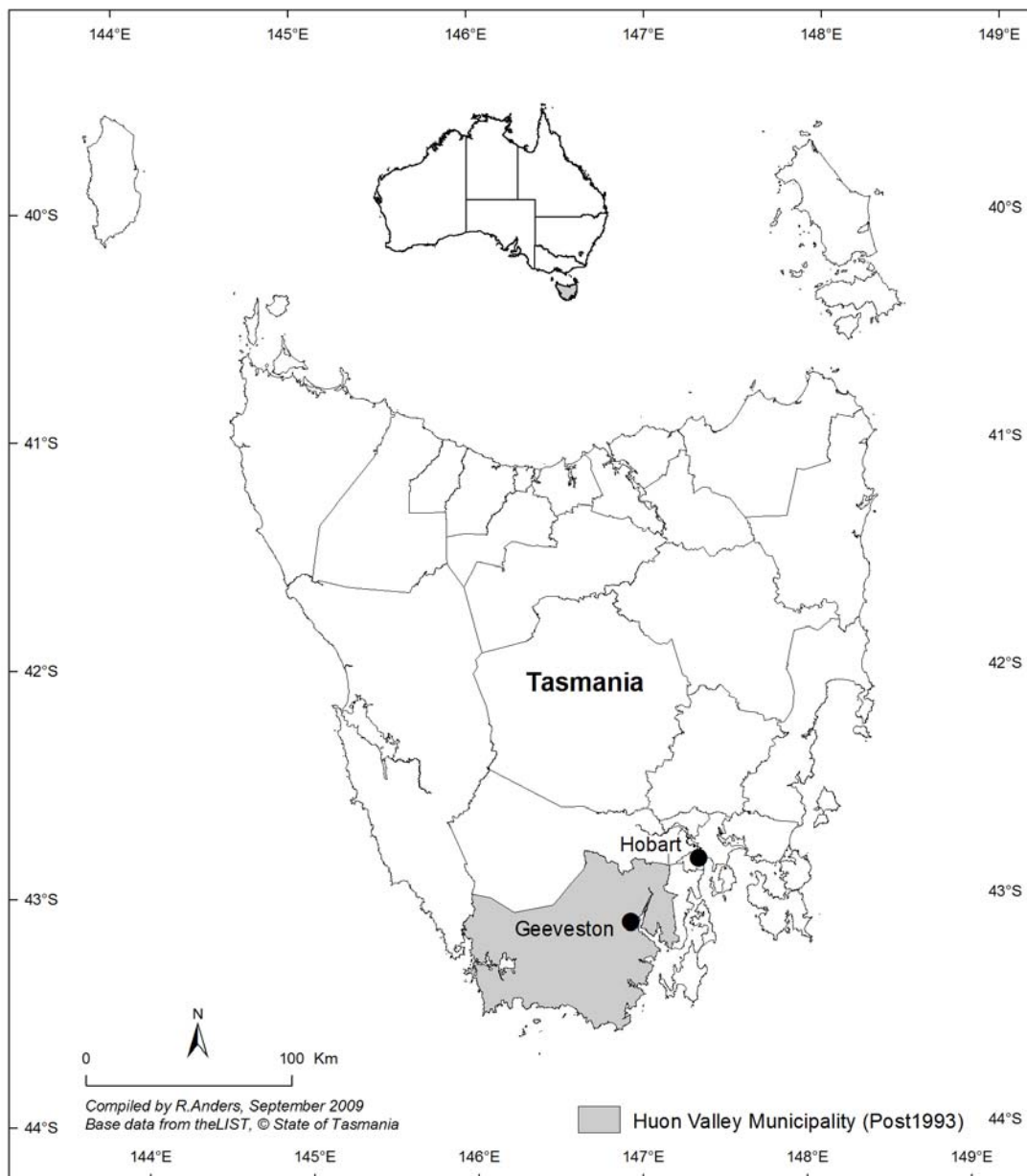


Figure 1.1: Geeveston, Huon Valley Municipality, Tasmania, Australia

In early October 1999, a small group of Geeveston people, confident that tourism had the potential to provide an economic future for their beleaguered community, viewed the poor presentation of the main street as a hindrance to realising that future.

Unbeknownst to most of them the Huon Valley Council was also concerned about township presentation throughout the municipal area and since 1995 had been setting aside an allocation of money in the annual budget to address the problem. The opportunity for effecting change was thus available but not acted on. In 1995/96 the Huon Valley Council allocated \$30,000 towards improvements to township presentation in Huonville. In the following year \$50,000 was allocated for the same purpose, this time in Huonville *and* Cygnet.

From 1998/99, \$110,000 was allocated for streetscape works every financial year until 2004/05. At that time the allocation was reduced to \$80,000 when the focus of Huon Valley Council spending returned to large scale infrastructure works. These funds were now to be distributed amongst the Valley's five major towns, including Geeveston. Despite this commitment of financial resources to improving township presentation, the Huon Valley Council had not been able to effectively spend the allocation, and by late 1999 none of the accumulating allocation had been spent in Geeveston.

Sometime in October 1999, the then manager of the Huon Valley Council's Community Development Services² received a call from a Geeveston resident complaining about tardy responses to requests for the Huon Valley Council's engineers to repair some council-owned property in the town. The manager, who would be integral to establishing the GSRG, arranged to meet with the resident in Geeveston to look at the problem and was greeted by what he described as a

² On 11 September 2002 the manager for Community Development Services resigned his position at the Huon Valley Council to take up a new position at the Hobart City Council. He was replaced by a new manager of Community Development Services, who had resigned from his position at the Hobart City Council to join the staff of the Huon Valley Council. In 2009 the former manager for Community Development Services returned to the Huon Valley Council in the new role of Manager of Economic Development and Rural Health.

*delegation of community members*³, mostly employees and volunteers of the Forest and Heritage Centre, a tourist attraction in the main street of Geeveston. These Geeveston people were angry about their perceived neglect at the hands of the new⁴ Council. According to the manager,

the tone was very much “us and them”, Geeveston versus the Council and a statement to the effect of “no-one’s on our side” was made to which I responded, “where’s the line? If there’s a line where is it, because I’m on your side”? After that the tone shifted and got serious From one issue with the fence there followed an explosion of issues all related to township presentation. I promised to have those issues raised fixed within a week and contracted a Geeveston local to do the work. I suggested to them that they back off for a bit while I fixed the problems initially identified and promised to come back later to look at what else needed fixing. I spent approximately \$2000 and the Geeveston people thought it was fantastic (HCVO 01, 2004).

The process that would result in the formation of the GSRG had begun. Huon Valley Council staff and councillors, the manager Community Development Services and a selection of Geeveston people were all concerned about township presentation. This confluence of concerns provided the opportunity to form a partnership between a selection of Geeveston people and the Huon Valley Council. The timing was significant given councillors and council staff, we discover in retrospect, were finding it difficult to accommodate higher levels of community participation in local government processes. The Manager of Community Development Services, who describes himself as committed to the value of community ownership of, and participation in, decision-making processes that directly affect residents of townships, seized upon and championed the opportunity. Indeed, his position in relation to community participation was instrumental in realising and acting upon the

³ A Council file note records the following people as being present at this first meeting with the manager of Community Development Services: Councillor Laurie Dillon, three staff members of the Geeveston Forest & Heritage Centre and four Geeveston community members. All of those present would become members of the GSRG and all bar two continue to be active members of the group (Doyle 1999)

⁴ As will be explained in more detail in the following chapter, the Huon Valley Council was formed in 1993 with the amalgamation of three local government areas; Port Cygnet, Huon and Esperance.

potential for a partnership⁵; a fact that was not lost on members of the GSRG who later noted at interview that *people in those positions have a very important role to play if they take it from a positive aspect and get involved and take the risk* (GSRG Member 2003). Of further interest, the Manager of Community Development Services had a long association with Geeveston people, having grown up in the township. He had also been an employee of the erstwhile Esperance Council from 1985, moving to the Huon Valley Council after the amalgamation of the Esperance, Cygnet and Huon local governments in sweeping reforms enacted by the Tasmanian Government in 1993. Thus he retains an intimate understanding of and empathy with those people he was trying to enrol in the partnership, which had its benefits:

There seems to be a greater trust by the people of Geeveston ... in council officers to help⁶ ... it could be my personal history with Geeveston. I was kind of a local boy ... they know me ... it makes it easier (HVCO 01 2000).

Aware of the accumulated funds for township presentation, the Manager of Community Development Services returned to Geeveston with an offer to establish an informal partnership with the HVC as a condition of accessing \$5000 to improve township presentation. The opportunity to access promised funds proved irresistible and became a most successful device to interest these Geeveston people who had initially been reluctant to enter into such a partnership, however informal. Accept the alliance (and its conditions) and you can be involved in developing strategies to spend funds allocated by the Huon Valley Council to improve the presentation of your township. Such decisions would otherwise be made by Huon Valley Council staff with limited reference to Geeveston people.

⁵ Community development has not always been considered core business of local government in Tasmania, which has traditionally focused on the maintenance and development of infrastructure (such as roads, water supplies and waste management) and the approval (control) of residential, commercial and industrial development. Indeed many local government and community actors remain unconvinced that it should be considered core business of local government.

⁶ In other towns in the Huon Valley, such as Cygnet, where there tends to be a greater number of community actors concerned about community development and environmental issues in the municipality, there is deep suspicion and mistrust of the Huon Valley Council. These community actors, many of whom have moved to the Huon Valley from elsewhere, feel that their needs and concerns are marginalised and their attempts to make what they consider positive change, are obstructed by those actors within the Huon Valley Council who support more traditional approaches to governing and (community) economic development.

Prior to the manager's visit to Geeveston, a small group of Geeveston people had been doing some work around the town—planting and maintaining flower beds, putting in park benches; creating and installing some wood carvings—in an effort to improve the presentation of the main streets. However, their approach had been *ad hoc* and uncoordinated. The Manager of Community Development Services could see the potential to harness this energy; though guidance and accountability were required if he was to involve these Geeveston people in processes of local government. Thus, the partnership that became known as the Geeveston SRG was used as 'a form of governance, a unifying, controlling or mobilising device to regulate interactions between formal government and individuals-in-community' (Armstrong & Stratford 2004, p.549; Gibson & Cameron 2001 and Kilpatrick & Falk, 2003).

In forming the Group those actors who were enrolled in the partnership accepted what I describe as a certain *problematization*, or specific conception of and analysis of, and preferred solution to, a problem (Selman & Wragg 1999): that township beautification will improve the social and economic well-being of Geeveston by reinvigorating local pride and making the town more attractive to tourists (Huon Valley Council 2000). Further, the simple recognition of the problem of township presentation was enough to involve a whole series of actors by establishing their identities and the links between them (Callon 1986). In the case of the GSRG, such actors initially included the Manager of Community Development Services, a Community Liaison Officer, a resident Councillor, and a selection of Geeveston people. The Group formed as these actors recognised that forming an alliance around the problem of township presentation could benefit each of them.

Such alliances ultimately helped those actors involved overcome the various obstacles preventing them from achieving desired goals. On the one hand, attempts by community leaders and champions in Geeveston to revitalise their town were frustrated by the poor streetscape presentation, and by negative and pessimistic attitudes of many Geeveston people (Armstrong 2000). On the other hand, the Huon Valley Council had been unable to spend effectively the allocated budget for township improvements and struggled to build positive and productive relations with community actors. Council staff and councillors were also wrestling with how and to

what extent community actors can and should be involved in processes of local government. Solutions (partial or otherwise) were found by Council in building and stabilising the GSRG and its formal partnership with the local government authority, and in developing similar partnerships in the remaining four major towns—Cygnet, Dover, Huonville, and Franklin—in the municipal area.

The emergence of the GSRG and its influence on the development of community-council partnerships in the Huon Valley is one example of the widespread incidence of experiments in governing that characterise western liberal democracies at the present time, and which deserve further and ongoing interrogation. A second example, that to some extent made the formation of the GSRG possible, relates to the local government reform processes from which the Huon Valley Council emerged and with it a new approach to local governance in Tasmania. Indeed, the Geeveston and Huon Valley Council cases provide an intrinsically interesting study of what happens when actors govern and are governed in particular ways and for particular local futures (Dean 1999).

Research questions

By becoming clear on how regimes of practices operate, we become clear on how forms of domination, relations of power and kinds of freedom and autonomy are linked, and how such regimes are contested and resisted, and thus how it might be possible to do things differently (Dean 1999, p.37).

This work examines how local government and community actors are managing change in local governing processes where such change is given effect by a range of technologies of government, governance, and the constitution of identity in place. In this work I seek to map how governing *is* practised and to document the *effects* of such practices. My purpose is to apprehend the materiality of governing at the local level under neoliberal governmental regimes in order to comprehend *what happens and what is at stake* when people govern and are governed in particular ways (Dean 1999).

In light of the foregoing, the following questions inform this research and are addressed variously throughout the work. How have community and local

government actors, among others, invested in, accommodated, resisted, adapted and sought to use shifting local governing processes to provide opportunities for enduring, strong and viable local futures, however they might be conceived? What do their responses tell us about how these actors understand representation, citizenship and participation in governing? How do these governing practices give effect to community capacity building through place-making? Embedded within these questions is an assumption that when community and local government actors govern *what is at stake* for them are normative ideas about local futures.

This project is underpinned by an interest in everyday practices and the particular experiences of individuals-in-communities of place and interest. I am also interested in asking how governing practices constitute material sites for the exercise of governmental technologies and knowing how these effects pertain to the spaces of the individual-in-community, the locale, and the rural region. These spaces are both targets for reform and sites of resistance; constituted by the effects of governmental technologies while at the same time acting as vehicles of their articulation (Foucault 1980).

In what follows, I introduce and summarise particular insights from a comprehensive engagement with scholarly and grey literature on government, governance, neoliberalism, citizenship and participation, community development and place. This summary work on governing, new public management and the place of community, regions in transition, and the power of place and place of power in place-making positions the research within a larger scholarship and emphasizes my particular reading of that scholarship. It provides the conceptual scaffolding for the rest of the research, grounded in a case study of township revitalisation efforts in Geeveston. Conducted over a period of several years, the work is broadly informed by a qualitative research approach.

Governing

The research presented here is indebted to Foucault's (1991) ideas about government and governmentality and to work by those scholars who have advanced his original ideas including, but not limited to Cheshire (2006, also Herbert-Cheshire 1998, 2000, 2001), Dean (1999), MacKinnon (2000 & 2002), Murdoch (1997a, 1997b, 1997c,

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1998, 2000; see also Murdoch & Pratt 1993 & 1997) and Rose (1993, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; see also Rose and Miller 1992)⁷. In this sense, governing is concerned with the conduct of conduct, that is,

any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes (Dean 1999, p.11).

Investing in this description of governing assumes that conduct can be and is ‘regulated, controlled, shaped and turned to specific ends’, and is a rationalising and moralising activity (Dean 1999, p.11). In thinking about governing as the conduct of conduct the notion of government is extended from how authority is exercised over others and how abstract entities are governed to include how individuals govern themselves and how they problematize their own conduct in order to govern it better (Dean 1999). In this way, governing is implicated in the formation of identities or the subjects of government *in addition to* the spatialities or the objects of government. Individuals are material sites of governmental technologies. Yet they are not simply passive recipients of these technologies; rather they are constituted by the effects of such technologies while at the same time acting as vehicles for their articulation (Foucault 1980). In this sense, government involves both practices of government *and* practices of the self.

⁷ Michel Foucault has influenced numerous other critical thinkers on many issues. Of interest here is his influence on the development of ideas about knowledge, power, and governance. In geography, Foucault’s ideas have been and continue to be applied in numerous ways including in relation to: the role of power, knowledge, discourse and truth in understandings of place, identity and geography as a discipline (Matless 1992); how power operates in society (Gordon 2001); understanding the relations between culture and power (Barnett 2001); critiques of communicative planning theory specifically and the role of power in planning theory and practice more generally (Fischler 2000; Hillier 1993; Ploger 2001; Richardson, T 1996; Tait & Campbell 2000); understanding the relationships between governance and environmental issues (Darier 1999a & 1999b); how citizens and citizenship are constituted, by whom and for what purposes (Burchell, D 1995); and perhaps most extensively in critiques of neoliberal techniques of government, in particular, the strategies deployed in activating citizens to take greater responsibility for their own government (Burchell, G 1993; Cheshire 2006; Herbert-Cheshire 1998, 2000, 2001; Murdoch 1997b; Raco & Imrie 2000; Rose, 1993, 1996a, Rose, 1996b & 2000).

Using this approach requires an analysis that pays attention to ‘those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups’ (Dean 1999, p.12). This focus helps connect ‘questions of government, politics and administration to the space of bodies, lives, selves and persons’ (Dean 1999, p.12) and points to the building of new relations ‘between ethical citizenship and responsible community fostered, but not administered, by the state’ (Rose, 2000, p.1398) . Of interest here is the *ethical government of the self* or *ethopolitics* ‘a space of political debate, strategy and technique’ (Rose, 2000, p.1399) within which can be found new conceptions of what one seeks to govern, how to govern, how one is made governable (mode of subjectification), and what are the end goals sought by those micro-practices of government used in the formation of individual (and collective) identities (Dean 1999).

The government of the self and government of community are intertwined. As Rose (1996b, p.331) explains,

[c]entral to the ethos of the novel mentalities and strategies of government that I have termed ‘advanced liberal’ is a new relationship between strategies for the government of others and techniques for the government of the self, situated within new relations of mutual obligation: the community.

Community has been constituted as a new space through which to govern individuals in terms of their personal allegiances and active responsibilities. This re-figuring of the territory of government in terms of community represents a shift in the focus of governing practices from acting upon the totalising space of the social to the fragmented, diverse and overlapping spaces of communities of place and interest (Rose, 1996b). The ethical character of individual conduct has also shifted. Under ‘the social’, responsibilities and obligations were collective. While individuals took responsibility for their own conduct, such responsibility was traversed by external determinations: the advantages or disadvantages conferred by social and economic forces beyond their control (Rose, 1996b). In contrast, a governmental rationality developed by those who seek to govern through community shifts responsibilities and obligations to individuals as moral subjects who should conduct themselves in ways that reflect self-responsibility and allegiance to family and community (Rose,

1996b). Under this regime of government individuals are constituted as self-motivated, self-responsible, and self-reliant; as active citizens within self-governing communities (Rose, 1996b). Success and failure are now borne by the individual and community rather than being socially collective responsibilities (socially here includes formal government). According to Herbert-Cheshire (2000, p.206), ‘governing through community... represents the creation of a new, non-political sphere of civil society that is supposedly ‘free’ to govern itself and take responsibility for its own future’. In this way community becomes

not simply the territory of government, but a *means* of government: its ties, bonds, forces and affiliations are to be celebrated, encouraged, nurtured, shaped and instrumentalized in the hope of producing consequences that are desirable for each and all (Rose, 1996b, p.335, original emphasis).

Attempts to shape and regulate our own and others behaviours are informed by ideas about how humans should organise their relations with each other, and with built and natural environments. These ideas and the practices they engender are fundamental to community capacity building and are often enacted in place-making activities. Actors involved in governing make, challenge, adapt, negotiate and reject decisions that set certain preconditions and boundaries for choice and action. Their capacities to participate in governing practices influence how governmental policy is formulated and implemented, and thus give effect to the types and qualities of community and economic development and services provided. Governing is also an attempt to shape freedom, and those who govern are faced with the problem that, as one locus of freedom, individuals may respond to such attempts in unpredictable ways (Dean 1999). In this way, governing is constitutive of and constituted by relations of power, and the institutions of government are key but not exclusive expressions of those relations. However, Foucault (1991, p.93) sees government as concerned with

a *complex* composed of men [sic] and things ... men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things ... wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility ... customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking ... accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death.

In this way, Foucault escapes the narrow confines of viewing governing as *primarily* connected with nation-state and government as *the* government, furnishing a complex and nuanced framework through which to explore the governing of human conduct ‘in all contexts, by various authorities and agencies, invoking particular forms of truth, and using definite resources, means and techniques’ (Dean 1999, p.3).

Foucault consolidated his understandings of government encapsulated in his term “governmentality”, which he described as follows:

1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.
2. The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of *savoirs* [apparatuses of knowledge].
3. The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes ‘governmentalized’ (Foucault 1991, pp.102-3).

Foucault’s work on governmentality led him to suggest that government is better understood not as the ‘étatisation’ of society, but as the ‘governmentalization’ of the state (Foucault 1991), a process in which the government is (at least partially) dissociated from sovereignty; its practices and rationalities are elaborated; the exercise of sovereignty is transformed; and a distinctly non-political sphere emerges. That sphere is constituted by processes outside of government (such as the economy, civil society, community, or culture) that are also necessary to the fulfilment of governmental objectives (Dean 1999). Governmentalization of the state also refers to ‘the tendency for state power to be exercised and realised through a heterogeneous array of regulatory practices and technologies’ (MacKinnon 2000, p.297). We live, Foucault claims, in ‘the era of governmentality’ in which

it is the *tactics of government* which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality (Foucault 1991, p.103, my emphasis).

Governmentality also draws attention to the ‘theories, ideas, philosophies and forms of knowledge’ embedded within a population’s social and cultural products, and the influence of them on the ways in which governing is conceived (Dean 1999, p.16). In this way governing is connected to the production of knowledge, to particular forms of thought, expertise, strategies, means of calculation and rationalities employed in the transformation of practices. It gives rise to specific forms of truth and renders particular issues, domains and problems *governable*. It is ‘concerned with how we govern and how we are governed, and with the relation between the government of ourselves, the government of others, and the government of the state’ (Dean, 1999, p.2). Governmentality aims, additionally, to uncover the specific mechanisms, techniques and procedures deployed by political authorities to develop and enact their programs (MacKinnon 2000). For example, how do political authorities constitute different locales and institutions as authoritative and powerful, render different domains as governable and administrable, and assemble different agents with specific powers (Dean 1999)? In response to such questions, and in framing the Geeveston case, I seek ‘to distinguish the particular mentalities, arts and regimes of government and administration’ (Dean 1999, p.2), described by Rose (1996b, p.328) as ‘the deliberations, strategies, tactics and devices employed by authorities for making up and acting upon a population’. In ways that I expand upon and ground in chapter two, I therefore engage in an *analytics of government*, described as

a type of study concerned with an analysis of the specific conditions under which particular entities emerge, exist and change [that] ... seeks to attend to, rather than efface, the singularity of ways of governing and conducting ourselves’ and to examine ‘the conditions under which regimes of practices come into being, are maintained and are transformed (Dean 1999, pp. 20-1).

An analytics of government is an approach that attends to ‘the singularity of ways of governing’ (Dean 1999, p.18) and is particularly well suited to investigations into

how community and local government actors are managing change in local governing processes *in place*.

An understanding of government as the conduct of conduct is directly connected to understandings of the exercise of power, which

consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government ... [Government designates] the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed ... To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others (Foucault 1982b, p.221).

The nature, contrivances, mechanisms, effects and relations of power are central foci of Foucault's writings: power is not something that can be possessed; it is not a discreet entity, a commodity that can be traded or exchanged. Power only exists in action; it is relational (Foucault 1980), forming a dense web 'that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them' (Foucault 1976, p.96). The relationality of power is emphasised by Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.50) for whom 'power is only exercised in relation to a resistance, each force having the power to affect and be affected by other forces'. In other words resistance to power is part of how power works.

Foucault (1980, pp. 93-4) also makes explicit the connection between power and knowledge (power/knowledge) inherent within discourses of truth, noting that

there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse ... [In] the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power.

Foucault (1980) was not interested in centrally located, regulated and legitimate forms of power. He sought instead to analyse power at its extremities, its infinitesimal mechanisms and their techniques and tactics; and then to see how these

‘mechanisms of power have been—and continue to be—invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended’ (Foucault 1980, p.99). By implication, power is something that circulates and is never localised, never possessed or appropriated, never homogeneous. Cheshire (2006, p. 24) suggests that governmentality provides a useful theoretical framework within which to understand contemporary forms of government and power since it offers an analytical approach highlighting ‘the complex nature of the relationship between the political and the non-political sphere and, accordingly, between the advanced liberal state and the individuals, populations and territories it seeks to govern’. Similarly, Raco (2003, p.91) suggests more geographers engage with the concept of governmentality for its capacity to provide

new insights into the relationship between space, power and subjectivities. It relates to boundaries, territories, attachments to place, the spatial demarcation of areas of action and the organizational capacities of the state, all of which are integral to geographical study.

Finally, it is noteworthy that viewing government as working beyond the state resonates strongly with discussions about a shift from *government* to *governance* in which narrow, institutionally focused understandings of governing are criticised as inadequate, limited and misleading, failing to capture the ‘complex architecture of systems of government’ (Stoker 1998, p.19). That complex architecture comprises the structures, processes, mechanisms, and techniques of governing; and the interconnections and interdependencies among government, civil society and economy (Goodwin 1998; Stoker 1998). Indeed, both MacKinnon (2000) and Herbert-Cheshire (2000) argue that this shift from government to governance represents a new advanced liberal mentality of rule when viewed through the lens of governmentality. It also includes those ideas and practices known as new public management which have had important effects on the constitution of community in public policy.

Governance, new public management and the place of community in public policy

There have been substantial shifts in how governing is practised in most western democracies. The term *governance* is being used as a general reference for these changing conditions of governing which have been associated with the roll-back or decline of the state (Raco 2003, Rose, 1996b) At its most extreme interpretation 'it is argued that "governance without government" is becoming the dominant pattern of management for advanced industrial democracies' (Peters & Pierre 1998, p.223, also see Rhodes, 1997). Proponents of this characterisation of contemporary governing practices stress the importance of networks, partnerships and markets, and the role of government in steering, rather than controlling and regulating the organisation of society (Peters & Pierre 1998).

Some authors point to the multiple uses and meanings of the term governance. For example, Rhodes (2007, p.4), citing Kjær (2004), lists the following uses of the term governance, which he claims have little or nothing in common: 'Governance in public administration, governance in international relations, European Union governance, governance in comparative politics, and good governance as extolled by the World Bank'. Stoker (1998, p.17) argues that despite these different uses and meanings there exists

a baseline agreement that governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred. The essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government.

Drawing on Rhodes (1996; 1997 & 2007) and Stoker (1996, 1998 & 2001), these changing conditions of governing encapsulated in the term governance may be described in the following terms. Governing is no longer the sole responsibility of formal institutions of government. Instead, governing involves interdependencies between 'political leadership, public administration and the community as well as between national and international arenas' (Marsh 2002, p.3) and the devolution of many of government's 'traditional' roles to other sectors. These increased interdependencies blur the boundaries of responsibility for policy development and

implementation and necessitate 'greater interaction among diverse actors from different territories, at multiple governmental scales' (Davidson et al. 2006, p.2). The delivery of services and strategic decision-making increasingly involves private businesses, non-government and community organisations, and voluntary associations. As a result, various collaborative governance instruments have emerged to integrate and coordinate decision-making. Such instruments include 'multi-level, multi-sectoral and multi-organisational partnerships, 'joined-up' government and policy networks' (Davidson et al. 2006, p.2).⁸ According to Rhodes, these instruments of governance, in particular policy networks, have decentred the role of government; while government can still set the limits of network actions and still largely funds the services provided by them, it is 'no longer either necessarily or invariably the fulcrum' of such networks (Rhodes, 2007, p.3). Indeed, Stoker (1998) suggests these new autonomous self-governing networks of actors seek not simply to influence government policy, but also to take over the business of government. The emergence of collaborative models of governing acknowledges the dependence of formal governmental decision-makers on the knowledge and resources of multiple actors outside government to tackle collective problems. Collaborative models of governance have emerged in a climate of

complexity, diversity and dynamic change (Kooiman 2000) such that no single actor has the resources or knowledge to respond to the complexity of current problems and/or opportunities (Davidson et al. 2006, p.1).

Similarly, it is now recognised by many government and community actors that 'the ability or power of collective institutions to chart a particular course depends to an increasing degree on the active involvement of the governed' (Michalski, Miller & Stevens 2001, p.7).

At least two characteristics of these changing conditions of governing are noteworthy for community capacity building: a rise in concern among community and government actors about accountability, legitimacy, mandate, inclusiveness and

⁸ Rhodes (2007, p.2) defines policy networks as 'sets of formal and informal institutional linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared interests in public policymaking and implementation'.

representativeness (O'Toole & Burdess 2004); and the deployment of new tools by government to steer, guide, enable, facilitate, catalyse, coordinate, regulate, lead and provide opportunities (Stoker 1998). This shifting dynamic between formal *government* and strategies of *governance*

emphasises the decline and fragmentation of established bureaucracies in the face of an increasingly complex and plural system which involves a wide range of institutions and actors drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors (MacKinnon 2000, p.294).

When examined through a Foucauldian lens, these changes in styles of governing can be understood as a product of neoliberal governmentalities. In this regard, Swyngedouw (2005, p.1993) argues that

this shift from 'government' to 'governance' is associated with the consolidation of new technologies of government (Dean, 1999), on the one hand, and with profound restructuring of the parameters of political democracy on the other leading to a substantial democratic deficit.

According to Peters and Pierre (1998), discussion about the emerging forms of governance described above began around the same time as the diffusion of ideas about new public management (NPM). NPM is a rationality of government that marries new institutional economics with managerialism. It has become the dominant paradigm for public management in most western nations, particularly New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States of America, Canada and, to a lesser extent, in Scandinavia.

Some scholars have argued that 'the governance debate was triggered in part by the management philosophy advanced by proponents of NPM (Peters & Pierre 1998, p.233). While there are many similarities between governance and the overarching philosophy behind NPM, Peters and Pierre (1998, p.233) contend that governance does not come with the 'same ideological luggage or distinctive ideals as the NPM does' and there are significant differences between the two approaches. Nevertheless, technologies of NPM have been deployed extensively in public sector reform programs in Australia, changing profoundly the ways in which the public sector is

expected to operate. These changes in turn contribute to the dynamism between governance and government, and influence how public sector actors interact with community and business actors and other stakeholders in policy development and implementation.

NPM has been described as ‘one of the most striking international trends in public administration’ (Hood 1991, p.3), ‘inspired by a particular set of economic theories and normative values whose main focus is on increasing efficiency’ (Christensen & Lægreid 2002a, p.1). NPM is an ‘instrumentalist view of bureaucracy and an approach centred on management rather than the traditional approach to administration based on public law’ (Caulfield 2003, p.14). It combines micro-economic theory with managerialism, and uses devolution and contracting-out to separate more clearly policy-making from policy administration and implementation. Christensen (2002b, p.19) lists the following further components of NPM:

hands-on professional management, which allows for active visible, discretionary control of an organisation by people who are free to manage; explicit standards of performance; a greater emphasis on output control; increased competition; contracts; devolution; disaggregation of units; and private sector management techniques.

The technologies and practices of NPM are described by MacKinnon (2000, p.298) as ‘a product of the intersection of neoliberal political rationalities and business management prescriptions for organisational change to meet the competitive challenge of a global economy’. He argues that at the local level such technologies are being used to restructure local government and to realise the objectives of neoliberal programs of government.

The deployment of NPM has particular implications for how government engages with community in relation to community capacity building and place-making. Along with an emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency there has been a desire to (re)inscribe the role of community actors in governing. NPM has been used by government as a form of conduct, and as a means to restructure how community is engaged, seems to accentuate community empowerment, customer responsiveness and citizen participation. As part of these manoeuvres, there has been a resurgence of

government interest in ‘community/capacity building, government-community partnerships, community and neighbourhood renewal and so on’ (Mowbray 2005, p.255; see also Bryson & Mowbray, 2005). According to Gaventa (2004, p.17),

there is a growing consensus that the way forward is to focus on both a more active and engaged citizenry and a more responsive and effective state that deliver needed public services ... In response to this agenda, a number of initiatives around the world have sought to find new forms of governance, which link citizens and states in new ways and seeks to build the relationships between citizens and governments.

Such strategies have not necessarily addressed the democratic deficit identified. Indeed Swyngedouw (2005, p.1993) argues that the shift from government to governance has positioned participation as ‘one of the key terrains on which battles over the form of governance and the character of regulation are currently being fought out’. Such battles prevail at the local level where determining the most appropriate strategies for citizen participation is a key concern for local government.

The prevalence of community as a contested abstraction in public policy has been explained as an outcome of a selective theoretical convergence between neoliberalism and communitarianism, a political convergence between radical and conservative practice (the rise of third way politics)⁹ and a concern to address the failures of economic rationalism (Adams & Hess 2001; Rose 2000). Community is also used as a normative construct in policy discourses and as a central organising idea for policy making and implementation. Again, these matters are elaborated here in later chapters.

Adams and Hess (2001, p.14) summarise the problematic ontology underpinning the normative discourse of community in public policy:

⁹ Mouffe (2000, pp.5-6) describes third way politics as no more than the justification by social democrats of their capitulation to a neo-liberal hegemony whose power relations they will not challenge, limiting themselves to making some little adjustments in order to help people cope with what is seen as the ineluctable fate of ‘globalization’.

Communities are social actors that cause things to happen; have universal features; most notably a sense of place; tend to be homogeneous with a common identity and set of values; tend to distribute benefits and burdens equitably; naturally adapt to change; build and sustain capital through trust, identity and mutuality; have natural organizational forms, through which they engage with the organisational forms of government and businesses; are a form of accountability, as in the phrase ‘accountable to the community’; and can plan, manage, deliver and coordinate better than governments and markets.

In claims such as these, communities (and voluntarism) are seen as wholesome, and their proponents as caring, responsible and progressive (Mowbray 2005).

Communities may also be seen as filling the gaps left by a shrinking state. Certain attributes of community are valorised, among them shared values, cooperation, trust, reciprocity, identity, source of coherence, meaning, and sense of self, a bastion of stability in uncertain times (Adams & Hess 2001). Other negative attributes—conflict, animosity, distrust or notions of who has membership of community—are dismissed or silenced in the claims noted above. Particular and romanticised values of community become key regulators of policy practice in community governance, and signal a move away from other strategies such as the use of voting and pricing, both of which appear to have failed to produce good policy (Adams & Hess 2001). While Adams and Hess (2001, p.14) view community as an alternative ‘foundation for policy making and implementation’, Mowbray (2005, p.263) suspects the resurgence of communitarianism in public policy as being ‘a cynical and frugal means for politicians and others to obfuscate or otherwise sustain their continuing commitment to economic fundamentalism’. Indeed, he argues that such valorisation of community may also ‘facilitate a move to depoliticise social problems’ (p.257).

For Rose (1996a, p.335), the place of community is not simply political but also deeply territorialized and territorializing, and the territory of government has been and is being reconfigured *spatially* in terms of communities and *morally* in terms of individuals: ‘its ties, bonds, forces and affiliations are to be celebrated, encouraged, nurtured, shaped and instrumentalized in the hope of producing consequences [in place] that are desirable for all and for each’. These forces are evident in rural places, where community-based regional development policies embody notions of social capital, community and participation.

Regions in transition

Across western liberal democracies, rural places have been constitutively embedded within regions in transition (Barnes & Hayter 1992; Buxton et al. 2006; Cloke & Goodwin 1992, Dibden, 2001; Dibden, Fletcher & Cocklin 2001; Gibson, Cameron & Veno 1999; Gray 1994; Reimer 2006; Tewdwr-Jones 1998). Those changes experienced over the past 30 to 40 years have been deemed so rapid that they have significantly changed rural places and the lives of people living there, and in some cases putting them in crisis (Coop & Brunckhorst 2001; Ellyard 2001; Halseth & Ryser 2006; Meyer & O'Brien 2000), with evidence to suggest that they have been 'caught in a downward spiral of declining commodity prices, public services, commercial facilities and political influence' (Falk 1998, p.2). The key drivers of such change are considered to be neoliberal governmental policies that support economic rationalism. While particularly intense over the 1970s to the 1990s, these changes and the processes driving them have been ongoing.

According to Martin and Ritchie (1999, p.117), 'Australia and New Zealand stand out as sites of extensive and rapid economic deregulation and rural restructuring.' With the shift to neoliberal economic management in these two countries strategies used to give effect to this rural restructuring include 'the removal of subsidies for agriculture, the deregulation of exchange rates and financial markets and fiscal restraint and cutbacks in public sector spending' (Martin & Ritchie 1999, p.117-118). Martin and Ritchie (1999, p.118) suggest that these

changes to the rural sector represent fundamentally different ways of valuing rural environments. Historically, rural development has been heavily supported by the state and the settlement of rural areas was an important aim of policy. In contrast, the rhetoric of neoliberalism constructs rural environments primarily as sites of efficient commodity production where market forces determine the shape of rural 'development'.

This once-protected sector was exposed to the full force of the global market place (Dibden 2001) in which economies of scale, efficiency and competitive advantage became increasingly important and led to major structural changes in primary industries, including those processing primary products. Sometimes, the general

trend for farm consolidation led to smaller family farms being subsumed into larger operations—regardless of whether these were spatially concentrated or involved numerous proximate or distant lots. These buy-outs often resulted in the outmigration of affected farming families from the agricultural sector and often from agricultural settlements and regions as well. Coupled with the adoption of labour-shedding technology, farm consolidation led to declining employment opportunities and compounded outmigration. Diminishing local employment opportunities resulted in the daily or permanent loss of people in search of such opportunities elsewhere; few of them returned. Without a critical mass of population (and of people of working and reproductive age in particular) there tended to follow the loss of economic and social infrastructure as government, health services, banks and other businesses have been further consolidated in regional centres (Falk 1998). These losses contributed to a decline in community capital in the form of lost leadership, skills, and sponsorship for community activities such as local sports teams and other events; typically there also followed a decline in real estate values and business closures (communitybuilders.nsw 2000). With the growth of regional centres at the expense of smaller settlements, economic leakage from local economies increased as residents accessed services and purchased commodities in regional centres rather than locally (communitybuilders.nsw 2000; Dibden 2001). Such trends appear to have eroded strong and viable local futures in many small rural locales.

Sometimes, however, and especially where rural land was proximate to urban centres, where topography or geography was inappropriate for broadacre farming, or where planning allowed conversion of zoned land use from rural to rural residential and subsequent development, trends were otherwise. In many rural settlements there has been a significant influx of urbanites to rural areas as city dwellers seek alternative lifestyles: a trend often referred to as either ‘sea-change’ or ‘tree-change’. This demographic transition increased the number of residents without backgrounds in primary production who frequently have values quite different from those of ‘locals’. One effect of the changing composition of the demography of rural settlements is an increase in conflicts over practices in primary production, land use, community development and place-making. Increasingly, ‘locals’ are faced with having to defend their versions of what might compromise a legitimate activity in rural spaces against those ‘newcomers’ who have different priorities (Vanclay &

Lawrence 1995) and at least some of whom are focused on local futures in which community capacity building and place-making are emphasised along with the protection of ecological integrity over traditional forms of economic activity. Whether the perception is fair or not, primary producers once celebrated (indeed stereotyped) for their conquests over nature are now more often viewed as despoilers (Dibden 2001). This perception is exacerbated by many primary producers resorting to the adoption of capital intensive (but also ecologically and socially malignant) forms of production in order to remain competitive in global markets. Newcomers' concerns about the effects of rural practices on the environment may be valid and timely and indeed some older farming families have also recognised the need for more sustainable farming practices. Furthermore, the influx of urbanites to rural areas has in many cases helped to redress the loss of leadership and skills in these settlements and many, especially retirees, have become actively involved in community revitalisation efforts and other community activities.

In response to the so-called 'crisis' of rural townships and regions, all tiers of government in Australia have favoured community empowerment, community capacity building and partnerships with an emphasis on self-help, self-reliance and voluntarism as among a number of approaches that enable rural locales to survive and thrive (Cheshire 2006; Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001; O'Toole & Burdess 2004). These strategies seek to strengthen the human, social, economic and political capacity within communities and harness the energies of community actors so they can take responsibility for their own development and shape their own futures (Mowbray 2005; Simpson, Wood & Daws 2003). To achieve these aims, community capacity building initiatives develop programs designed to increase the active involvement of community actors in decision-making about local futures; develop leadership skills; renew and/or develop networks within communities, between communities and between communities and government; and revitalise community spirit, pride, and sense of place. Such acts of empowerment embedded within attempts to build community capacities serves to enmesh community actors in 'new forms of power relations that set limits on how they respond to change' (Cheshire 2006). Capacity building also involves the constitution by government of those who lack capacity before government can engage with and act upon these actors to establish a relationship of governance (Cruikshank 1994).

In this sense then, strategies of empowerment such as capacity building involve technologies of citizenship; that is, a set of methods for constituting active and participatory citizens in which the willingness and capacity of community actors to act in their own interests become an object of research and governmentalization (Cruikshank 1994). Thus strategies for community capacity building give effect to the conduct of conduct and the creation of political subjectivities and modes of participation.

Key Federal Government policies in this regard include the *Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia* strategy, *Regional Australia: Making a Difference*, the *Rural Plan*, the *Rural Communities Programme*, the *Regional Assistance Program* and the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001, Commonwealth of Australia, 1999b). At a state level, government funded capacity building programs include *Community Builders* in South Australia, the *Community Capacity Building Initiative* in Victoria and *communitybuilders.nsw* in New South Wales (communitybuilders.nsw 2004; Department of Planning and Community Development 2009; Department of Trade and Economic Development 2009). All appear to work through the desires, allegiances and hopes of rural people, and are viewed by some commentators as attempts to govern at a distance by governing through community (Herbert-Cheshire 1998; Rose, 1996a & 2000).

In some regions, these strategies, and the emotional geographies that attend them, manifest as strong senses of place and impulses to *make or remake place anew* (see for example Stratford 2009). Part of this latter includes the impulse to foster economic opportunities. In this way, and under neoliberal governmental regimes, the local (its people and places) have been revived as

key institutional arenas for a wide range of policy experiments and political strategies. These include new entrepreneurial approaches to local economic development as well as diverse programs of institutional restructuring intended to enhance labor market flexibility, territorial competitiveness, and place-specific locational assets (Brenner & Theodore 2002, p.341).

The power of place and the place of power in place-making

Place-making is the way all of us human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live. It includes building and tearing buildings down, cultivating the land and planting gardens, cleaning the kitchen and rearranging the office, making neighbourhoods and mowing lawns, taking over buildings and understanding cities. It is a fundamental human activity that is sometimes almost invisible and sometimes dramatic. Place-making consists both of daily acts of renovating, maintaining, and representing the places that sustain us, and of special, celebratory one-time events such as designing a new church building or moving into a new facility. It can be done with the support of others or can be an act of defiance in the face of power (Schneekloth & Shibley 1995, p.1).

Place has been described as ‘fundamentally important to our sense of identity, our sense of community, and our humanity’ (Vanclay 2008, p. 5). Places are personal, unique, particular and distinctive; they influence the character and quality of our everyday lives and form an important part of communal and personal identifications. Places are also ‘relational and contingent, experienced and understood differently by different people; they are multiple, contested, fluid and uncertain’ (Hubbard et al. 2002, p.18). Activities or events that change the character and qualities of a place may impact on an individual’s attachment to that place. Changes perceived as negative may result in a reduced sense of place or place attachment, while changes viewed as positive may have the opposite effect, especially if that person invests their own time, energy and resources in giving effect to such change (Vanclay 2008).

The fundamental role of place in our lives and the values people attach to particular places is commonly a taken-for-granted part of our everyday lives. Often it is not until the integrity of place is threatened that people individually or collectively articulate their deep attachment to it and the different meanings contained within it. For Massey (1996), attempts to modify or change the character of a place are inherently political and imbued with relations of power. She suggests that

the boundaries which we draw in space, the ‘places’ we define (indeed all spatial definitions), the decisions about which mobilities to allow and which not, and about how open, or how closed, our places are to be ... all of these things, rather than being based on some eternal principles, are in fact expressions of, and exercises in, social power (Massey 1996, p.117).

Taking this lead from Massey (and also from Foucault (1980)), I place at the centre of my analysis of community capacity building and place-making a concern with the micro-practices of power and how their effects are mapped onto place. As one such expression of social power, place-making activities may involve intensified feelings of security, safety and amenity, beautification, the renewal of community pride, well-being and empowerment. They may also engender acts of exclusion, inhumanity, conflict, intimidation and violence ‘against those who are seen as *not* of a particular place—as ‘other’ if the assertion of a connection *to* place is used as a means to assert control *over* place (Malpas 2008, p.327). To behave in such way, according to Malpas, (2008, p.331), is to

fail to understand the real nature of our connection to place, and refuse to understand that connection other than in terms of ownership and control, then not only have we misunderstood ourselves, but we have also lost any real sense of place as such. To have a sense of place is not to own, but rather to be owned by the places we inhabit; it is to ‘own up’ to the complexity and mutuality of both place and human being.

Place-making as expressions of power *to* and power *over* is at the core of the Geeveston case study where works supported by a community-council partnership transformed the main streets of Geeveston and arguably Geeveston people’s understandings of self, place, and governing. Through township beautification activities participants created and re-created, revised and adjusted, confirmed and re-confirmed, affirmed and re-affirmed *their* identity and place attachment in relation to Geeveston. These activities reflect broader trends where main street revitalisation efforts are viewed as making significant contributions to (re)building social and economic wellbeing in rural towns and urban centres (see for example Mainstreet Australia no date). In describing and analysing the processes and effects of place-making activities within Geeveston I work from the premise that places are significant sites that are embedded in and reflect the particular intersection of myriad socio-spatial relations including those of power which are evident at any particular time.

Chapter synopsis

This work is organised into seven chapters. The current chapter has set out the purpose of the research, the research questions and the work's conceptual scaffolding. **In chapter two** I describe the research design, make transparent the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the approach I have taken, and describe and justify the specific methods chosen to collect and analyse the data. The purpose of that chapter is to demonstrate that the research has been conducted in an ethical manner, is of high quality, rigorous and coherent; and that my interpretations of the topic and approach to its analysis are valid.

The rural locale of Geeveston and its people have histories that inform the present day character of the locale and give effect to the conduct of conduct of Geeveston people and the creation of political subjectivities and modes of participation. Therefore, in **chapter three**, I describe how a series of past events contributed to the character of Geeveston at the time of the formation of the GSRG. Of significance for the story of the formation of the GSRG are those performances of Geeveston people as victims of the changes wrought upon them by forces and actors beyond their control. Understanding some of the particular—and in many ways painful—journeys Geeveston people have endured over the past 30 to 40 years provides a critical context within which to trace the emergence of the GSRG. This context informs, in part, the identities and attitudes of GSRG members and Geeveston people more generally and an understanding of the motivation for GSRG members to drive township revitalisation projects. These attitudes may also work to undermine inclusiveness and the capacity of GSRG members to accept and tolerate difference and engage in governing practices that may better contribute to community capacity building through place-making. One group of events that resulted in the state-wide contraction of forest industries has a particular capacity to bring into sharp relief an entrenched polarisation within the Huon Valley and across Tasmanian communities in relation to the management of environmental resources, in particular forest resources. Geeveston is the heart of forest industries in southern Tasmania, so such division have significant implications for how governing is practised in Geeveston and in the Huon Valley and constitutes a particularly antagonistic geopolitical landscape.

The Huon Valley Council has its own history. Indeed, its very formation relates directly to larger trends in public sector reforms implemented over an extended period beginning in the 1970s that changed dramatically the local governance landscape across the nation. **In chapter four** I describe these changes and the national and state governmental and political contexts within which local government reforms were developed and implemented in Australia. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for chapter five in which I examine critically the felt effects of modernisation in the Huon Valley municipal area. It is therefore necessary to have an understanding of those public sector reforms made in Australia (and informed by international theories on social democracy, economic rationalism or public choice theory and managerialism) and the governmental technologies stemming from these ideas, (largely encapsulated in the term NPM), which have underpinned the drive for efficiency and effectiveness within the public sector. At the local level, managerial and structural changes designed to increase local government (economic) efficiency were accompanied by significant emphases on the importance of citizen participation in local government processes. The local government reform agenda in Australia reflects two tendencies in late modernity: the quest for economic efficiency on the one hand and the desire for enhanced participation on the other. The territory between these two goals is inscribed with tension and contradiction as made evident in this chapter.

In chapter five I describe the felt effects of local government modernisation in the Huon Valley and examine how citizenship and participation have been affected by that process. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse critically Huon Valley local government actors' attitudes towards community participation in local government decision-making processes. Along with other community and local government actors in the Huon Valley, Geeveston people variously invested in, accommodated, resisted, adapted and/or sought to use the changes in local governing processes to provide opportunities for enduring, strong and viable local futures. These actors' differing conceptions of what constitutes such a future and how it can be achieved are at the centre of contests over how to govern the municipal area. Examining these contests provides significant insights into the challenges for community and government actors as they determine the extent to which they can collaboratively contribute to community capacity building through place-making. The analysis and

discussion is revealing in terms of how local government and community actors are adjusting to the changes in local governing processes.

In chapter six I document the creation, activities and achievements of the GSRG and examine the extent to which actors involved in the group were able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them. I also discuss the effects of the group's activities for community capacity building through place-making in Geeveston. I look at how far and to what extent the GSRG was able to achieve its goals which depended on numerous factors (many unique to Geeveston) whilst highlighting the contingent nature of community capacity building and place-making activities. In addition, I analyse critically the effects of the partnership in reconstituting community and local government actors' understandings of the benefits and limitations of inclusive governing practices. These foci are important in relation to my research questions because discourses of community mobilisation and empowerment—which the GSRG may represent—need to be understood in the context where the responsibilities of individuals and communities to play active roles in local governance are emphasised (Raco & Imrie 2000).

Having mapped how governing is practised, and having documented the effects of such practices specifically in relation to Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council, **in chapter seven** I unpack a range of statements about democracy organised around the following issues: the dynamic and complex relationship between representative and participatory democracy; claims to representativeness; the challenge of conflict; and governing through community.

Chapter 2

Research Design

An analytics of government is a *methodological* approach that is concerned to highlight the heterogeneous elements that, blended together, constitute the practices of government. Several qualitative research *methods* are well suited to this task and have been chosen here for their capacities to elicit particular practices in place. Such methods include the analysis of secondary texts, participant observation of people and place, and the conduct of individual and group interviews with actors in and associated with the Geeveston locale. Mason (2002, p.57) refers to such a collection of data as ‘text, talk and practice’ (after Foucault 1972 and Hajer, 1995). Here, and throughout the thesis, I refer to all ‘text’ using standard Harvard referencing; all ‘talk’ derived from individual and group interviews will be referred to as transcripts; and I describe ‘practice’ in observational terms.

The overall design for the research is based on a case study approach, which assumes great value in working from the particularities of people’s experiences; this position is central to the practice of cultural geography and requires careful attention to the description, constitution and interpretation of everyday life experience (Eyles 1988; Geertz 1973; Jacobs 1999; Patton 1990, Stake, 1995 & 2000). Accounts of everyday life are often captured in the research process as narratives and the discourses that arise from them (Hajer 1995). It is in the detailed examination of the particular case that a ‘nuanced view of reality’ can be described and understood with the advantage that one ‘can “close in” on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold’ (Flyvbjerg 2006, p.223 & 235). Such rich descriptions and interpretations of governing practices in the Geeveston case inform the conclusions drawn, and simultaneously provide scope for readers to form their own judgements about the case and its implications (Flyvbjerg 1998).

In writing *this* particular story¹⁰ of changing governing practices in Geeveston and the Huon Valley—rather more than merely presenting the case—I work from the premise that while there are heterogeneous things that exist prior to human conception of them, I cannot understand them outside of the socio-cultural contexts in which I operate. I do not seek to uncover fixed intrinsic meanings; rather I understand meaning to be constituted by language, and language (broadly defined) to constitute social realities. My purpose is to unsettle taken-for-granted understandings of social reality, in particular those relating to governance, and to describe ‘how meanings are produced, how they are effective, how they conflict and how they change’ (Weedon 1987, p.42). I am interested in the material effects of governing practices rather than abstract principles of rule. That is, my focus is on how discourses and practices of governing constitute subjects and how these discourses and practices are (re)constituted through the everyday practices of people in place. In admitting the perspectival character of the knowledge I construct about governing practices in the Geeveston case, I hope to ‘sharpen rather than blunt [my] critical stance’ (Dean 1999, p.10).

Language, subjectivity, social organisation and power are linked (Richardson, 2000). Language as discourse, as constituting competing realities, is an inherently political site of struggle in the constitution of subjectivity which is emergent, precarious and contradictory (Weedon 1987). This process, one of becoming, also means ‘being subject to particular norms, rules and modes of governing’ (Cameron & Gibson 2005, p.318). Neoliberalism, for example, is a discursive field that constitutes particular social realities, with distinct ideas about human social, economic and political behaviour as well as about human relationships to the non-human world. Some of its heterogeneous traits include a privileging of the self-regulating market, a political and ideological antagonism toward state intervention, and the restructuring of state functions (McCarthy & Prudham 2004).

There exists a range of discursive practices—economic, social, cultural and political—through which subjectivity is produced. Indeed, discursive relations are in themselves relations of power (Kendell & Wickham 1999). The language of government, for example, ‘arises from and reflects a dominant set of power relations’ (Dean 1999, p.9).

¹⁰ I refer to ‘this story’ as opposed to ‘my story’ as while I acknowledge that what is presented here is my interpretation, the story is also created by those who participated in the research.

In effect, subjectivity is neither static nor the ‘authentic source of action and meaning’ (Hall 2001, p.79); rather it can be understood to be a product or effect of language and, according to Foucault (1972), of discourse. Hajer (1995, p.44) defines discourse

as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed through practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.

For Foucault, discourses are productive or generative. Things have no independent existence outside the operation of discourses (Kendell & Wickham 1999), the effect being that discourse

defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (Hall 2001, p.72).

Furthermore, the discursive production of subjectivity is historically and culturally specific; that is, subjects ‘operate within the limits of *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period and culture’ (Hall 2001, p.79, original emphasis). To return to the specifics of the case, these discursive challenges have been accompanied by new technologies of government that incorporate rural locales into a wider net of political relations that produce new social and spatial forms of regulation emphasising the active citizen and the responsible community. While such changes are typical of neoliberalism within a broader context of contemporary western liberal democracy, their manifestation is specific to each locale and concern such things as the conflict over place-making and community capacity building, which affect the production of local futures.

This research has received ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania (Ref. No. H0006334). Throughout the research process I have worked within the principles of ethical conduct in research outlined by the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (Australian Government et al. 2007). Such principles include the merit of the research and integrity of the researcher, respect for persons involved in the research, beneficence

in terms of minimising harm and justice in terms of ensuring a fair distribution of the burdens and benefits of the research (Australian Government et al. 2007).

In adhering to these principles I remain cognisant that all research is interleaved with relations of power and that no matter how ethically one conducts research the process will always generate power effects to some degree (Dowling 2005). Such relations of power are evident in the data collection processes, the generation of the interpretations of the data collected and the ways in which the research results may be used to alter policy on local governance that may affect (and/or give effect to) local futures in Geeveston. Accepting that relations of power cannot be eliminated from the research process I attempted to minimise power effects where possible through the application of standard ethical rules: protection of confidentiality and anonymity, gaining the informed consent of participants and the minimisation of physical and psycho-social harm to participants. Where these standard procedures were deemed inadequate, critical reflexivity—‘the constant, self-conscious scrutiny, of the self as researcher and of the research process’ (England 1994 in Dowling 2005, p.22)—was deployed and the research process modified where required. Throughout the research process the intersubjective and intertextual relationships between researcher and participants have remained central to the generation of knowledge about governing practices in Geeveston. As we are reminded by Foucault (1977, p.27),

power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.

All of the methods employed generate ineradicable power effects that impact on the data collected. In my interactions with Geeveston people I remained conscious of the effects on participants of my status as a white, middle class, young, educated woman and an outsider. Further, I acknowledge that, although difficult (if not impossible) to measure, there were impacts on Geeveston people of my surveillance of their everyday lives, notwithstanding my consistent observance of ethical conduct in research.

In this research a decision was made to not to de-identify Geeveston and the Huon Valley as the case study sites. This decision was taken partly because throughout the data collection phase participants in Geeveston expressed clear enthusiasm for their

story to be known. I sensed that it was important to recognise the achievements of those involved in the GSRG. I was also concerned that the rich story that belongs to Geeveston could not have been told in such detail if the case study site had been de-identified, effectively becoming ‘no place’.

This choice presents additional challenges related to the maintenance of the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The risk being that even though all interview quotes have been de-identified, the choice not to de-identify the place means that some participants, especially those from Geeveston, could potentially be identified in the thesis, if not by an external audience, then certainly by each other. While I did not anticipate there would be any risk above the everyday norm for persons participating in this research project, I was concerned that the potential for any social harm, embarrassment or legal implications were known to participants and minimised where possible. In information sheets provided to GSRG members about their participation in the group interview I emphasised that their comments would be known to other members of the group. Therefore, there is a risk that their comments may become known to others outside the group. Because of this risk I requested that all members of the group ensure that any comments made “in confidence” by any member of the group were not discussed outside of the group. Participants were also encouraged to contact the researcher after the group interview to discuss any issues they felt uncomfortable about raising within the group and/or if they wished to have any of their comments removed from the group interview transcript.

Nevertheless there are methodological contradictions in the issues of the ethics of identifying people and place. According to Malpas (2008) place has its own identity and resonance in terms of the knowledge revealed and our reflections on that, so that rendering it into an archetype of place is to deny all of the richness of specificity. These contradictions are worthy of further research and it is my intention to co-author future papers with the participants to examine such dilemmas.

Selecting the case study and accessing participants

The GSRG is a community-local government partnership formed in 1999 to address issues of township presentation and revitalisation in Geeveston, one of five major townships in the Huon Valley municipal area. As noted in Chapter 1, the GSRG is a

partnership between community actors in Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council. Its purpose is to address issues of township beautification to revitalise social wellbeing and economic prosperity. The GSRG was *purposefully selected* as suitable for an in-depth study into how community and local government actors are managing change in local governing processes where such change is effected by a range of strategies of neoliberalism that adhere to government, governance, and the constitution of identity in place. The choice to work with actors in Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council, rather than another locale and municipal area, was driven in large part by my having conducted research in Geeveston in 2000 (Armstrong 2000). As a result of that research I identified that local government in Tasmania had changed dramatically, and that there was little appreciation of these changes and their implications among those to whom I spoke in Geeveston. Geeveston presented one case that is illustrative of the challenges faced by rural communities in coping with and managing the effects of rapid social and economic change. There seemed to be diminished capacity and/or willingness among many Geeveston people to participate actively in strategies to re-build economic security and well-being and thus to create stronger local futures. Instead there appeared to be an over-reliance on a small number of individuals identified by their peers as leaders or “community champions” (a description used again and throughout the thesis) who were attempting to drive positive change. For various reasons (elaborated in the following two chapters) the uncoordinated and *ad hoc* activities of these particular Geeveston people had been undertaken with little reference to the Huon Valley Council which presented a potential source of human, organisational and financial resources. The formation of the GSRG community-local government partnership is significant in this regard and it offered an excellent example of how actors at the local level have come to participate in co-creating local solutions to local problems in an effort to revitalise their township. As such, it was considered that the GSRG could provide salient insights into how Huon Valley Council and community actors understood the role of local government, elected members and citizens in local governing processes, how these constitutions changed as a result of the partnership experiment and with what effects for Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council.

Addressing the aims of the research required a thorough understanding of local government processes, the purpose behind local government modernisation efforts but also its unintended consequences, and the opportunities and challenges experienced by local government in Tasmania as they have adjusted to a new governance regime. It was

considered important to gain insights from both the particular case of the Huon Valley Council and from those organisations that support and oversee the broader operation of local government at a state-wide level.

Access to the GSRG was obtained with assistance from the Manager of Community Development Services at the Huon Valley Council. I attended a meeting of the GSRG, facilitated by him, at which I explained the purpose of the research and requested permission to observe the group's monthly meetings and conduct a group interview with members. Other participants from Geeveston, the Huon Valley Council, the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT), the Local Government Managers Association (LGMA), relevant State Government departments and planning and policy professionals were selected using *purposive criterion and chain sampling*.

Prior to conducting the research all prospective participants were sent a letter of invitation. Each letter was accompanied by an information sheet explaining the purpose of the research, who would be interviewed, the kinds of questions I would ask them, how the interview would proceed, any possible risk or discomfort they might experience as a result of their participation, how their anonymity and confidentiality would be protected, when and how they could withdraw from the research, and who to contact if they had any concerns about the conduct of the researcher. Letters were followed up with a phone call to confirm willingness to participate and to organise interviews. Only one of the prospective participants declined to be interviewed and that was for health reasons. All participants were sent a letter thanking them for sharing their time, knowledge and ideas. Once the interviews were transcribed, each participant was sent a copy to review and asked to notify the researcher if there was anything they wanted changed, removed or added to the transcript. Only one participant asked for changes to be made. Subsequent letters were sent to participants on a regular basis to keep them informed of the progress of the research until such time as the thesis was submitted (see Appendix 1).

In the case of participants from the GSRG with whom I conducted a group interview, it was stressed that, in participating, their comments would be made known to all other members who participated. Therefore, there was a risk that their comments may become known to others outside the group. Because of this risk GSRG members were asked to ensure that any comments made "in confidence" by any participant remain confidential

outside of the group interview. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss in private any issues they considered important but were uncomfortable about raising during the group interview. All participants of the group interview were sent a copy of the transcript and invited to comment. Like individual participants, this group were happy with the research process and kept informed of its progress.

Methods of data collection

Observation is a fundamental method of qualitative research deployed in various settings from highly controlled laboratory or clinical experiments to uncontrolled (although not unaffected) ‘natural’ locations of everyday activities (Angrosino & Mays de Perez 2000, Kearns, 2005). Participant observation has been used in this research as a means by which to develop a baseline of meaning and a rich contextual understanding of the unique *place identities* of Geeveston gained through the direct experience of everyday life in this locale (Boyle 1994, Kearns, 2005). The results of my observations provide complementary evidence to support, contrast with and/or expand upon the results of other data collection methods used (Kearns 2005). Following Angrosino (2000, p.676), I view participant observation as ‘a context for interaction among those involved in the research’, and the narratives generated as part of a collaborative effort between researcher and research participants (see also Evans 1988). Wherever possible, Geeveston people were made aware of my identity as a researcher and were engaged in dialogic relationships, rather than being covertly observed (from a distance) (Angrosino & Mays de Perez 2000). Thus the meanings generated from my observations are context-dependent and the result of participants’ reactions to my presence.

During the course of the research I spent a total of five weeks living in Geeveston with a local family, during which time I observed the day-to-day life in Geeveston, spoke informally with people in the streets of Geeveston and photo-documented the physical assets of the township. The time spent in Geeveston was spread out over three periods: 7-11 April and 23-27 April 2003 and 9-29 August 2004. These periods of extended observation were augmented by others undertaken during numerous day-long visits to Geeveston to attend monthly meetings of the GSRG, to interview participants, and to attend the unveiling of several of the sculptures installed in the main street as part of the group’s township revitalisation project.

Many hours were spent walking and sitting within Geeveston observing in detail the particular people and things occupying the spaces and places within and around the locale. I looked for indications of flows and boundaries – between and among people, and between people and place-use. I recorded these observations in detailed notes and photographs, paying particular attention to those characteristics that may provide clues or indicators of issues related to place-making and community capacity building. These observational data also work to situate the reader in the particular places and contexts described within this research and, along with other images and maps, are used to illustrate specific ideas, events and arguments presented within the work.

While wandering the streets, and visiting the shops, businesses and cafes in Geeveston I engaged in casual conversations with Geeveston people. I talked to them about my research and asked them about life in their community. Observations from these encounters were recorded by taking hand written notes in situ or as soon as possible after the fact and thus some impressions are memory dependent.

I also intermittently attended 12 of the GSRG's monthly meetings over a two year period beginning in November 2001 during which time I wrote detailed notes on the dynamics of the decision-making processes within group meetings; how individual members conducted themselves; how the business of meetings was organised; and how conflict was managed. I also reviewed the minutes of the GSRG from the first of its monthly meetings in December 1999 to December 2008 to get a sense of the overall activities of the group and to augment my understanding of issues and events discussed at interview.

In addition, between 13 August 2001 and 12 April 2003 I observed nine of the Huon Valley Council's monthly meetings, including one annual general meeting. Although council meetings are open to the public, I requested permission from the General Manager and councillors to attend council meetings for the purpose of observing this particular and important local government process. My presence in the council room was obvious to councillors and council staff and many members of the public gallery, and I cannot be sure to what extent (if at all) my presence affected the conduct of the actors in these meetings. Attending council meetings provided valuable insights into the dynamics of local government decision-making procedures which were augmented with an analysis of primary data (planning schemes, strategic plans, legislation, State

Government policy and interviews with Huon Valley councillors and council officers, other key informants and the GSRG) and secondary data (scholarly work on local government and governance). During the period of the research two local government elections were held, one in October 2002 and one in October 2005 (Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2003, 2006). As a result of the election in both cases the membership of council changed as some incumbents re-contesting their positions were not re-elected and other candidates were newly elected to council.

Data obtained from individual *interviews* conducted with approximately 42 participants and one *group interview* conducted with the GSRG form a critical component of the findings presented in this dissertation. The interview is not a neutral tool of data gathering; rather it is an active interaction between two people (or in the case of the group interview among numerous people) that leads to the production of negotiated, contextually based results (Fontana & Frey 2000). The interview was chosen in order to gain access to, and develop a subsequent understanding of, interpretations of social reality held by the individuals involved (Minichiello et al. 1990). I was particularly interested in developing an understanding of the complex behaviours and motivations among participants and especially in relation to opportunities to make durable a strong and viable future in their locale (Dunn 2005). Thus, through the interview process, I was also concerned to develop an understanding of participants' opinions and experiences in relation to community capacity building and place-making and to gain insights into differing debates and areas of consensus on local governance and local futures (Dunn 2005). Interviewing is a method that allows participants' world views and values to come to the fore (Dunn 2005) and the choice of this method is based on an '*ontological* position that suggest that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality' that my research questions are designed to explore (Mason 2002, p.63).

Interviewing is also a dynamic process and I chose a semi-structured interview technique to provide scope for each interview to take its course, to elicit more in-depth information unique to each participant and to allow them some control over the process (Minichiello et al. 1990, Nichols, 2000, Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Participants were divided into three groups (see Table 1 for a list of participants). Where I wanted to gain information on specific issues common to a group of participants standardized questions formulated by me and based on prior knowledge of those issues were asked of all

participants in that group. Such knowledge included information gathered during research conducted in the Huon Valley in 2000 (Armstrong 2000) in addition to knowledge gained from reviews of primary and secondary scholarly and grey literature.

The first group consisted of key informants from the Huon Valley Council, LGAT, LGMA, relevant State Government departments and from planning and policy circles. These participants were asked questions about their official and personal views on the role of local government, the role of the citizen, and how local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries can effectively manage the changing roles of local government and citizens, and concomitant responsibilities. Huon Valley councillors and council officers were also invited to discuss the above issues in relation to the GSRG. I interviewed 15 people (councillors and council officers) from the Huon Valley Council, six key informants from relevant state organisations and State Government departments and two other key informants considered relevant to the research.

The second group consisted of Geeveston community actors. The activities of the GSRG occur and generate effects within the Geeveston locale which, in-turn, affect other Geeveston people as well as that place. Thus in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 Geeveston people, 16 of whom were not directly connected to the GSRG. Ten of those interviews were conducted in 2002, while the remaining eight were conducted in 2000 as part of an earlier research project in which I collected narratives of sustainability and community (Armstrong 2000).

The selection of participants interviewed in 2000 was based on the criteria that participants were considered to be leaders by others in their community, defined as people who work with and for and thus champion that community. Beginning with Councillor Dillon, a resident in Geeveston, this and all subsequent participants were sampled using a snowball sampling technique. Each participant was asked to recommend further potential participants who they believed would be 'information rich' in their responses to my questions. Some of those participants interviewed in 2002 were recommended by people I interviewed in 2000, while others were identified by those I interviewed in 2002.

Table 1: List of participants interviewed

Officers and elected representatives of the Huon Valley Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manager, Environment and Development Services• Manager, Community Services (until 2004)• Manager, Community Development (from 2004)• General Manager• Mayor• Deputy Mayor• Nine councillors (some of whom were newly elected councillors in 2004)
Key informants from relevant state organizations and State Government departments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT)• Director, Local Government Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Government of Tasmania• Chair, Local Government Board, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Government of Tasmania• President, Local Government Managers Association, Tasmania (LGMAT)• Communications Officer, Huon District Office of Forestry Tasmania• Planner, Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC)
Other key informants
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landscape Architect from the private firm contracted to develop Geeveston landscape plan• Planner, Private Consultant and advocate of citizen participation in planning and processes
Geeveston Community Actors
<p>A selection of community actors were interviewed including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local policy officer• Two new business owners• Two established business owners• A local community worker• Manager, Geeveston Online Access Centre• Two local orchardists• An organic farmer and environmental activist• Manager, Geeveston and Dover Branch of the Bendigo Bank
Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group Members
<p>One group interview attended by 6 group members</p>

Such participants included the local police officer, people who had recently invested in Geeveston businesses, two long-term business owners in the township, a community worker, the manager of the Geeveston Online Access Centre¹¹, two local orchardists, and an organic farmer and local environmental activist. Participants in 2000 and 2002 were asked to describe their lives in Geeveston, what they value about the place and community, and what things detract from the place and community. They were asked to discuss their understanding of the role of local government, the role of citizens, and what they considered to be opportunities and constraints in relation to ensuring a strong future for Geeveston. I also invited them to talk about their capacity, confidence and willingness to participate in decision-making processes that affect Geeveston and the Huon Valley more generally. Additional questions included how they view the role of the local authorities and their own role as a citizen in pursuing strong local futures in Geeveston.

The third group of research participants consisted of members of the GSRG. They were interviewed as a group on the 4th of June 2003. This three hour long interview enabled me to augment my observations of GSRG meetings and to engage members in discussions of particular issues in relation to local governance and local futures. The discussion focused on the following issues: how and why the group developed; why group members participate; how they participate; what they get from participating; what problems they have faced; how these problems were overcome; whether the group could become a first point of contact for council to involve the wider Geeveston community in local government decision-making processes (for example consultation on the Council's strategic plan); what future they see for the group, in particular how to involve a broader cross section of the community (especially youth); and whether through their participation they gained a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local government and governing processes in general. Six of the 14 core GSRG members participated, the other eight choosing not to attend for reasons not made known to the researcher. Participants were provided with the opportunity to have

¹¹ The Geeveston Online Access Centre provides access to and training in the use of computing resources—computers, printer, copier, scanner and laminator—to residents and visitors in Geeveston. It is managed by the Tasmanian Department of Education through the Huon LINC and is supported by a local advisory committee (Tasmanian Communities Online no date, no page).

removed from the transcript any comments they did not want recorded. I received no requests for a private meeting, nor for any comments to be struck from the transcript.

In all cases I allowed scope to explore unexpected issues that emerged during interviews and remained flexible about the order in which questions were asked. Where participants in any group had specific knowledge, additional questions were asked of them. All interview schedules are provided in Appendix 2. The questions used and the issues explored in both interview approaches were developed from a review of the general and case-specific literature on government, local governance, sustainability, sustainable development, neoliberalism and place.

All interviews (including the group interview) were conducted face-to-face and, with permission from each participant, interviews were taped so that I could give my full attention to the conversation. Each interview was transcribed verbatim generating 528 pages and 367,739 words of data.

Methods of analysis

The data collected were analysed using methods indebted to traditions in hermeneutics and (Foucauldian) discourse analysis. This hybrid approach extends the boundaries of hermeneutics by exploring the particular contexts of human action in everyday life while remaining sensitive to the historical operation of discourses, discursive practices or discursive structures (Mason 2002). In using this approach I have sought to understand the micro-practices of governing in the context of one locale from the participants' points of view, while at the same time highlighting the discursive production of their political subjectivities. The approach allows for an interpretation of the diverse meanings of everyday life constituted with participants inter-subjectively and inter-textually, accepting the existence of multiple 'truths' that inhere in the many perceptions of the lived experiences of people in place. Throughout the process of reporting these interpretations I have remained sensitive to the inter-subjective and inter-textual relationships between myself as the research instrument and the multiple research participants with whom I engaged (Fine 1994). In writing my analysis of the narratives of governing practices in Geeveston I have attempted to produce 'a quilt of stories and a cacophony of voices speaking to each other in dispute, dissonance, support, dialogue, contention, and/or contradiction' (Fine et al. 2000, p.119).

Hermeneutics is a cyclical process that enables a researcher to move beyond simple explanation and naive or superficial initial understandings of the narrative of a transcript towards deeper understandings of what that narrative could mean or represent, or what I think I can infer from it (Geanellos 2000; Mason 2002; Minichiello et al. 1990). The hermeneutic process has been described by Kincheloe and McLaren (2000, p. 286) as enabling one to

transcend the inadequacies of thin descriptions of decontextualised facts and produce thick descriptions of social texts characterised by the contexts of their production, the intention of their producers, and the meanings mobilised in the process of their construction.

In keeping with the epistemological premise that ‘coming to understand the meaning of the whole of a text and coming to understand its parts [are] interdependent activities’ (Kinsella 2006, paragraph 15), the data were organised holistically. Each interview transcript was analysed as a whole and in relation to other transcripts, rather than cutting parts from transcripts and reassembling them under common cross-sectional themes. Organising the data in that way involved looking at discrete cases (Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council) in relation to broader contexts (local governance and local futures), and documenting aspects of those parts specifically (Mason 2002). I chose this approach over more formal or quantitative methods of discourse analysis that involve counting, describing and classifying, and other methods of cross-sectional coding, in order to seek out the ‘*particular in context* rather than the common or consistent’ (Mason 2002, p.165, original emphasis).

Such deep interpretive understanding is only gained in stages during which there is continual movement between the parts or ‘the internal relations of the text’ and the whole or ‘the meanings the text discloses’ (Geanellos 2000, p.114). Throughout the process I kept in mind that there is no absolute knowledge, and that interpretation will always be incomplete, perspectival and changing (Geanellos 2000). No final interpretation or closure was sought, for a definitive interpretation requires the coherence of a whole text; yet I could never be sure that I knew the limits of the whole text, nor how many of the parts of that text which might be missing (Minichiello et al. 1990). Interview transcripts were read and re-read to get a ‘sense’ of what participants were telling me about questions of governance, community capacity building and place

making. I also searched for absences or silences and for inter-relationships between the participants' different accounts of what it means to govern and be governed. The accounts produced at interview were compared with my observations of material practices of local decision-making within local government and Geeveston to locate and draw meaning from any consistencies and discrepancies.

The work as a whole represents the *crystallization* of a multifaceted qualitative research design (Janesick 2000; Richardson, L 2000) based on an understanding that the production of knowledge is relative, relational, and context-dependent. In using crystallization as opposed to the more traditional notion of triangulation I follow Laurel Richardson (2000) who rejects the assumption inherent in the idea of triangulation that there is a fixed point or object that can be triangulated. For Richardson (2000) the triangle is altogether too rigid and too fixed; a two-dimensional object. In contrast the imaginary of the crystal

combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose (Richardson, L 2000, p.934).

In short, my interpretations of governing practices in Geeveston have been informed by many *primary* and *secondary* sources on governance, democracy, citizenship and participation. As the sole research instrument (Janesick 2000), I have also cross-checked the work presented here by discussing emergent findings with participants, using member-checking processes (described below), and with a community of scholars through seminars,¹² conference papers,¹³ publications¹⁴ and research discussion groups.¹⁵

¹² Annual seminars of work in progress have been presented to staff and graduate students in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

In keeping with an adherence to reflexivity, and so as to assess the coherence, clarity, completeness and credibility of my interpretations of governing practices in Geeveston, I engaged participants in a range of member-checking activities. Member-checking processes help researchers fulfil their *ethical obligations*, providing participants with opportunities to enter into conversations about how they are represented in research and thus about how they may continue to be represented through the publication of research in books, academic journals and the popular media. Member-checking is also intended to clarify issues and questions about themes, ideas, concepts and events that emerge during the preliminary analysis of data (Rubin & Rubin 1995). In the Geeveston case, participants whose comments may have revealed their respective identities were invited to comment on my interpretation of their interviews and other data sources to see if they recognised the meanings contained within those interpretations (Baxter & Eyles 1999). Building participants' confidence in my integrity as a researcher was a critical part of the process of inviting individuals to give information to me as an outsider. This practise required that I accept an added responsibility to ensure I did 'not abuse that trust by renegeing on commitments, acting deceitfully, or producing explanations which may damage the interests of the subjects' (Mason 1996, p.159). Through the member-checking process I was able to meet my commitments and remain true to my promise to work *with* Geeveston people rather than treat them as the objects of my academic gaze.

The member-checking process did not hand over veto power to participants and I remained cognisant of the risk of becoming disempowered in the process of empowering participants through such engagement. For example at least one researcher has found that

[e]qualising power relations by allowing participants to contest one's explanations was fine in principle, but in practice it could turn friends into enemies and so compromise

¹³ Three separate papers based on the research, and on a similar study in Canada, have been presented at conferences: the first at the Islands of the World VII Conference in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada in 2002 (Armstrong 2002); the second at the Islands of the World VIII Conference in Kinmen Island, Taiwan, R.O.C. in 2004 (Armstrong 2004); and the third at the North Atlantic Islands Program Conference, Twillingate, Newfoundland, Canada in 2005 (Armstrong 2005).

¹⁴ See (Armstrong 2007; Armstrong & Stratford 2004; Armstrong & Stratford 2009; Stratford, Armstrong & Jaskolski 2003).

¹⁵ Two working papers from the thesis have been critiqued by fellow graduate students and academic staff: one on governmentality and one on Actor-Network Theory and the applicability of these theories to the research questions.

what one wanted to say as to make it worthless (Burawoy et al. 1991, p. 296, quoted in Bradshaw 2001).

In light of this insight I made it clear to participants that their feedback—affirming or challenging—may not *necessarily* precipitate a complete rewriting of any aspect of the work under scrutiny, misinterpretation or error of fact excepted. What I agreed to was the incorporation of such comments into the text, supporting a commitment to conducting research as a collective and negotiated process (Bradshaw 2001). The member-checking process ultimately enabled conversations and negotiated interpretations resulting in ‘texts in which multiple interpretations flourish’ and ‘in which challenges are integrated into the manuscript’ (Fine et al. 2000, p.127).

Additional notes to guide the reader

Throughout the remainder of the thesis I refer to community actors, local government actors, Geeveston people, and GSRG members. The term community actors refers to those people who identify with the various communities of place and interest in and related to the Huon Valley municipal area, which may include people from outside the municipal area, the state of Tasmania or the nation of Australia. The term local government actor refer to councillors and council employees of the Huon Valley Council; that of Geeveston people refers to those people who live in or have a close association with the Geeveston township and immediate area by owning a business there or because Geeveston is their local centre. GSRG member refers to those Geeveston people who are or have been members of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group. Quotes from participants are identified in text by the use of italics as well as reference to participants using a code as follows:

GCA	Geeveston community actor
HVCR	Huon Valley Councillor
HVCO	Huon Valley Council Officer
Key Informant	Refers to key informants from relevant state organizations and State Government departments

Chapter 3

Stories of origin: the context of the formation of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group

To understand where people wish to go ... or what they see as being desirable for the future, you have to have an understanding of what their background is and what the community base [is that] you are coming from ... (GCA 06, 2001).

Places ... have *histories* which contribute to their present day *character*. The development by citizens over time of personality, ideology and consciousness, and the acquisition of language, are some of the constraints and enabling conditions that affect the nature of cultural and social practices within a locale. They are based on rules, resources and norms that reflect geographically and historically specific power relations (Kearns, A 1995, p.166, original emphasis).

Numerous threads drawn from a series of past events influence place-making and community capacity building in Geeveston, giving effect to the conduct of conduct and the creation of political subjectivities and modes of participation. Of significance for the story of the formation of the GSRG are those performances of Geeveston people as victims of the changes wrought upon them by forces and actors beyond their control. Understanding the particular journey Geeveston people have endured over the past 30 to 40 years provides a critical context within which to trace the emergence of the GSRG. It is also important to my examination of the actions of a small group of community leaders and champions whose contribution to a number of place-making projects helped to redefine the status (identity) of Geeveston from a dependent to a 'can do' community.

Acknowledging that a full account of the context can never be told, I will focus on key moments and their effects in Geeveston as rehearsed in conversations with community members and described by them as instrumental in the decline of their town and community. The first relates to the restructuring of the apple and pear growing industry between 1972 and 1977; the second concerns the effects in

Geeveston of the contraction of forest industries during the 1980s and 1990s; and the third is about the modernisation of local government in Tasmania in 1993. These events had a profound effect on how Geeveston people constituted their identity, the identity of the Huon Valley Council and the identity of environmentalists (key protagonists in debates over the management of the forest resources in the State). Interpreting these effects provides valuable insights into the governing practices of the actors involved or associated with the GSRG, the strategies and tactics used, and the allegiances made, reinforced and/or reactivated. Interpreting these effects also provides a valuable context upon which to map the relations of power and responsibility in Geeveston that have developed as a result of the formation of the GSRG partnership.

Geeveston is *Tasmania's Forest Town*. Considered the southern heart of forestry, it is a rural settlement approximately forty-five minutes drive south of the State's capital of Hobart. One of five key population centres in the Huon Valley municipal area, Geeveston is a centre for surrounding smaller communities from Castle Forbes Bay in the north and Glendevie in the south (Figure 3.1). Using terminology from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2006 the population of the locality¹⁶ of Geeveston was 762 persons (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006b). Approximately 1200 people inhabit surrounding communities and may use Geeveston as a service and community centre (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006c, 2006d, & 2006e).

¹⁶ The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a locality as 'a population cluster of between 200 and 999 people' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006a, no page). Other geographical or spatial terms that may be referred to in this chapter include: urban centre (a population cluster of 1000 or more people), and local government area or municipal area (a geographical area under the responsibility of an incorporated local government council) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006a, no page).

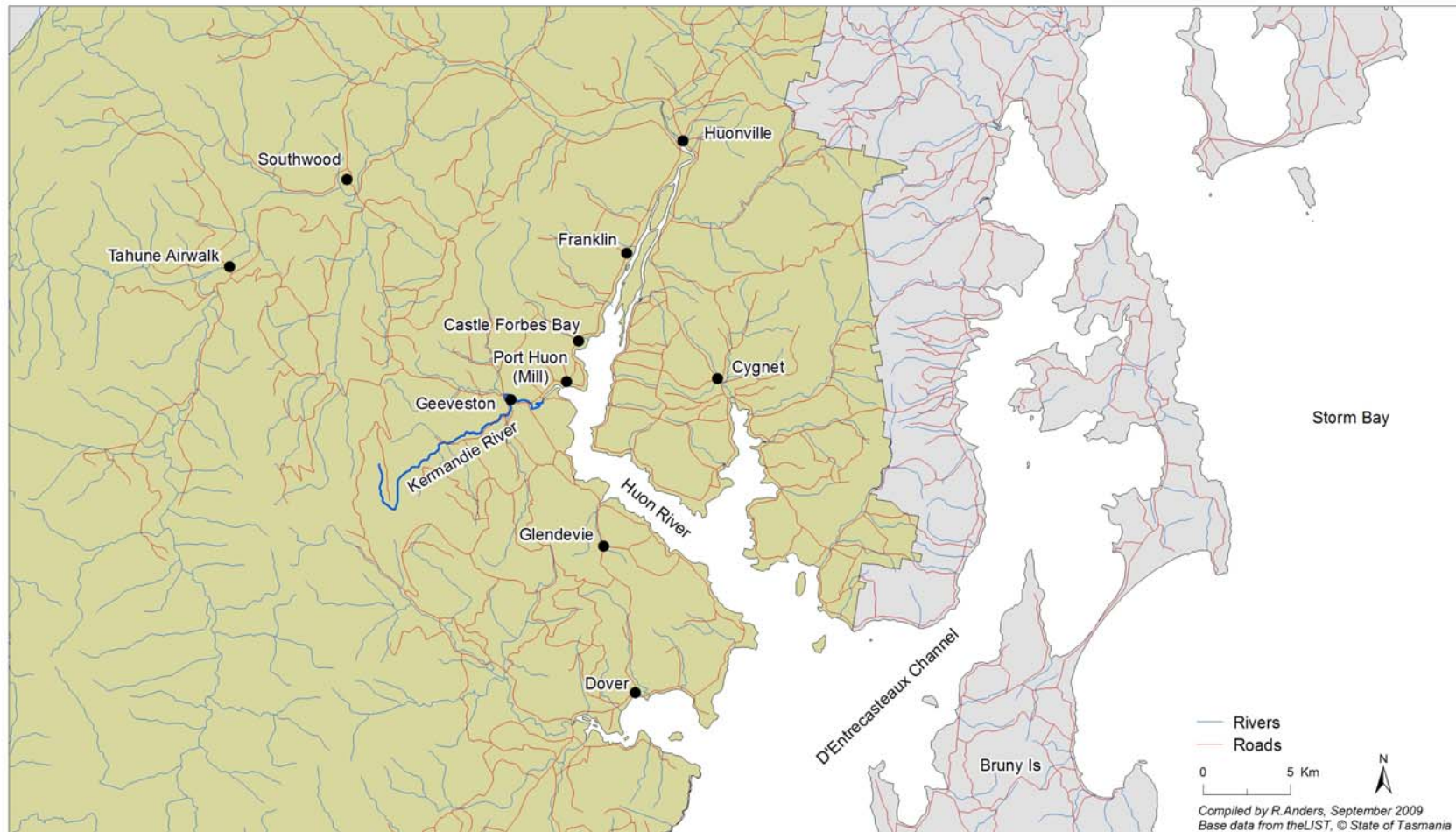


Figure 3.1: Location of major towns in the Huon Valley Municipality and the location of the Tahune Airwalk and Southwood

The town is located at the confluence of three small valleys forming the catchment for the Kermadie River, which flows through Geeveston to join the Huon River at Port Huon (Figure 3.2). The small settlement of Port Huon is 2 km north of Geeveston and the two places are closely related. In light of their close proximity for the purpose of this research, residents in Port Huon are included in references to the Geeveston settlement and community.



Figure 3.2: Geeveston, located at the confluence of three small valleys.

Since settlement in 1849, the fortunes of Geeveston people have been tied to apple and pear growing and forest industries, and to the government support and patronage which enabled those economic activities. However, since the 1960s, Geeveston people like residents in other rural settlements around Australia, have been confronted with the significant changes in rural and regional communities and the industries and government strategies that have sustained them. In Geeveston and the Huon Valley, forest industries have been a particular focus of local, state, national and international concern. However, other agricultural and aquaculture practices have also come under closer scrutiny. Producers are now competing in an environment of economic globalisation characterised by high

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levels of uncertainty and fluctuations in commodity prices and a need to meet a complex range of standards to take advantage of a broader range of export markets. Additionally, since the 1990s, the Australian Government¹⁷ has made clear their expectation that rural communities need to become self-reliant and competitive (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999b, Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001).

The restructuring of primary industries and the modernisation of local government over the period since the 1960s had profound and longstanding effects in Geeveston and the Huon Valley more generally and the community, in defence, seemed to turn in on itself. Only a few years ago many of the shops that are now bustling with people were empty; the green spaces, streets and sidewalks were drab and in disrepair; there were no displays of public art and no signs of welcome to the town (Figure 3.3). However, from the 1990s, the emergence of tourism as an additional economic activity in the Huon Valley prompted Geeveston people to take advantage of a range of opportunities provided by such shifts in economic activity.



Figure 3.3: Church St Geeveston looking east in 2000

¹⁷ In this work, I also refer to the Australian Government as the Commonwealth or the Federal Government; all three terms refer to the national government. During the period in which this research was undertaken Australia was governed under a Liberal Government led by Mr John Howard. In the 2007 elections the 'Howard Government' was defeated by the Labor Government under the leadership of Mr Kevin Rudd, now Prime Minister of Australia. Unless otherwise stated, all references in this thesis to the Federal Government and its policies refer to the Howard Liberal Government.

While tourism is not the only factor that raised the spirit of a dejected and hostile community such that its members began to celebrate their town and culture, it was nevertheless the first catalyst for change. The majority of members of the Geeveston community now welcome visitors to their town, exploiting its position as a gateway to numerous attractions in the Southern Forests. Some residents of Geeveston are harnessing the town's tourism potential by interpreting its history and in particular its association with forest industries that have sustained Geeveston since settlement.¹⁸ Numerous actors have been involved in the movement to revitalise Geeveston as a tourism attraction. Key among them is a group of approximately fifteen retired Geeveston people, who formed a voluntary association, the Green Jackets,¹⁹ and give their time to provide information to tourists visiting the town's Forest and Heritage Centre. Located in the main street, the Centre houses a gallery, displays of timber, a school of wood turning and a craft shop and provides hands on and visual interpretation of past and present forest practices to visitors (Forest and Heritage Centre 2007, no page).

Key events in the story of the formation of the GSRG

The decline of the apple and pear growing industry – the beginning of the rot

The valleys and hillsides of Geeveston and its environs were once covered in apple trees, sustaining numerous families that farmed on small 10-acre lots. Today there are few orchards left, with the majority of land now supporting pasture or timber plantations. The industry's peak of production occurred between the 1950s and 1960s and older community members in Geeveston remember those days fondly as a time when the community was prosperous and vibrant with focused activity.

¹⁸ Indeed, according to Kostoglou (1996), the early timber getters and the small saw millers had a marked influence on the pattern of settlement in the area, supplanting the colonial government's planned townships of the 1870s. The site of the Geeveston township was carved out of the forests by the early settlers and since then, Geeveston residents, amongst others, have continued to clear the forests for agriculture, manage them as a timber resource and use them as places of recreation. Many Geeveston residents still engage with the forests through at least one of these activities.

¹⁹ The Green Jackets predate but still exist alongside the GSRG and many of them are original members of the streetscape group too.

Geeveston ... if you go back to the '60s as a young fella growing up I can remember the log trucks lined up from here [pointing to the highway outside the Kermandie Hotel in Port Huon] back to APM [a local pulp mill] waiting to unload. I can remember the apple trucks all lined up from here to Port Huon Wharf. I can remember two ships alongside Port Huon wharf and another over at APM another one lying at anchor in the bay. It was a hive of activity it really was. APM was going well the apples were going well (GCA 11 2000).

Those days of prosperity were not to last, and a number of events resulted in the rapid decline of the apple and pear growing industry that led eventually to a restructuring program inspired by the Federal Labor Government under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in the early 1970s.²⁰ The *Fruit-growing Industry Reconstruction Scheme*—known colloquially as the “tree pull scheme”—was a driving force behind the massive changes experienced during that period. The scheme was implemented in 1972 in response to the serious economic problems that beset the Australian fruit-growing industry, which began to falter in the late 1960s.²¹

The reconstruction scheme was a Commonwealth-State agreement,²² administered by the Tasmanian Rural Reconstruction Board under the *Fruit-growing Industry Reconstruction Agreement Act 1972* (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1974). The program had significant impacts in areas where apple and pear growing was

²⁰ According to Whitlam (1985, p.263), the power of the primary producers had been upheld by the previous Liberal-Country Party coalition Government creating uninformed, unrepresentative and inequitable rural policy. In contrast rural policy of the Whitlam Government focused on “reordering the existing productivity and profitability of primary industries to improve the real standards of living of disadvantaged rural groups” (Whitlam 1985, p.263).

²¹ Two events were particularly significant in the decline of the apple and pear industry in Tasmania: the devaluation of the Australian Dollar between 1967 and 1972 and the loss of the primary export market for apples and pears in 1973 when the United Kingdom joined the European Common Market (Gardner 1977; McConnell & Servant 1999; Wood 1982). Between 1960 and 1976 the proportion of total apple exports from Tasmania to the United Kingdom decreased from 61 to 39 per cent (Grant 1977).

²² Other Commonwealth-State rural reconstruction schemes included the Rural Reconstruction, the Rural Reconstruction Employment Training, and the Marginal Dairy Farms Reconstruction Schemes. Under the *Rural Reconstruction Act 1971* the Rural Reconstruction Board administered (AUS) \$6.7 million of Commonwealth financial assistance to farmers across Tasmania in an effort to address debt reconstruction, farm build-up, rehabilitation and re-training (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1974).

concentrated: the Tamar Valley in the north of the State and the Huon Valley in the south.

In Geeveston, as in the rest of the Huon Valley the program significantly changed the feel and structure of the community, an event described as

the start of the rot... In the '60s ...you had a farmer with an orchard, Mum, Dad and a couple of kids and probably growing about 6000 bushels a year ... You then saw the tree pull situation, but you also saw the three or four big orchardists ... start to take over because the small orchardists were selling out. That (the tree pull scheme) to me was the start of the down turn. Because also in those days ... we were doing the Canadian case or the old wooden case and that also started to finish, which affected the box mills, which were employing people, so the whole system started to change (GCA 11 2000).

In the Huon Valley, nearly two thirds of orchardists and many processors went out of business between 1961 and 1975 during the reconstruction period (McConnell & Servant 1999; Watson 1987). The fruit-growing industry was labour-intensive and required numerous ancillary services, the industry's decline affected the entire Huon Valley (Gardner 1977). The landscape of Geeveston and the Huon Valley was transformed: acres of orchard were pushed into piles and burnt. Geeveston lost an unknown (but large) number of families to out-migration,²³ most of them had heritage as orchardists in the area for three or four generations. Although greatly reduced in size and significance, apple and pear growing continues to be an important part of the Geeveston and Huon Valley community.

The *Fruit-growing Industry Reconstruction Scheme* provided assistance to apple and pear growers in serious financial difficulties (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1974). Growers were entitled to a maximum of \$350 per acre for tree removal depending on 'the age, variety and condition of the trees, the markets and any

²³ A search of Tasmanian Parliamentary papers, Australian Bureau of Statistics data, State statistics and records of the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture failed to establish exactly how many families and orchards were lost from Geeveston during this period. Anecdotal evidence suggests numerous orchards were removed and numerous families, unable to support themselves, left the community in search of employment opportunities elsewhere.

other matters deemed relevant to the case' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1974. p.199). Compensation was conditional on growers' not replanting apple or pear trees on their properties for five years (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1974). The restructuring program assisted in reducing an over-supply of apples; however as Wood (1982) argues, criteria for eligibility for assistance were insufficiently discriminating, and both unproductive and productive orchards were removed. In addition, little assistance was provided in the restructuring program for orchardists to develop alternative enterprises, and compensation for removal of orchards barely covered many growers' accumulated indebtedness to suppliers and creditors (Wood 1982).

The scheme ran for four years until 31 December 1976, with trees approved for removal to be gone no later than 31 August 1977. During the scheme's life orchardists in Tasmania received a total of \$2 059 212 in compensation; a total of 3268 hectares of orchard was removed; 700 orchardists or 50 per cent of the total number left the industry; and total apple and pear production decreased by 50 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1981; McConnell & Servant 1999).

At the end of the restructuring period those orchardists who remained in the industry tended to be 'the biggest [sic] or those prepared to invest in modern and competitive equipment' (McConnell & Servant 1999, p.58). The Reid family, who owned and operated the only packaging shed left in Geeveston, reflected this trend; but in 2007 that business also closed its apple packing and export business in Geeveston to focus on their more profitable cherry growing business in the Derwent Valley north of the State capital, Hobart.

This dramatic period of restructuring left a lasting imprint in the minds of many in Geeveston. One third-generation orchardist who stayed explained that *it didn't feel good* watching many of his neighbours push their orchards out, seeing an industry change *from something that was worth bothering about to something that nobody cared about*. While those farmers—friends and neighbours—did not leave Geeveston immediately, over time most eventually did (GCA 06 2004). There used to be 52 apple farmers on just two roads in the area, and

now there's only four... I think the worst thing that happened was when the government gave the growers a grubbing out grant to remove their orchards and gradually things like the banks went and you know that sort of shut the town down (GCA 06 2000).

Accounts such as these have been passed down to younger generations. The son of the orchardist quoted above likewise made a commitment to the orchard but later, in the 1990s at a time when most of his peers sought employment opportunities in the city, spoke of the aftermath of the restructuring period. According to him, the general trend towards economic rationalisation—characterised by a search for economies of scale and efficiencies—has been misplaced, noting that numerous small businesses employ more people than a few large companies. The interests of shareholders, he felt, have become more important than those of the community, damaging morale in places such as Geeveston as community members watch *people having to sell their farms and move out and you never see them again* (GCA 07 2000).

The aforementioned effects of the restructuring of the apple and pear growing industry radically changed the physical landscape and ultimately the social structure of the Geeveston community. These changes would be compounded by later events as elaborated below. Certainly, the decline of this industry put greater emphasis on forest industries as the source of economic security for Geeveston. Thus, there was more at stake for Geeveston people when forest industries underwent their own protracted period of restructuring from the 1980s onwards, resulting in the contraction of employment opportunities in that industry sector as well (Green 2002).

The contraction of forest industries

Tasmania's public forest resource is managed by Forestry Tasmania, one of eight government business enterprises owned by the State of Tasmania.²⁴ Its Huon District office is located in Geeveston and, in 2003 when I was undertaking much of the primary research for this work, directly employed 71 people, 28 of whom live in the immediate Geeveston area (Key Informant 06, 2003). Generations of Geeveston people have worked in forest industries and have witnessed reductions in their capacity to harvest timber from that resource as more forest is removed from production and protected in national parks and reserves. Such conservation measures were developed in response to concerns about the impact of industrial forestry on biodiversity, wilderness and existence values of these forest habitats (Commonwealth of Australia 1988; Commonwealth of Australia & State of Tasmania 1997). Decisions to annex forest resources into reserves for conservation purposes in Tasmania have involved significant consideration of the potential impact on forest industries in Tasmania and some would argue, at the expense of conserving environmental values (Mendel & Kirkpatrick 2002).

According to McDonald (1999, p.295), 'the management of forest resources has been a controversial and politically divisive issue in Australia for over a century' with conflicts over the logging of publicly-owned native forests some of the most bitter. In Tasmania, as in other states where forestry is a prominent industry, the issue of native forest logging continues to provoke polarised public reaction

²⁴ Under the *Government Business Enterprise Act 1995*, the objectives of a Government Business Enterprise are

- (a) to perform its functions and exercise its powers so as to be a successful business by –
 - (i) operating in accordance with sound commercial practice and as efficiently as possible; and
 - (ii) achieving a sustainable commercial rate of return that maximises value for the State in accordance with its corporate plan and having regard to the economic and social objectives of the State; and
- (b) to perform on behalf of the State its community service obligations in an efficient and effective manner; and
- (c) to perform any other objectives specified in the Portfolio Act (State of Tasmania 1995, s7.1(a-c)).

Government Business Enterprises are also expected to pay dividends to the State Government at the end of each financial year. However, there remains considerable criticism of the Forestry Tasmania in this regard (see for example The Wilderness Society (Tasmania) Inc. 2006).

(McDonald 1999). This polarisation is certainly the case in the Huon Valley where there are deep and long-standing divisions about issues of environment and development, particularly those related to forest industries. Indicative of the extent of the division within the Huon Valley's communities of place and interest are simplistic characterisations of pro-forestry and pro-development versus anti-forestry and anti-development positions; with adversaries pitched in bitter and sometimes violent battles over the forests. Many (though by no means all) Geeveston people stand firmly on the pro-development and pro-forestry side and vehemently defend their values.

Geeveston people have suffered considerably from the effects generated by the general contraction of forest industries and by the outcomes of debates over forest (resource) management that have entangled numerous actors in a querulous knot. Four key events, spanning two decades—the closure of the pulp mill at Port Huon, the failure to redevelop that mill, the Helsham inquiry into forest industries in Tasmania, and the proposal to develop an integrated timber processing mill known as Southwood and located elsewhere in the Huon Valley—have particular significance for Geeveston people. Those stories go some way to explaining how Geeveston people became so demoralised by their perceived poor treatment at the hands of government, business and the media and reacted so defensively towards arguments against forest industries in Tasmania.

In Tasmania the management of Tasmania's State-owned forest resources has been a particular focus for criticism by environmentalists²⁵ including but not limited to manatee people who were later involved in the Tasmanian Greens,²⁶ the Wilderness Society, Timber Workers for Forests, Doctors for Forests, the Environmental Defenders Office and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust. Private land to the east and national park to the west adjoin the boundaries of the State

²⁵ I use the term environmentalists here deliberately and want to make a distinction between the term conservationists as many in the Geeveston area and the forest workers to whom I spoke consider themselves conservationists but not environmentalists.

²⁶ The Tasmanian Greens are a political party established in 1992. The Party grew out of the United Tasmania Party, the world's first Green Party formed in 1972 to fight the flooding of Lake Pedder in the State's south-west. An Australian Green Party was formed in 1996.

Forests in the Huon District (Figure 3.4). Conflict over the management of the forest resources in southern Tasmania, began in the early 1970s, and rose to a peak during the 1980s after a burgeoning environmental movement²⁷ in Tasmania was successful in lobbying State and Federal governments to stop the proposed Gordon-below-Franklin hydroelectric dam proposal in July 1983 (Green 1984).

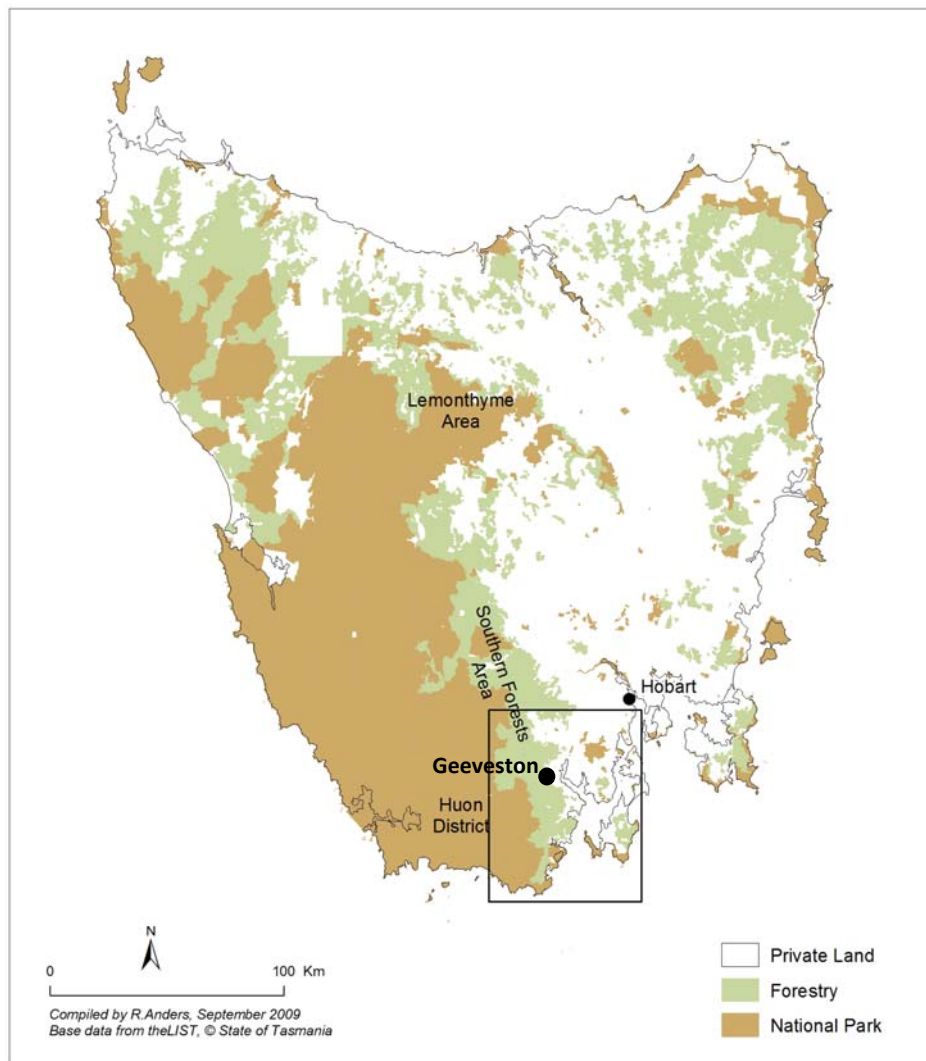


Figure 3.4: Boundaries of State Forests, National Parks and private land including area within the Huon District.

²⁷ The environmental movement in Tasmania began in the late 1960s early 1970s with protests to stop the flooding of Lake Pedder. At that time the first Green Political Party was formed, the United Tasmania Group, and from this point on the environmental movement in Tasmania has gone from strength to strength with the Tasmanian Greens now holding four seats in the Tasmanian House of Assembly.

Events in Tasmania such as the campaign to stop the damming of the Franklin River were instrumental in the rise of Commonwealth intervention in State environmental issues. The success of the Franklin River campaign also strengthened the relationship between the environmental movement and the Labor Party, which held federal government in Australia from 1983 to 1996.

Some of the biggest environmental campaigns fought by the environment movement during this period would be over the need to protect 'wilderness' from 'logging, dams and other threats' (Hutton & Connors 1999, p.170). Tasmania provided a focus for environmental activity during this period as members of the environmental movement and those of the politically powerful forest industry went head to head over access to forest resources in the State. However, similar battles were then also being fought in the forests of Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales (Hutton & Connors 1999).

Over the course of the 1980s, environmentalists turned their attention 'to the forests and the acceleration of clear-felling in wilderness areas and in rural Tasmania' (Gee 2001, p.352). Numerous campaigns to protect forests in Tasmania were undertaken, culminating in the reservation of 1.3 million hectares (20% of the land area of Tasmania) in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in 1989 (Gee 2001; Smith & Banks 1993). Campaigns to include further areas considered of high conservation value continue to date. During casual conversations with a variety of Geeveston people, it became evident to me that the successes of the environmental movement had been perceived by many in Geeveston as the result of unrelenting strategies to "lock up" and erode their access to the forest resources upon which they have depended for over a century, and for which they feel a keen sense of pride, albeit one only recently made explicit.

For some time, Geeveston people had internalised an identity constituted for them by those protesting against forest industries: *we were the bad guys in the finish and I think a lot of people still carry the scars from that* (GCA 09 2000). As noted by the then Manager of Community Development Services,

Geeveston is just coming to terms with its identity. The mill shut, forestry was buggered, the apples were buggered; everything was buggered. I think they are realizing now that forests now have a worth for the production of timber but they also have an interest to the visitor and so maybe we will get that image throughout and maybe it's not such a bad thing after all and maybe we can be proud of it ... they are really just getting confident enough now to say OK timber isn't reliant on a big mill, timber means more to us than that so we don't mind being known as Tasmania's forest town (HVC0 01 2000).

What is clear from these stories is that Geeveston is a place whose people strongly identify with forest industries. Timber extraction and associated industries are important to Geeveston's heritage and its future. Indeed the GSRG draws solidly on Geeveston's past and present engagement in forest industries as a key theme informing the revitalisation of the town's streetscapes and as a means by which to reinforce its (political) identity as the centre of forest industries in southern Tasmania.

The closure of the Port Huon pulp mill

In November 1982, the closure of the Australian Paper Manufacturers (APM) Port Huon pulp mill (planned for Christmas Eve) was announced (Taylor 1983). Operating since 1962, the mill had provided an important source of employment and contributed to the general economic prosperity of Geeveston, buffering its residents from part of the economic downturn resulting from the decline of the apple and pear growing industry (McCuaig & Hoysted 1983). At the point of closure the mill directly employed 64 people and generated indirect employment for approximately 200 others in associated industries such as logging, engineering and the supply of fuel (McCuaig & Hoysted 1983; Taylor 1983). When APM announced the closure it was confident it would be able to reopen the mill again in two years time and, on the strength of such optimism, provided generous retrenchment packages for employees (Taylor 1983).

Those employed at the mill were reportedly disappointed, if unsurprised, by the announcement²⁸ of their imminent retrenchment (*The Mercury* 20.11.1982, p.1). Their disappointment was compounded by the apparently ‘sneaky way’ the company went about announcing the closure, contrasting sharply with APM’s reportedly fair treatment of workers over its 20 years of operation (*The Mercury* 20.11.1982, p.1).

No doubt such actions undermined the trust in the company and contributed to a sense of being let down. Indeed, it is important to stress—in anticipation of work reported in later chapters—just how important trust in business and government were to become for Geeveston people and the Huon Valley Council in the intervening 25 years. As will become clear in later chapters, council actors had to carefully deploy a range of strategies to enhance accountability, transparency and participation and rebuild trust in the activities of local government. The GSRG partnership experiment is key among such techniques of restoring trust and provides evidence for the implementation of what Dean (1999, p.169) describes as technologies of performance: ‘the technical means for locking the moral and political requirements of the shaping of conduct into the optimisation of performance’. Technologies of performance provide opportunities to ‘govern at a distance’ by deploying technologies of agency such as the contract, to develop institutional spaces—for example the Huon Valley Council and the GSRG—as self-managing local centres.

Of the 64 people employed at the mill at the time of closure, 58 were retrenched, one retired and five were transferred to the mainland (Taylor 1983). Some of those retrenched found alternative employment, mostly in the apple and pear growing industry, although that relief was short-lived as employment in that industry continued to contract; others explored opportunities with the then Esperance Council and in relation to anticipated construction of the Gordon-

²⁸ According to (Taylor 1983), the Port Huon mill had retrenched workers in 1968 due to a 20 per cent decrease in production; had temporarily stopped production for several month on 1975; and workers had voted to decrease their working hours to manage a problem of over production in 1978.

below-Franklin Dam²⁹. The effects generated by the mill's closure rippled beyond direct mill employees in ways that paralleled the effects of the restructuring of the fruit growing industries in earlier decades. Nineteen logging contractors engaged by APM to supply wood to the Port Huon mill and their combined 95 employees were also affected (Taylor 1983). Such contractors had significant levels of financial commitments in terms of plant and equipment, a situation that concerned the banks, in particular the Geeveston branch of the Commercial Bank of Australia, the main source of financial lending arrangements for logging contractors in the district (McCuaig & Hoysted 1983). At least one logging contractor affected by the mill closure was able to weather this period by sending two of his truck drivers to work on the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam site, which was to become a site of major environmental conflict shortly thereafter (Taylor 1983).

Some businesses in Geeveston were also affected and three owners reported a large and consistent drop in turnover during 1983 (Taylor 1983). One of them was an engineering works that depended on the Port Huon mill for 20 per cent of its income, providing services to logging contractors who had taken to servicing their own machines as a cost cutting measure (Taylor 1983). Fuel distributors also suffered large losses (Taylor 1983).

Significantly, in the austral summer of 1982-3, environmentalists staged one of the largest protests in Australia at the site of the proposed Gordon-below-Franklin dam. Over 2000 people took part in the blockade (Green, R 1984). The Gordon-below-Franklin dam site is on the west coast of Tasmania near Strahan. Although the protests occurred a significant distance from Geeveston, casual conversations with Geeveston people suggested that the battle deeply confronted them, since many were supportive of the dam and the jobs to be generated by its construction. The timing of the protest was inauspicious:

²⁹ The Hydro-Electric Commission proposed the Gordon-below-Franklin dam in 1979. The proposal was vigorously and successfully fought by the growing environmental movement in Tasmania, with Bob Brown rising to prominence as an environmental activist during what became known as the Battle for the Franklin. The proposal was defeated in 1983.

Greenies have been really good scapegoats when things hit the fan and that was certainly the atmosphere when I was teaching in this community. The Franklin River blockade was on, I stood with Bob Brown on the 'no dams' election – big green flashing stuff and then the pulp mill closed down. Now what is the most convenient thing to do when something like that happens? You find the best diversionary tactics and say they [the greens] did it and so there was this incredibly deceptive push by government and media to lay the closure of the APM mill at the door step of the Greens. It was not in that arena whatsoever (GCA 06, 2000).

While the closure of the Port Huon pulp mill was due to wider economic trends, the mill's failing to reopen did involve the Greens. Indeed from 1983 onwards, the conduct of green politics in Tasmania (and Australia) increased in professionalism and became an integral part of the State's political scene, with a particular focus and impact on forest industries in Tasmania.

Huon Forest Products

Everybody hung their hat for years on APM reopening (GCA 09 2000).

In 1985 a proposal was put forward by Australian Newsprint Mills (ANM) to redevelop the Port Huon pulp mill under the banner of Huon Forest Products and as a new venture to produce cardboard box liner for export to Asia. ANM predicted the venture would directly employ 80 workers and create a further 200 forestry jobs at a time when unemployment rates were especially high and morale was low in Geeveston (*The Mercury*, 23rd Oct. 1992, p.1).³⁰

While Geeveston people were looking forward to some relief from chronic unemployment with the prospect of a redeveloped Port Huon mill, across the Huon River in Cygnet the Huon Protection Group had formed to protest against the proposed redevelopment. Newcomer to the State, Peg Putt, who would later be elected to State Parliament as a member and then as leader of the Tasmanian

³⁰ In 1986 the unemployment rate for Geeveston was 13 per cent, rising to 18 per cent in 1991, before falling again to 15 per cent in 1996 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1986, 1991 & 1996).

Greens between 1998 and 2008³¹, joined the campaign. The group organised public meetings, conducted telephone polls and dropped leaflets providing information about the proposal and its effects different from that being promulgated by the proponents. Geeveston people strongly resisted attempts to quash the proposed development. According to Peg Putt, at all but one of the public meetings people voted against the mill redevelopment; the exception was at Port Huon, 'which was a near riot' (Putt 2001, p.185). There,

Warden Jack Kile declared the meeting on Council property and put notices around advising people not to come, as it was illegal. We went to the Ombudsman, who said, 'you have a right as citizens to have a public meeting on public property,' and advised police protection. The Deputy Police commissioner agreed to defend our legal right. We held the meeting in the park at Port Huon. It was a Sunday, a glorious day. We arrived and there was, I suppose, a vigilante mob from around Geeveston – about 50 of them, led by a couple of local characters of prominence. We had trouble getting our people to come – they were understandably nervous. We had 25 or so. We had an outdoor PA system. I got half way through my speech and the mob hurled abuse. Then for the rest of it Martin _____ spoke and they were even worse, shouting nasty abuse, very personal stuff. It hit the front pages: Protest Meeting Fizzer – all negative (Putt 2001, p.185).

The Huon Protection Group also staged a vigil, setting up a camp on the site of the proposed mill. The vigil lasted six months during which time participants engaged in a number of non-violent action sessions—planting trees, singing, meditating and praying—at the site (Putt 2001) but undoubtedly further aggravating Geeveston people. The mill proposal was defeated when the Tasmanian State Labor Party, under the leadership of Michael Field MHA, signed an accord with five Green Independents (the Tasmanian Greens had not yet

³¹ The Tasmanian Greens is a political party in Tasmania that evolved from the United Tasmania Group. As a political party, the Tasmanian Greens are informed by the principles of ecology, social justice, grassroots democracy and peace. The principles of the Tasmanian Greens are encapsulated in their Charter, reflecting what they describe as 'and awareness of the interrelatedness of all ecological, social, and economic processes' (Tasmanian Greens 2002-2006). The Tasmanian Greens currently hold four seats in 25-member Tasmanian House of Assembly.

formed as a state party) on 29 May 1989 in order to gain government. The Labor-Green Accord contained a specific clause stating: ‘The Huon Forest Products venture will not be allowed to proceed’ (Clause 7 Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord). The decision cost the then Field Labor Government \$3.4 million³² in a compensation payout to Huon Forest Products (Gee 2001).

The success of the Greens in stopping the proposal to redevelop the Port Huon Mill compounded a feeling growing among Geeveston people that the Greens were to blame for the lack of employment and the economic stagnation in the Geeveston locale:

In 1989 there had been a considerable blow struck to the morale and well being of the residents of the Geeveston district. Despite the Herculean efforts of the then warden Mr Jack Kile, who earned the title of “Chainsaw Jack” from the Greens, the Government of the day failed to approve the development of a new mill, and down-stream furniture and veneer mill known as ‘Huon Forest Products’. This was due to the effective intervention of Peg Putt, a Green polliwog (GSRG member 2004).

The animosity of Geeveston people towards the Greens and environmentalists more broadly became entrenched—alongside a growing feeling of distrust of Government—during the course of the Federal Government’s Helsham Inquiry that resulted in further areas of the Tasmanian timber resource being reserved in protected areas.

The Helsham Inquiry

At the same time that community members in Geeveston were fighting with environmentalists over the redevelopment of the Port Huon Mill, a Federal Government inquiry was being conducted into the future of the Lemonthyme³³

³² Unless stated otherwise, all financial references are in Australian currency.

³³ The area of forest referred to as the Lemonthyme covers 14,300 hectares, surrounded in arc to the south by the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and the Central Plateau Conservation Area (Commonwealth of Australia 1988).

and Southern Forests (see Figure 3.4 on page 61). The inquiry was soon named after its presiding member, the Honourable Michael Helsham.

The Helsham Inquiry was performed over 12 months from 8 May 1987 (Commonwealth of Australia 1988) and the outcome of its findings would have (direct and indirect) economic and social impacts for Geeveston people among others. The primary task of the Inquiry was to ‘find out whether in two specified areas of Tasmania—the areas known as the Lemonthyme and Southern Forests—there were any portions that had world heritage status’ and should thus be reserved from harvesting (Commonwealth of Australia 1988, p.1). The Helsham Inquiry resulted in 155,000 hectares of forest being removed from forest production; 4,300 hectares were reserved in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and the remainder in existing and new multiple-use reserves (Forests and Forest Industry Council of Tasmania 1990, p.5). Yet again land was withdrawn from forestry production; however this time the Commonwealth awarded \$42 million ‘to offset the economic impacts of fewer areas being available for wood production’ (Forests and Forest Industry Council of Tasmania 1990, p.7). The Forests and Forest Industry Council was established by the State Government in 1990 to develop recommendations for a strategy for the management of Tasmania’s forests and forest industries and to oversee the allocation of the ‘Helsham compensation’ funds. A sum of just over \$12 million of these funds was directed toward plantation and intensive forest management in the Southern Forests and a further \$1.04 million was provided in an employment and tourism package (Barr 2006). Over \$700,000 of these funds were spent on projects in and around Geeveston, the most substantial being the conversion of the Geeveston Town Hall into the Forest and Heritage Centre in 1991 (Barr 2006).

The privatisation of a substantial proportion of the Town Hall to accommodate the Forest and Heritage Centre was met with a great deal of displeasure from Geeveston people. As described by one participant, the Town Hall was *the only large meeting place* in Geeveston and the conversion of this public resource into the Forest and Heritage Centre was seen as denying *the community the only place where they could hold large community social events* (GSRG member 2004).

Initially the Forest and Heritage Centre was managed and staffed by the former Esperance Council and

for many years those people who worked in the [Forest and]Heritage Centre had no connection with [activities undertaken by] the Geeveston Community Development Association [to improve the town].³⁴ They didn't go to meetings or anything. They had no involvement with us and of course there's a feeling, I think it's Tasmanian, probably everywhere, everyone hates councils you know, it's a tradition I think in Tasmania and so therefore once the [Esperance] Council was running the Heritage Centre people didn't want to get too close to it...you've got to create a climate where people can get involved and if Council is running everything ... there is no opportunity to get involved (HVCO 03 2004).

The lack of community support for the Forest and Heritage Centre has since been overcome by the efforts of the Green Jackets, a group of residents who volunteer as visitor guides at the Centre. The regular presence and visible support of the Forest and Heritage Centre by these Geeveston people resulted in locals taking an interest in their building again. It is notable that after five years there are still 15 of the original 16 members providing this service to visitors to Geeveston and the Forest and Heritage Centre (GSRG member 2004).

The Tasmania-Commonwealth Regional Forest Agreement: an end to debates about the management of forest resources?

In 1992, after decades of conflict over the use of forest resources in Tasmania (as in other states), forest policy in Australia took a significant turn with the introduction of a National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS).³⁵ The NFPS was presented by the Commonwealth as a framework within which to manage the social, economic and ecological values of Australia's native forest resources. The NFPS was implemented through an assessment process described as 'the largest

³⁴ The Geeveston Development Associate predates the GSRG and still exists in Geeveston

³⁵ The NFPS was signed by the Commonwealth and all states except Tasmania that year. Tasmania, the major woodchip exporter in Australia, finally became a signatory to the statement in 1995, around the same time that the Commonwealth declared that a regional forest agreement would have to be completed before woodchips would be licensed for export (Dargaval 1998).

intergovernmental planning activity related to the environment ever undertaken in Australia' (Dargaval 1998, p.25). According to Dargaval (1998, p.25) the purpose of the NFPS and the assessment process was to 'take forest issues off the political agenda by securing Commonwealth, State, environmental and developmental objectives through comprehensive and co-operative processes'. The assessment process in particular was an attempt to find a lasting solution to the conflicts over the competing uses of forest resources, especially those between conservationists and wood production, and the 'conflict between the Commonwealth and State governments, arising from intervention by the Commonwealth in forest management issues' (Ashe 2002, p.156). That process involved an extensive integrated program of environmental, economic and social assessments designed to

bring stability by providing a sustainable resource base for industry and a safer climate for investment, at the same time ensuring adequate protection of Australia's biodiversity, old-growth and wilderness values through a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system and complementary off-reserve management (Tasmanian Public Land Use Commission 1996, p.1).

The process resulted in 11 Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) being established between the Commonwealth and relevant State governments.³⁶ The Tasmania-Commonwealth Regional Forest Agreement (Tasmanian RFA) was signed on 8 November 1997 and remains in force until 2017 (Commonwealth of Australia & State of Tasmania 1997).

RFAs were developed within a wider national policy framework related to the environment and initiated by the Commonwealth in response to the ongoing debate that intensified during the 1980s within Australia and internationally about environmental issues. Such policies include the *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992* (NSED), and *Intergovernmental Agreement on*

³⁶ The two territory governments (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory) were not involved in the RFA process as there is no significant forest related industries and forest management issues in these two jurisdictions.

the Environment 1992 (IGAE). Both of these policies, along with the NFPS, reflect a growing desire on the part of the Commonwealth to work cooperatively with the States and Territories on matters related to environmental management (Tribe 1998). As noted above, during the 1980s under public pressure the Commonwealth had used its constitutional powers to intervene in state decisions over resource management issues.³⁷ However by the end of the 1980s the Commonwealth, realising that such tactics could have adverse political implications, 'began to circumscribe its powers of intervention in environmental affairs and search for more cooperative approaches to Commonwealth-state relations over the environment' (McDonald 1999, p.306).

The Tasmanian RFA was supposed to provide predictability, stability and certainty and put an end to the debate over the use of forest resources, something many Geeveston people and other residents and councillors in the Huon Valley Municipal Area who are supportive of forest industries would have welcomed. Instead, the RFA process and its outcomes have been the subject of concentrated critique³⁸ and according to Majewski (2007, p.1) some ten years after the RFA was negotiated in Tasmania, the

divisive debate over the fate of the state's native forests can still be identified as one of the defining features of the political, social, ideological and economic landscape of the island.

Majewski (2007) discusses in detail the numerous concerns raised about the Tasmanian RFA process. In summary the key concerns include the following: First, while much was made of the apolitical scientific basis upon which the RFA was determined, concerns were raised about the way in which the science about the forests was interpreted and translated into policy by policy-makers to achieve

³⁷ Examples of Commonwealth interference in environmental issues in Tasmania include the Franklin-below-Gordon dam decision, the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill and the Helsham Inquiry over access to the forest resources of the Lemonthyme and Southern Forests.

³⁸ For two critiques of the Tasmanian RFA process, see Kirkpatrick (1998) and Majewski (2007). For critiques of the RFA process in general or in other Australian states see for example Ashe (2002), Brueckner (2007), Dargaval (1998), McDonald (1999), and Musselwhite and Herath (2007).

their own objectives. In other words, an apparently neutral and thorough process was riven with relations of power that blurred the dividing line between rationality and rationalization (Flyvbjerg 1998). Second, the inclusion of the vast quantity of scientific evidence generated as part of the RFA process appeared 'selective'. Third, insufficient time was allocated to the complex process of mapping vegetation types and resulted in poorly-constructed vegetation community classifications which critically compromised the scientific basis of the Tasmanian RFA. Fourth, while there was extensive community consultation about the RFA, insufficient weight was given to these consultation processes in the drafting of the agreement. Furthermore, these consultation processes were perceived by various government and community actors as supporting particular interest groups. Last, the final stages of the RFA decision-making process were seen to lack transparency. Two further concerns relate to the degree to which the Commonwealth has transferred its authority to the states, which has both disabled Commonwealth environmental legislation as it applies to forests and reduced any consideration of indigenous rights in the forests (Dargaval 1998, Rangan, 2001 #1098). Majewski (2007, p.50) concludes that the fundamental problem with the RFA process relates to the fact that it 'utilised a technocratic veneer of 'scientific' legitimacy to try and resolve an intrinsically value-laden and ideologically grounded debate'. As noted by Lane (1999, p.143 & 151, original emphasis), the RFA process succeeded 'in helping the Commonwealth *manage* the politics of forest conflict', but through the 'bureaucratisation and de-politicisation of forestry', was 'poorly equipped to *resolve* conflict' and reconcile competing ideologies in forest use.

Thus it is not surprising that the forest conflict remains a powerfully volatile force in Tasmanian local and state politics. As noted by Majewski (2007, p.57) and made evident in conversations with Geeveston people and others in the Huon Valley, almost 'every Tasmanian possesses a well-formed and often vocal opinion on the forests and forestry practices within the state'. There is a sense among many that the debate is 'hopelessly entrenched [and] publicly framed in oppositional terms ... [such as] 'workers'/'greenies' and '(native) forests'/'jobs' ... which acts to reduce complex debate to two choices' (Majewski 2007, p.57).

Such antagonism further cements unproductive and damagingly polarised relationships between warring adversaries within Tasmania's communities of place and interest. A recent example in the Huon Valley, to which I now turn, relates to the proposal to develop an integrated timber processing site in the Huon Valley. This proposal further revealed antagonisms among the Valley's residents and political representatives profoundly influencing governing practices in the Huon Valley during the period in which I gathered the data for this research.

"Southwood" Wood Centre Development

In September 2001, Forestry Tasmania put forward a proposal to develop an integrated timber processing site in the Huon Valley. The potential employment and other economic opportunities of that new proposal were welcomed by many in Geeveston (Huon Valley Council 2002: 26 February). The Southwood Wood Centre Development (hereafter referred to as Southwood) was designed 'to promote the expansion and diversification of forest-based industries' in southern Tasmania (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001b, p.3). After the closure of the APM pulp mill in Port Huon, timber harvested from the Southern Forests was no longer processed locally; instead the majority was transported to one of three processing plants in the east, north or north-west of the State³⁹. The export of raw logs from the Huon District State Forest reportedly reduced the socio-economic benefits to the Huon Valley and resulted in lower returns to Forestry Tasmania (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001b). Forestry Tasmania (2001b) viewed the Southwood development as key to addressing these diseconomies by centralising local value-added processing in that region.

³⁹ All three of these woodchip processing or pulp mills are owned and operated by Gunns Limited, a company that holds a majority market share in forest industries in the State. The head office of Gunns Limited is located in Launceston in northern Tasmania with branches in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. Gunns has proposed to develop a fourth pulp mill on the Tamar River near its existing Bell Bay mill. The proposal has become a significant environmental and political issue at the State and Federal levels, similar to that generated by the Wesley Vale pulp mill proposed in the late 1980s. The Wesley Vale pulp mill was unsuccessful.

Value-added hardwood products are manufactured on a central site within the forests allowing for local employment opportunities and improved transport efficiencies due to the hardwood resource being hauled to a site within the local region as opposed to more distant locations outside of the Huon District (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001b, p.3).

The site proposed for the Southwood development occupies about 90 hectares of State Forest at Weld Road, Lonnavele, near the confluence of the Arve and Huon Rivers approximately 25 km due west of Huonville and 16 km north northwest of Geeveston (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001b, p. 26). The site includes a '20 metre wide corridor to the Huon River to accommodate a pumping station and rising main supplying water to the proposed industrial complex' (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2002. p.1). Forestry Tasmania proposed to develop the site to an investment-ready state with a view to attracting private sector investment to develop the planned timber-processing facilities. Such facilities included a merchandising yard, regrowth sawmill, rotary peeled veneer mill, a wood fibre production facility and wood-residue-fired power station (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001b).

The Southwood development proposal was submitted to the Huon Valley Council in September 2001. The progress of the Southwood proposal through the State Government's planning and development approval process under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (LUPAA)⁴⁰ was characterised by considerable conflict in the Huon Valley and it dominated political and governance activities

⁴⁰ The *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, makes provision for land use planning and approvals in Tasmania. The objectives of the Act are as follows:

- (a) to promote the sustainable development of natural and physical resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity; and
- (b) to provide for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land and water; and
- (c) to encourage public involvement in resource management and planning; and
- (d) to facilitate economic development in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c); and
- (e) to promote the sharing of responsibility for resource management and planning between the different spheres of Government, the community and industry in the State (State of Tasmania 1993, Schedule 1, s.1(a-e)).

during my field work. Interviews with Huon Valley Councillors and observations of council meetings, councillors, council staff and community actors were coloured by the protracted and bitter conflict over the Southwood proposal specifically and by local and State governing practices in relation to forest industries more generally.

The intensity of feeling in the Huon Valley over the Southwood development approval process was reflected in the number, type and conduct of people attending Huon Valley Council meetings. Throughout the period of my observations of these meetings, the public gallery was unusually full to overflowing. Yet according to numerous participants, at other times, as few as four or five members of the public typically attend Council meetings. The public gallery was equally divided between supporters and detractors, and Council discussions were often interrupted by heckling from members of the public. Indeed, on one occasion, the entire public gallery was ejected from the meeting by the Mayor. Additionally, members of the public attempted to use public question time as a political forum to argue for or against the proposal. GSRG members were among those in the public gallery and their efforts to attend Council meetings reflect a growing mood in Geeveston intent on ensuring strong resistance to environmentalist agenda generally imposed from outside the locale and thought to be a threat to opportunities for economic development in the Huon Valley and of forest industries in particular.

The controversy generated by the Southwood proposal was so pervasive that Huonville solicitor, Tim Tierney, convened the Southwood Community Advisory Group (SCAG). Its self-imposed purpose as a regional advisory group was to

review community and business concerns; provide advice to Forestry Tasmania on regional development impacts; provide comment on proposed approaches to mitigating community issues; propose recommendations to enhance the proposed community benefits from the development; identify and comment on related community concerns; assist identification of “offsets” that might be provided where impacts cannot be mitigated; [and] principally focus on issues within the

Huon Valley but may need in that context to comment on related issues (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001a, p. 51)

SCAG invited the GRSG to nominate from among its members someone to join these deliberations; Cr Laurie Dillon took on that role. That engagement further underscores the links forged and maintained among Geeveston people, other Huon Valley interests and the forestry industry in the face of what were seen as threats and opposing values.

The Southwood proposal required an amendment to the Huon Planning Scheme. Planning schemes are the key regulatory instrument used by local government to ‘set out the requirements that apply to new use and development’ (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003, p. 9). Under *LUPAA*, which governs the preparation and administration of, planning scheme amendments must be assessed by the Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC).⁴¹ The RPDC assessment process includes substantial opportunities for public input through the written and verbal submissions made to it. Of the 216 public submissions to the Southwood assessment process, 66 were in favour of the development and 25 of these were made by Geeveston people. Five of those Geeveston people who made submissions attended the hearing to make their case to the Commissioners. Arguments in support of the development cited the opportunities it presented in terms of job creation and downstream processing and value adding in the Huon Valley. Numerous other benefits were listed including the more efficient and better use of timber resources and waste materials and the use of regrowth timber rather than old growth in what they considered to be an environmentally sound and sustainable development (Huon Valley Council 2002: 26 February). Of the 150 submissions made against the proposed development, the majority raised concerns about road safety and traffic issues; questioned whether the development was consistent with the sustainable development

⁴¹ The Resource Planning and Development Commission is a statutory body formed under the *Resource Planning and Development Commission Act 1997* to oversee ‘the State’s planning system, state of the environment reporting and assesses draft State policies, public land use issues and projects of State significance’ (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2007, p.5).

objectives of *LUPAA*; commented upon the potential adverse environmental impacts of the development; challenged the real economic value of the project; queried the potential adverse impacts on other businesses; and lamented the lack of public consultation (Huon Valley Council 2002: 26 February).

The perceived threat to the proposal presented by the anti-Southwood protest led to a rise in the participation of Huon Valley residents in local government. Their participation contrasts with what was normally otherwise the widespread and generally pervasive lack of participation in council and local government activities. Groups such as Citizens for Southwood were formed with significant local input in an effort to lobby local and State governments. Members of that group did attend Huon Valley Council meetings, submitted petitions and made submissions to the RPDC assessment process in support of the proposal. This trend in increased *active* participation in government and governance was explained by one Councillor in the following terms:

I think our very survival depends on it, I think they've woken up to the fact that we can no longer sit back and hope it all goes away ... [Citizens for Southwood] and the GSRG realize that if they don't do something now then they're just going to be washed aside in the flood of controversy (HVCR 09, 2003).

The local government election in the Huon Valley in 2000 and by-elections in 2001 were also affected by the Southwood proposal. In relation to the latter, Waterhouse (2001, p.18) reported that the

by-elections for the Huon Valley Council are shaping up as anything but ordinary. Against the backdrop of the proposed Southwood integrated timber processing development ... the two by-elections take on an extraordinary significance.

This observation was supported by a Huon Valley Councillor who claimed that *the whole election was pretty much based on Southwood (HVCO 07, 2002).*

Another commented that the election was *not about corporate governance or running the council or any of those issues; it's all about Southwood (HVCO 04,*

2002). Yet another councillor told me that one person elected during this period had

tried to get on council for as long as I can remember ... and ... if Southwood wouldn't have been on the agenda ... I don't think he would have had a hope; it was just that he was so vocal ... that people for Southwood ... voted for him for that reason (HVCR 07).

That councillor's subsequent electoral success may also be partly attributed to the adoption of 'new' tactics by pro-forestry/pro-development candidates, who referred to themselves as the Futures Team. The Tasmanian Greens have for some time used the system of running candidates in an election on a ballot ticket to enable the distribution of preferences among candidates and to aid in pre-election advertising. In an effort to combat this strategy, which had proven successful, members of the Futures Team emulated their adversaries in the lead-up to the 2000 and 2002 local government general elections and the 2001 by-election. Once confident that they could secure the majority of the vote without resorting to such tactics, but then increasingly threatened by electoral successes among the Greens, the Futures Team decision to imitate these strategies may be seen as a 'maturation' of their political *savoir-faire*. In the 2002 election, a combination of the political climate of the day and the adoption of these new tactics resulted in seven members of the Futures Team being elected to council, with only two councillors, one Independent and one Greens, opposing them⁴².

Some older-style tactics were also deployed during the Southwood crisis, including lobbying of councillors by other councillors and industry leaders. One case is particularly illustrative of some of those tactics and tensions. A motion was put before Council by Cr Thomas (Greens) to call for the end of old-growth logging in the Huon Valley. The motion read as follows.

⁴² The composition of the Huon Valley Council prior to this election had consisted of two Independent councillors, two Greens councillors and five councillors that later also became Futures Team members.

In acknowledging the road blockade in the Weld Valley, the Huon Valley Council heeds the call of the vast majority of Tasmanians recognised by the Tasmania Together consultation process, 80% of Tasmanians identified in other surveys, a great many visitors, and numerous resident and non-resident ratepayers, and calls on the State and Federal Governments to legislate to end the logging of the old growth forest estate in the Huon Valley municipality, in particular the Weld, Picton and Huon Valleys (Huon Valley Council 2002a: 12 February, p.3).

One Huon Valley councillor, who supported the Southwood proposal because he believed it would only use regrowth timber, also supported the philosophy of this motion. However there were aspects of it with which he was unhappy and he planned to put forward an amendment. He told me that, over the preceding month, he had been contacted and lobbied so often by *most of the councillors who had been voting for Southwood*, that he told them not to *bother ringing me; my phone will be off* (HVCR 07, 2002). He also told me that he was later confronted by several pro-Southwood councillors who asked him:

“What are you going to do with this motion? Which way are you going to vote?”
Their fears were that ... if the wrong message was sent from the Huon it could be detrimental to Southwood (HVCR 07, 2002).

With his confidence undermined and a clear sense of having been bullied, he organised a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Forestry Tasmania and the Mayor of the Huon Valley Council in order to get more information about the potential impact of calling for an end to old growth logging. There, he was encouraged to

“just think about what you’re doing” ... if I was successful in stopping old growth it would cost forestry Tasmania and the people of Tasmania 14 million dollars ... and I had these other four sitting there saying “and the people in the veneer plant in Boyer will lose their jobs and will all be on my head” ... and then to make matters worse two days earlier all this [forest contractors’] equipment had been

vandalized⁴³ ... [and] you can imagine the talk around Geeveston at that point... and [the other councillors were saying] “how could you move a motion like this after what's just happened in Geeveston?” So it became a no-win situation ... the _____ rang and asked me what I was going to do. I said I don't think I'm going to move the amendment [to the motion] (HVCR 07, 2002).

In the end, however, the councillor did vote for a motion to end old growth logging, put forward by Cr Thomas and amended by Cr Coad.

Cr _____ completely threw the wild card in when he nearly word-for-word put the amendment up I was going to move, and as soon as he did that I felt there's no way I can vote against this ... he really ... pushed me in to a corner ... I looked at [_____] when the vote was taken; I know he couldn't believe it and [nor could] [Citizens for Southwood] ... But when I was driving home I just really suddenly felt good (HVCR 07, 2002).

The activities surrounding the Southwood development show the extent to which local government decision-making processes, in this case development approval and planning processes, are *challenged by the differential exercise of power*. Local and State government planning decisions have *a direct effect on individuals and institutions and the stakes are almost always high... Whatever tactic can be employed is usually put to use* (Key Informant 07 2008). Indeed, according to one senior planner in the RDPC, the handling of the Southwood development proposal process by the Huon Valley Council and Huon Valley residents *demonstrates a long-standing concern among some in State Government that councils are not capable of acting in their role as a planning authority* (Key Informant 07, 2008). A further technical challenge for the council related to the fact that the Southwood development proposal *had impacts outside of the Huon Valley municipal area and*

⁴³ According to news reports, \$3 million damage was done to logging equipment in two forest coups near Geeveston. An excavator was used to rip apart other excavators and fires set in some equipment. Contracting agents/owners stood down 14 contractors as a result of the incident (Rose, D & Waterhouse 2002).

*the planning legislation had no capacity to account for this fact (HVCO 04, 2009).*⁴⁴

The Southwood development proposal was approved by the RPDC in June 2002. The announcement was made by the then Deputy Premier, Paul Lennon MHA, who reportedly stated that ‘the independent umpire has given the value-added Southwood-Huon project the green light’ and this was ‘great news for the Huon Valley, the timber industry and Tasmania’ (*The Huon Valley News*, 10.7.2002, p.1). Forestry Tasmania predicted that the Southwood development (which was subsequently renamed Newood Sustainable Systems) would create up to 250 new jobs and direct approximately \$40 million into the Tasmanian economy (Forestry Tasmania & SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd 2001b).

Nevertheless, at the time of writing, among Huon Valley community actors there remain deep and long-standing divisions that are most apparent in relation to conflicts over resource use and management, and forestry in particular. These divisions are manifest in terms of the disparate values that council and community actors hold about how to govern the resources of the municipal area, of which Southwood is just one example. As noted by one councillor,

they say that Southwood has divided the Valley, but that division was always there, it’s just brought it [to the surface]. It’s always been for and against in the Valley ... it’s [differences in] lifestyle and way of life thinking (HVC 02 2002).

A similar observation was made by the RPDC (2002, p.33) in its evaluation of the conflict surrounding the Southwood development proposal.

What the Southwood debate has illustrated is a clash of alternate visions of the future. Both visions have found sincere and passionate support within the Huon Valley community. One vision is based on a traditional model of ‘value-adding’

⁴⁴ These impacts included a proposal for a new port at Electrona, an old industrial estate to the east of the Huon Valley within the Kingborough municipal area; the use of Macquarie St, one of two arterial roads that pass through the Hobart CBD, by log trucks; the proposal to construct a road linking the Huon Valley to the Derwent Valley and other effects of Southwood on logging activities within that municipal area.

through intensification of established forestry practices and integration of the supply chain to produce large volumes of industrial commodities (woodchips, sawn timber, plywood-grade veneer, electricity) for a global market place within an industrial complex funded by global investors. The other vision, perhaps less specific and tangible, called for a diversification away from 'industrialised forestry'; preferring to harness other local resources (including fine timbers, agricultural products, wilderness, landscapes, human creativity and skill) to generate local wealth through many small businesses that could offer unique products and recreational experiences both to Tasmanians and visitors from around the world. These two views are at opposite ends of a spectrum that spans the whole range of possible futures. Both claim to be 'sustainable' and operating on principles of sustainable management of resources over many decades to come. They need not be mutually exclusive views and the emerging reality is likely to contain elements of both visions.

It was evident in my conversations with councillors that many of them struggle with how to govern such a divided community and in such a divided Council room. When asked about how Council is working to manage the competing interests within the municipal area one councillor admitted *we're not ... We're poles apart at the moment ... I don't know how we can get back together...* (HVCR 02 2002). Other Councillors have expressed similar concerns.

I don't think the community could be any more divided or the Council itself ... I see a lot of the division with votes on Council ... a particular councillor will vote the way of another councillor, regardless of which way he votes (HVCR 07 2002).

Council has got some work to do in bringing the community back together... I think Southwood has been very divisive... I honestly don't know how we're going to do it (HVCR 01 2002).

In the wake of Southwood, bringing the community back together in practice appeared to mean winning the balance of power in Council, which, as noted earlier, was achieved at the 2002 election. The legacy of the Southwood assessment process was still evident in the Huon Valley Council a year after the

development application had been approved, as described by a newly elected councillor to me in 2004.

I can understand why [councillors] are defensive ... during the Southwood debate ... everything got out of hand. There was no ground given to anyone and ... I think it may be that it's the same nucleus of people still asking the same questions and still insinuating the same issues that they've had in the last fight ... I think it's just more or less "not you again", "not the same question, I answered last time and I answered that the time before and I answered that the time before" and I think they're just fed up ... the ground rules have been set (HVCRC 09, 2003).

The politics that influence governing practices in the Huon Valley which were brought into sharp relief by the Southwood development proposal are but an example of the broader status of politics of Tasmania, described by Hay (2000, no page number) as 'extraordinary', 'volatile' and fashioned by the following 'contrary ingredients':

An economy devoid of dynamism, a persistent cargo-cult mindset that yearns for a single whopper industry that will turn sleepy hollow into the thrumming engine of industry, an elite based upon old pastoral money, an unimaginative, intellectual conformity that has remained constant since the totalitarianism of convictism, a robust and in-your-face indigenous movement, and a magnificent temperate wilderness ...

Loss through local government amalgamations

A third story of loss that enriches an understanding of the emergence, activities and effects of the GRSG and highlights the interrelationships among community capacity building, place-making and governance relates to the dissolution of the region's council (the Esperance Council located in Geeveston). Such dissolutions were a common event and part of a state-wide process of local government modernisation undertaken from 1991 to 1993 (and is described in detail in Chapter 4). This loss of the seat of government was felt keenly in Geeveston, compounding a sense of Huonville's suzerainty as more and more services were rationalised and relocated there.

Local government in Tasmania has developed over time from a plethora of single-issue boards, trusts and municipalities with various responsibilities (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2003). First attempts at local representative government took the form of road districts established in 1840. Local boards of trustees were elected by landowners to maintain secondary and bye-roads. This system remained in place until 1906-07, forming the basis for the development of a multitude of other single-issue boards that complicated local government of the day (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2003). Local councils first emerged in 1852 with the establishment of seven member councils for the towns of Launceston and Hobart, under the *Hobart Town and Launceston Municipal Council Act*. In 1858, rural districts gained the right to municipal government with the passing of the *Rural Municipalities Act 1858*. By 1899, there were 366 local bodies in the colony, including

21 municipalities, 102 road trusts, 34 fruit boards, 37 cemetery trusts, 30 recreation grounds trusts, 79 local boards of health, 43 boards of education advice, 20 town boards, 63 main road boards and several water trusts (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2003, p.3).

This plethora of boards and trusts was abolished in the wake of the *Local Government Act 1906*, which introduced compulsory municipalisation and established municipal boundaries for 51 local government areas that remained

more or less in place until the mid 1980s (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2003). By 1990, after inquiries in 1939 and 1965, the number of these municipalities had been reduced to 46 (Vince 1997). Then, from 1991 local government in the State was *modernised* as part of a national process of public sector rationalisation. In 1993, many councils were amalgamated, resulting in a new municipal landscape of only 29 local government areas by year's end. Before these changes took effect, the Huon Valley comprised three municipal areas, Esperance, Huon and Port Cygnet (Figure 3.5, also see Figure 3.6 on page 88). Recalling that the offices of the erstwhile Esperance Council had been located in the main street of Geeveston in the building that now houses the Forest and Heritage Centre, in 1993 the 'new' Council offices⁴⁵ were centralised in Huonville, a 20-minute drive north from Geeveston.

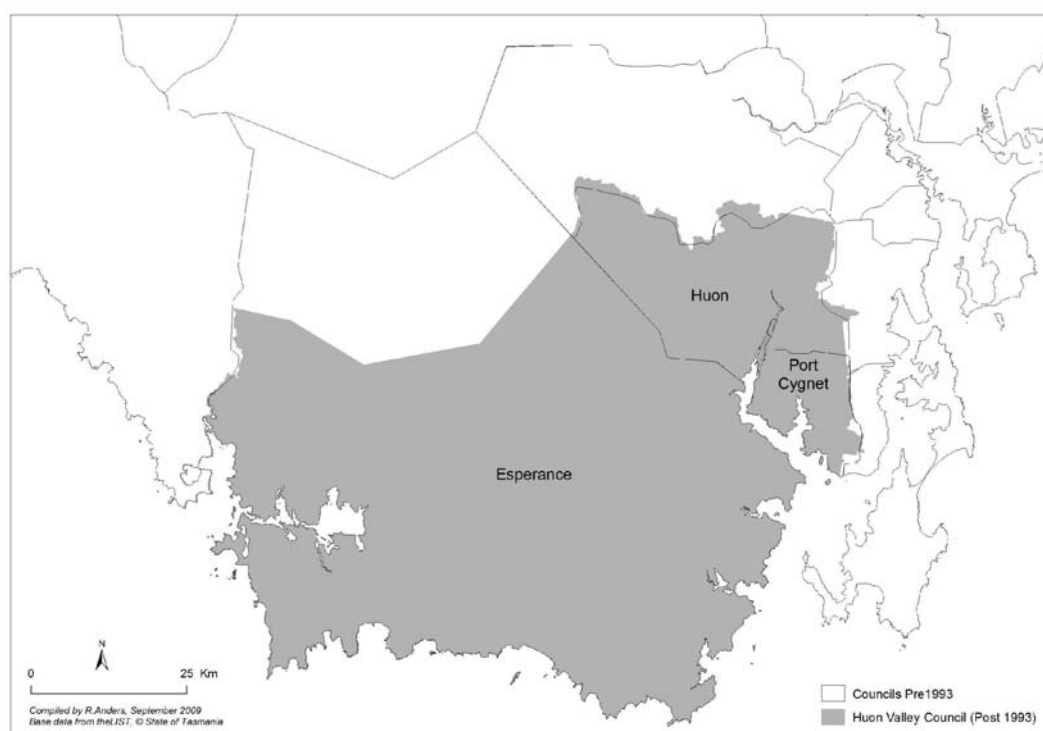


Figure 3.5: Huon Valley Council was formed by amalgamating three municipal areas: Esperance, Huon and Port Cygnet.

⁴⁵ In fact the 'new' council offices of the Huon Valley Council were located in the 'old' buildings that once housed the offices of the erstwhile Huon Council.

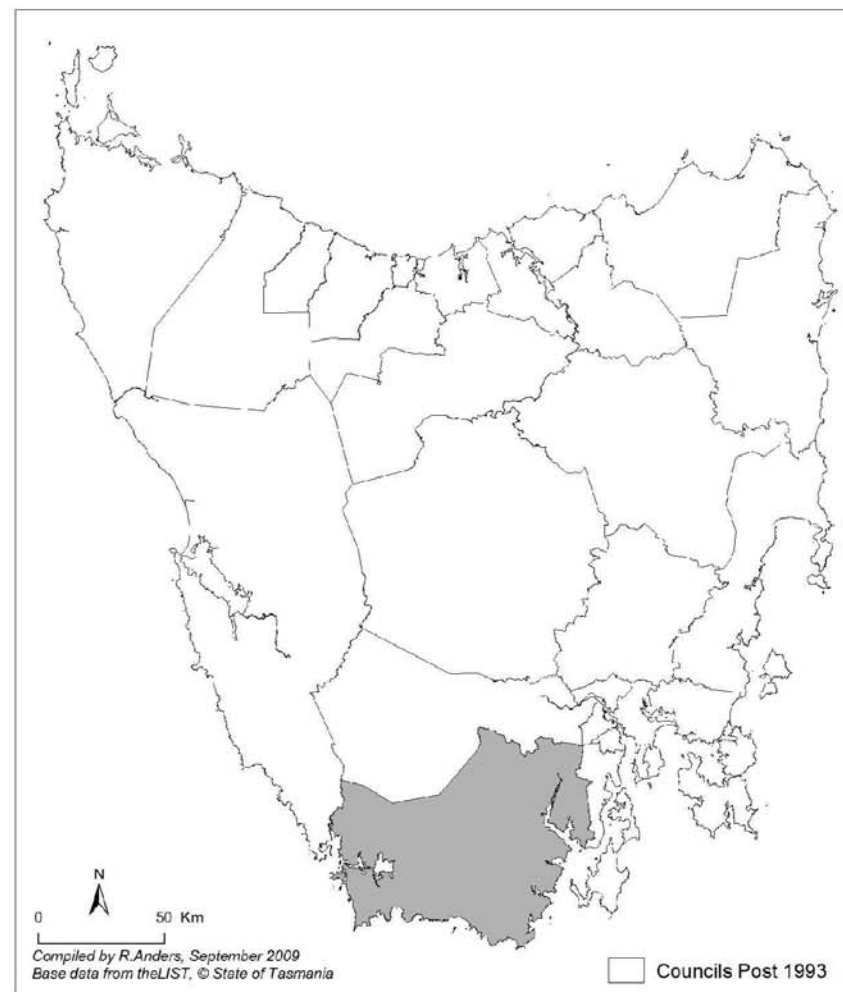
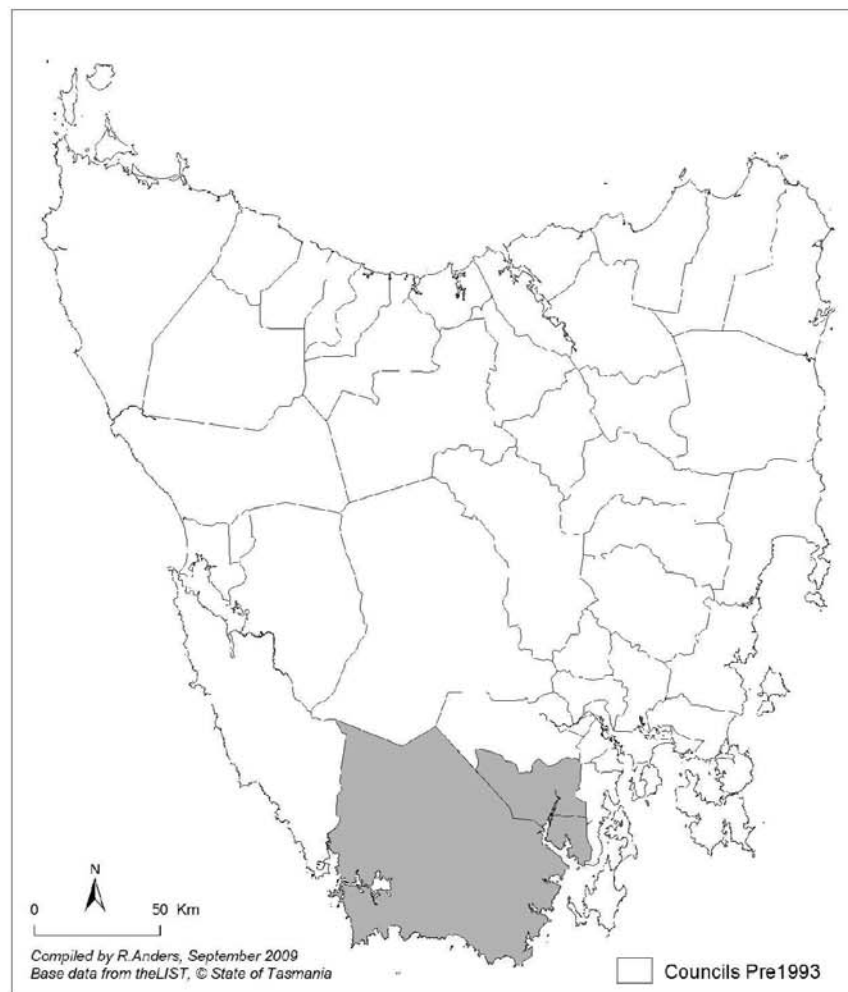


Figure 3.6 Municipal boundaries in Tasmania pre and post 1993

Amalgamation resulted in the centralisation of the Esperance and Port Cygnet council offices in Huonville: *that went down like lead balloons 10 fold over with local communities because they were very attached to their councils ... their council was very much a focus* (HVCO 03 2003). Certainly, the Esperance Council had provided a focus for the sense of community and civic activity by Geeveston people, who described feeling more connected to the smaller local council than to a larger distant one. Geeveston people also considered the service provided by Esperance Council staff to be more personalised than that meted out by the Huon Valley Council which replaced it.

There used to be little councils; well I can understand why there's not, but that was also more of a focus for the community to be together ... when Geeveston had their own council you knew who to ring to get the water ... people were known, but now... I guess that has had an effect on the community as well; because you don't have that personal contact, you don't feel as important or [as much a] part of it (GCA 07 2000).

The effects of amalgamation were experienced differently across the Huon Valley. However, in general the process was felt to have entrenched negative relationships between local government and community actors. Councillors, council staff and community actors were not ready for the adjustments that followed amalgamation.

Bringing the three communities together was really difficult and I suppose in lots of ways we did it badly. I think in the first part ... because of the real difficulties of just bringing the three councils together into one. The new council was basically financially unsustainable at that stage. There were no resources to actually set up a proper administrative centre, because all the resources were channelled into the development of infrastructure ... The Council was just overwhelmed ... by the low standard of infrastructure ... The Council made some really hard decisions at the beginning which also put them offside with the community... so the Council was coming from a fair way back to try and actually meld the three communities together (HVCO 03 2003).

Such decisions included increases in the cost of rates in 1993 and again in 1994 to pay for urgent infrastructure improvements. Numerous non-compliant waste disposal sites were closed, a move perceived by community actors as a reduction in services.

While amalgamations were the most immediate and tangible outcome, they were only one aspect of a larger local government reform agenda in Tasmania that reflected many of the principles underpinning public sector reforms in Australia since the 1970s (noted earlier and grounded further with discussions in Chapter 4)

Cumulative effects and ‘victim identities’

it was a combination of losses ... I mean we can all accept the fact that we’re going to lose one, we’re going to win one, but it was a combination of just loss after loss after loss after loss. Pretty soon in [the] mind [of Geeveston people] ... it was a fact of life (GCA 11, 2000).

In Geeveston, the cumulative effects of the changes described above were profound. In the space of a decade or so, the town’s major employer (APM), the banks and the Council were lost. As a consequence many of the community’s leaders were also lost to out-migration (GCA 02, 2001). Following these losses other businesses began to close and long-term community members departed to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Many houses were placed on the market and in most cases vendors were unable to sell quickly (if at all) even though prices were very low. Service rationalisation and consolidation in Huonville meant that remaining Geeveston residents had to travel to that regional centre for banking, shopping, municipal and other services, which contributed to declining input into the local economy.

The majority of Geeveston people characterised the changes they had experienced as negative, imposed on them from outside the community by forces beyond their control (Armstrong 2000). They positioned themselves as victims of the changes experienced. Their ability to respond diminished, damaged or broken by the effects of change and therefore requiring the intervention of external actors to manage a response (Gibson, Cameron & Veno 1999). They had internalised a perception of self and/or community identity that eroded their collective sense of competence and confidence (Durrant & Kowalski 1990). However, there were a few Geeveston people who consistently worked to improve the prospects of realising economic security in the face of and in response to change.

These community leaders and champions deployed a range of strategies and tactics, individually and collectively, targeted in one way or another and with differential effect, at managing the effects of change. One strategy involved the participation in a form of activism (retaliation) in relation to the threat to the security of forest industries as described above. In some cases the tactics deployed during this period were quite violent, in particular where groups of forest workers and environmental activists met face to face in the forests (Gee 2001). These Geeveston people and other forest workers were defending their perceived rights to earn what they considered a legitimate livelihood.

Other strategies focused on improving economic security and social well-being within Geeveston and immediate environs. For example, to combat the economic leakage from Geeveston, a group of 15 Geeveston business people formed the Geeveston Traders in 1989 to promote Geeveston as a commercial centre⁴⁶ encouraged residents to shop locally and coordinated advertising and other promotional activities (*Huon Valley News*, 1st June, 1989). The Geeveston Traders later became involved in community events with financial and in-kind assistance from the Esperance Council. It operated for a number of years before becoming an incorporated community development association in 1993, opening up opportunities to access a wider range of funding opportunities offered by State Government agencies.⁴⁷ The move to incorporate was driven by a key figure in Geeveston, Cr Laurie Dillon. He has lived in Geeveston since 1974 and, with his wife, owns and

⁴⁶ Membership soon expanded to 23 and included, the Geeveston Supermarket, Conner's Shoeland, Flair 'n' Fabrics, Geeveston Electrical, Geeveston Butchery, Clenn's Southern Hardware, Snippits Hair Salon, K & A Clark BP Geeveston, W.J.Trevaskis (Chemist), Ganes Food Wizard, Savings Bank of Tasmania, Esperance Video, Geeveston Newsagency, J.B.Nicholas and Son, Southern Chainsaws, New and Near New, Thistle Milk Bar, Corner Pizza Take Away, Shell Geeveston, Westpac Banking Group, Esperance Drapery, P.L. & J.L. Russell Caltex Geeveston, Country Kitchen Bakery (*Huon Valley News*, 1st June, 1989, p.12). The number and variety of businesses listed here illustrate the vibrancy of Geeveston at that time. Of these businesses only nine remain today, although new businesses have been established in Geeveston due in part to the work of the GSRG on township beautification and the success of Forestry Tasmania's tourism venture in the Southern Forests, the Tahune AirWalk, which opened in July 2002. Geeveston provides a gateway to the Tahune AirWalk and many tourists have been stopping in the town on their way to and from this highly successful tourism venture.

⁴⁷ For example, Geeveston Community Development Association was awarded \$17,000 by the Tasmanian Community Fund in 2005 to build a platypus walk along the banks of the Kermadie River that flows through Heritage Park. Other State programs the Association could access include Arts Tasmania Assistance to Organisations Program, Sport and Recreation Tasmania Grant Programs, and Office of Children and Youth Affairs Grants.

operates the Geeveston Post Office. Dillon has been a Huon Valley Councillor since 1994, is currently Deputy Mayor, and has been instrumental in driving local actions to manage change in Geeveston.

The Geeveston Traders' metamorphosis into a community association coincided with the declining economic prosperity of the town and the closure of many local businesses which had resulted in the declining relevance of a group consisting entirely of local business owners. In 1993, the Association, led by Dillon, initiated a community project to develop an area of land (at that time owned by the Esperance Council) in the centre of town into what became an award winning development known as Heritage Park (Figure 3.7).

The building of Heritage Park in the early 1990s provided a catalyst for change in Geeveston, particularly in terms of how Geeveston people represented the value of the township to the local community and how they saw their position in the Huon Valley and more broadly within the Tasmanian geo-political and socio-economic landscape. According to one community leader, critical to this process of (re)constituting aspects of a Geeveston identity were the needs to mobilise large numbers of people to build the park in the first instance and then to assist with running major events in the park (HVCR 03, 2000). Reportedly, 140 volunteers worked together to create Heritage Park (*Huon Valley News*, 2 March, 1995, p.2).⁴⁸ Geeveston people were also able to mobilise resources from outside the community. The Geeveston Community Development Association was awarded support from North Forest Products valued at \$14,000 as this local timber growing and processing firm provided 500 seedlings and expert advice from its staff (*Huon Valley News*, 14 July, 1994, p.10).

⁴⁸ The work of another community group in Geeveston was critical to the long term viability of Heritage Park. The Kermandie Landcare Group removed willows from the Kermandie River and other waterways around the Geeveston Township. Prior to their removal the crack willows had contributed to severe flooding of the Kermandie River, which runs along the bottom of the park site (map). Cr Dillon was also a leading and most active member of this group.



Figure 3.7: Heritage Park, Geeveston

As with later events, the opening of Heritage Park provided an opportunity for politicians to reinforce their political position among Geeveston people and other members of the Franklin electorate. The then Premier, Ray Groom MHA, officially opened Heritage Park on 26 February 1995 paying ‘tribute to the local Geeveston community for their dedication’ in working together to create the park (*Huon Valley News*, 2 March, 1995, p.2). The Premier went further, commending ‘the local Huon Valley community for its strong support of the Tasmanian forest industry’, rallying support from this forest industry’s heartland by observing that people ‘who are dependent on forestry are united as never before and they are ready to fight for their right to earn a decent living’ (*Huon Valley News*, 2 March, 1995, p.2).

Heritage Park has become a valuable asset in the community, and numerous events have been held in the park, providing ongoing community capacity building and economic opportunities. In 1998, the Taste of the Huon, a major yearly tourism event promoting Huon Valley and Tasmanian produce, was held in a location of Heritage Park after community leaders succeeded in convincing an apparently reluctant organising committee of the site’s suitability. The event was a huge success and an estimated 13-14,000 people attended (*The Mercury*, 2 March, 1998, p.10; *The Mercury*, 3 March, 1998, p.7). This achievement was cited as a critical *turning point where the community started to really get involved and take notice of where Geeveston was going* (HVCR 03 2003). The mobilisation of 60 to 80 volunteers to help run the two-day event is thought to have had a significant influence in renewing community members’ interest in the future of their town (HVCR 03 2003). Of further importance was the opportunity for Geeveston people and visitors (especially those from Tasmania) to see the town in a positive light after many years of being characterised as a place few would want to visit. This (re)constituted a Geeveston identity was hoped by some locals to provide a much-needed boost to morale.

A busy Neil Merdivenci of Huon Pizzas said people from all around Tasmania attended and the feedback was excellent. “This will lift the spirits of Geeveston immensely” ... “It makes us realise how lucky we are to live in such a great place”. Huon character and mushroom producer John Caire, at his sixth festival, said the festival gave the town a chance to boost its outlook. “Geeveston has been struggling with low self-esteem; this is such a great opportunity for the town to show a new face” (*The Mercury*, 2 March, 1998, p.10).

According to one research participant (HVCR 03 2000) the process of creating Heritage Park and the subsequent success of the Taste of the Huon provided Geeveston people with a valuable lesson in looking to themselves to solve the problems of the town rather than relying on outsiders such as local, State and Federal government to identify problems and come up with solutions (as they had previously).

***We had to actually do something ourselves.** It was unfair to expect the Forest and Heritage Centre to make Geeveston different. **We actually had to be different** and I think that was something that we have picked up over the years (GSRG member 2003, emphasis added).*

It appears that some Geeveston people took heed of this lesson. Armed with a renewed sense of hope and the conviction that there could be an alternative future for Geeveston, a few community members began to work on the gardens of the town. The renewed community and visitor interest in the town had opened their eyes to the urgent need to improve the presentation of the main street. In this sense, and despite the initially hostile reception to its development, the existence of the Forest and Heritage Centre and the availability of the energies of the Green Jackets were central to the emergence of the GRSG.

The stories of loss described above have contributed to the constitution of the identity of Geeveston people as victims of changes wrought upon them and ‘their’ place by forces, events and actors beyond their control. The experiences had left many Geeveston people fixed in their vehemently negative attitude toward the environmental movement and ‘greenies’, and distrustful of government at all levels, persuading some of them that the *only* way forward was to take control of their own futures. It is within this context that I examine how some Geeveston people surfaced as self-managing individuals, enterprising persons and active citizens capable of managing their own risks and the risks typifying life in the Geeveston locale. The stories of change, and the emotional and political geographies generated as a result of such change are also illustrative of what has been described by Raco and Flint (2001, p.592) as

the congruence between the establishment of spaces of governance and the structures of feeling that exist within particular places that shapes the degree of tensions within local democratic political systems.

The emergence of the GSRG cannot be understood in isolation, for ‘what happens at one scale cannot be understood outside of the nested relationships that exist across a hierarchy of scales’ (Harvey 2000, p.75). In this sense the reform of the local government sector in Australia, which profoundly changed its character, is a further important context within which to frame the research. Thus it is to an account of broader trends in local government reforms in Australia and their specific manifestation in Tasmania that I now turn.

Chapter 4

The Shifting Territory of Local Government in Australia and Tasmania

I flagged in the previous chapter that the local governance landscape in the Huon Valley changed dramatically in the early 1990s as a result of far-reaching public sector reforms initiated in the 1970s that affected all levels of government across Australia. The reforms in question were achieved via the implementation of a range of neoliberal governmental technologies resulting in substantive changes to how governing is practised at all levels of government. At the local level, managerial and structural changes designed to increase local government (economic) efficiency were accompanied by significant emphases on the importance of citizen participation in local government processes. Geeveston people, along with other community and local government actors in the Huon Valley, have variously but subsequently invested in, accommodated, resisted, adapted and/or sought to use the changes in local governing processes to provide opportunities for the creation of enduring, strong and viable local futures. Their differing conceptions of what constitutes such a future and of how it might be achieved are at the centre of larger questions and contests over how to govern. Their examination provides significant insights into the challenges for community and government actors as they determine the extent to which they can collaboratively contribute to place-making and community capacity building.

In this chapter I analyse texts that account for the national and state governmental and political contexts within which these local government reforms were developed and implemented in Australia. I follow that work with a description of two periods—one of local government reform in general, and more specifically the modernisation of local government in Tasmania. These sections form the context for chapter five, in which I undertake a critical examination of talk that account for the felt effects of modernisation in the Huon Valley municipal area. In that chapter I analyse how councillors and council officers have understood, accepted, and been able and willing

to embrace their new roles and responsibilities, and the roles of community actors in the resulting new governance environment. I pay particular attention to their constitutions of citizenship and participation in local government decision-making processes, and document the extent to which the principles that underpin local government modernisation have been understood by these local government actors. Their attitudes and actions also provide insights into some of the barriers to the full realisation of a modernised local government sector as intended by State and local government actors involved in developing and driving the modernisation process.

I now turn to a discussion of the shifting territory of local government in Australia that reflects changing trends in governing encapsulated by the term governance and the widespread adoption of NPM practices throughout the public sector.

The shifting territory of local government in Australia

Local government forms the third tier of government within the federal system of politics in Australia and is ‘the primary locus of democracy at the sub-central government level’ (Prachett 2004, p.359). Across Australia there are 565 local governing bodies (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2009b, no page.). These local governing bodies are responsible for developing and implementing policies and plans that have a direct impact on the quality of everyday life—individual and community well-being, ecological integrity, economic security, and empowerment and responsibility—experienced by the diverse communities of place and interest across the nation.

These local government units range in size from 2 km² to 371,696 km² and in population from 57 to 992,176 persons.⁴⁹ There is considerable diversity among them: between states and, within states, between urban, rural and remote municipal areas (Dollery, Marshall & Worthington 2003). Differences among local government areas across Australia are expressed in terms of size of geographic area and population as well as

⁴⁹ All figures were checked in 2009 and the most recent figures then available were current as of 30 June 2007.

- range and scale of functions;
- council's fiscal position (including wide disparity in revenue-raising capacity), resources and skills base;
- physical, economic, social and cultural environments of local government areas;
- attitudes and aspirations of local communities;
- legislative frameworks within which councils operate, including voting rights and electoral systems (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2007, p.6).

The Australian Government classifies local governing bodies into 22 categories for the purpose of allocating general purpose financial assistance grants. The Australian Classification of Local Governments (ACLG) categorises councils using population, population density and the proportion of the population that is classified as urban for the council. The categories are broadly divided into urban (developed, regional or fringe; small medium, large or very large) and rural (significant growth, agricultural or remote; extra small, small, medium, large or very large) indicating the diversity of local government units across Australia⁵⁰.

Local government in Australia is not recognised in the Australian Constitution as a separate sphere of government; rather it is created under state legislation⁵¹. As such, local government has traditionally been 'kept in check by state government acts which have long placed strict limitations on the scope of local government activities and services' (Aulich 1999, p.12). In each state jurisdiction, with the exception of the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, there are local governments constituted under a local government act, which consolidates the law in relation to local government, determines the boundaries of municipal areas and sets out the roles and functions of local government separately for each state. As noted by Wensing

⁵⁰ For a detailed explanation of the structure of the classification system see Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government (2007, pp.212-213).

⁵¹ Constitutional recognition is considered important by the local government sector to ensure fair treatment, adequate funding and formal recognition for local government as a sphere of responsible government in Australia in contrast to its current position as politically and financially subordinate to state governments (Australian Local Government Association 2002).

(1997b, p.25) local government acts until recently have tended to be ‘among the longest and most complex of a state’s statutes.’ These acts were typically highly prescriptive about the roles and functions of local government and reflected the attitude of state governments which was that local government provided ‘a convenient administrative arrangement to which the state could delegate part of its functions’ (Wensing 1997b, p.26). The strengths or weaknesses of local governments were ‘derived from the range of functions they acquired (and lost)’ at the behest of state governments and ‘the extent to which their structures remained stable over time’ (Wensing 1997b, p.26).

Despite the fact that the constitutional responsibility for local government resides with the states, the Commonwealth has been able to influence local government through the provision of strategic financial assistance. As noted in a report by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (2007, p.2),

Government has recognised that the national interest is served through improving local governments’ capacity to deliver services to all Australians, while also enhancing the performance and efficiency of the sector. The Australian Government uses the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* as the primary means to achieve these goals.

Successive federal governments have exercised this capacity to varying degrees as a means to further their respective agendas and to by-pass politically opposed state governments. In this complex intergovernmental environment, ‘the development of Australian local government has been moulded by individual state political cultures, and leavened by Commonwealth expectations’ (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999, p.35).

Until the mid-1990s, the role of local government was primarily concerned with providing services to property on behalf of state and federal government (Wensing 1997b). Local government administration was uncomplicated and usually consisted of a town clerk and a handful of employees responsible for the provision of basic infrastructure and services to local communities, guided by prescriptive legislation. Such responsibilities often referred to as *roads, rates and rubbish or the three Rs*, were typically restricted to

constructing and maintaining roads, footpaths, drains and parks; collecting and disposing of garbage and 'nightsoil'; enacting by-laws(or 'local laws') for the health, safety and convenience of communities and enforcing them through health, nuisance and building inspection services; and communicating with central government on these and other matters of interest to local communities (Tucker 1997, p.70).

In response to a range of pressures beginning in the 1970s, the local level of government has evolved into a sophisticated and critical component of the public sector, responsible for developing and implementing policies and programs related to a wide range of social, economic, environmental and infrastructure services. Local government is now recognised by state and federal government actors as an important *partner* in the federal political system. In their turn, local government actors recognise that 'local councils are involved in *governing* as well as managing, whether as an agent for the state or Commonwealth, or in providing local services'(Chapman 1997b, p.2, emphasis added).

The transformation of local government in Australia has been influenced by larger state and national public sector reform agenda. These agenda have been informed by a revised set of 'ideals, rationales and legitimations for public organisations' (Considine 1997, p.44), underpinned by international theories on social democracy, economic rationalism or public choice theory and managerialism, and encapsulated in the term NPM (Orchard 1998). The Australian reform agenda was also influenced by public sector reforms in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

At the federal level, and beginning in the 1970s with the Federal Labor Government under Gough Whitlam (1972-1975) there was a growing concern to reform the public sector to progress the federal government's social democratic and managerialist agenda at that time. However, during the 1980s concerns to ensure a more efficient, democratic and equitable public administration were overtaken by economic rationalist and public choice arguments about the 'need to place limits on government and to pursue greater efficiency, competition and market emulation in public sector activity' (Orchard 1998, p.21). Such changes were then initiated under the Labor governments of Bob Hawke (1983-1991) and Paul Keating (1991-1996),

whose leaders pushed public sector reform along NPM lines, while retaining a commitment to social democratic principles. However, public sector reforms shifted under the Howard Liberal-National Coalition Government, emphasising economic rationalism and dispensing with social democratic principles (Orchard 1998).

The Federal Labor Government's national economic reform agenda during the late 1980s and 1990s has been described by its proponents as critical to building a more competitive Australian economy, itself a necessary condition for social progress (Hawke 1991 & 2003). While structural adjustments to support economic reforms were primarily directed at the private sector, structural adjustments within the public sector were also considered critical in determining the overall efficiency of the Australian economy (Keating 2003). The policy aim here was to build an efficient and effective public service responsive to both the government's agenda and 'a changing society that was better educated and more demanding and critical' (Keating 2003, p.368). These reforms were to be achieved without compromising the 'capacity of the public service to warn and to suggest better alternative ways to achieve the government's objectives' (Keating 2003, p.368). While acknowledging the importance of many of the changes, other commentators are more critical, especially of those changes related to the imposition of new technologies of managerialism. For example, Mowbray (2000, p.216) criticises the reforms as being 'directed at dismantling public welfare, privatizing social provision, diminishing the social wage and restricting civil and civic rights'. Considine (1997, 48) describes NPM (or what he terms corporate management) as

a major project of modernisation and rationalisation which reworks and intensifies aspects of the operational techniques of the established paradigm of technical rationality, shifting its emphasis from the legal to the economic and from values of protection and compensation to those of competition and entrepreneurship.

Despite such concerns, NPM has taken hold throughout all levels of the Australian public sector. While local government was the last level of government to be reformed along these lines, its modernisation was nevertheless viewed as critical to national micro-economic reform projects.

Two periods of local government reform

In Australia, over the three decades from 1970, the roles and responsibilities of local government and the status of local government in the federal system changed dramatically. These changes occurred during two major periods of local government reform: the first raft of changes occurred during 1970-1990 but a second (more ambitious) suite of changes has been happening since 1990. In the extended discussion that follows, my intention is to map this reformed landscape of local government practices. It will be shown in subsequent chapters to have had significant impacts including effects upon the constitution of Geeveston as a place and especially on Geeveston people who, through the GSRG, sought to engage in the conduct of conduct on their own terms.

Period 1: 1970-1990

Over two decades, local government underwent a gradual yet substantial evolution that formed the foundation for the more rapid and extensive reforms from 1990 onwards. The 1970s and 1980s have been described as a period of

major and continuous change for local government in its functional responsibilities, in the level of expenditure not covered by rates or borrowings, in the demands placed on its professional officers, and in the need for councillors to be adaptable and change attitudes to their task (Chapman 1997a, p.45).

During this twenty-year period Australian local government functions were expanded, and the sector grew in sophistication and developed more comprehensive organisational structures (Marshall 1997). Additionally, a corporate rationality spread throughout local government, influenced by parallel reforms in the United Kingdom. According to Tucker (1997), local government developed from a simple *administrative* model to a complex and relatively sophisticated model of *management*, with an appointed CEO assisted by a team of professionals across a wide range of areas. Using funds provided by the Commonwealth in the form of special and general purpose grants, Australian local governments increased the range of services they provided to include social, recreational, educational and urban

programs. As a result, the organisational structure of councils became more complex and sophisticated, and it became necessary to employ more highly trained staff to administer the new programs (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999).

Commonwealth-local government relations were fundamental to the evolution of local government during this period. The Whitlam Labor Government provided direct funding to the sector in an attempt 'to make local government a genuine partner' in the federal system as a means to implement policies it felt would be blocked by politically opposed States (Chapman 1997b, p.3). The Liberal-National Coalition Government under the leadership of Malcolm Fraser (1975-1983) later created the Advisory Council for Inter-governmental Relations (ACIR) to examine the relationships between the Commonwealth Government and state and local governments. The ACIR helped raise the profile of local government by recognising it as part of Commonwealth and state intergovernmental processes, and as the sphere of government that could be the most responsive to their constituents (Chapman 1997b). The formal recognition of local government in the Australian Constitution was also discussed at a series of constitutional conventions with a proposal for constitutional recognition put forward to the Constitutional Commission in 1985. This proposal was defeated; however, the discussions helped to raise the profile of local government on the national political stage. The involvement of local government representatives in negotiations with Australian Government agencies such as ACIR, and their participation in constitutional conventions all contributed to the strengthening of the Australian Council of Local Government Association (now ALGA) as a national body representing the local government sector. The president of ALGA became a member of the Council of Australia Governments (COAG)⁵² when it was formed in 1992.

⁵² COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. Its membership includes the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (COAG 2005). The main function of COAG is to 'initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and which require cooperative action by Australian governments' (COAG 2005, no page).

Other key influences on the Australian reform agenda included a report prepared by Malcolm Bains in 1972⁵³ on the management and structure of local government in England and Wales, as well as various other reports prepared by the same author for the Centre for Research on Federal Financial Relations at the Australian National University, in Canberra, and one written for the Board of Review of the Role, Structure and Administration of Local Government in Victoria (Bains 1979). These reports highlighted the problems of the internal organisation of local government administration, especially its tendency towards departmentalism. Bains (1979) recommended whole-of-council and corporate approaches to the management of local government, described by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) as requiring a shift from rowing (focused on service delivery) to steering (focused on policy decisions). Separating policy decisions from service provision, they claim, was essential if public institutions were to have the flexibility required to respond to 'complex and rapidly changing conditions' (Osborne & Gaebler 1992, p.34). Bains was also influential in the adoption in Australia of appointed rather than elected CEOs and called for a clearer division of responsibilities between councillors and council officers (Bains 1979; Tucker 1997). In broad terms, it was suggested, councillors should focus on policy development and officers on the day-to-day administration required to develop and implement such policy, including the provision of expert advice to councillors. These influences were a forerunner to the extensive managerialist reforms that took hold in earnest in the 1990s.

The period between 1970 and 1985 was one in which there were significant changes to the Australian public sector in general, with major influences on local government also in evidence. Federal reductions in funding to the states resulted in less funding for local government, one effect of micro-economic reforms in the public sector following the economic crisis of the 1980s. According to Chapman (1997b, p.7) 'all these changes increased the burden on local councils, which became responsible for implementing many programs through special purpose grants' provided by the

⁵³ Malcolm Bains was an English local government practitioner and key figure in English local government reforms in the 1970s. Bains immigrated to Australia and became influential in the development of Australian local government policy in the late 1970s (Jones 1989).

Commonwealth. At the same time, local governments applied for funding to run programs to meet the needs of their residents especially in the area of community services (Chapman 1997b). Millions of dollars⁵⁴ were channelled through local governments to finance numerous programs despite the fact that many programs required ‘a level of capacity to act that most local councils lacked’ (Chapman 1997b, p.8).

By the end of the 1980s perceptions of the role of local government in Australia’s governing system had matured (Chapman 1997b) and local government had become a ‘recognised—if not fully accepted—player in the intergovernmental arena’ (Marshall 1997, p.4). Actors across all levels of government began to accept the municipal as a sphere of government in its own right and not merely as an administrative arm of state jurisdictions. The local government sector was now viewed as having the capacity to make a substantial contribution to various national micro-economic reform agenda and especially in terms of the provision of services, infrastructure and regulatory functions (Marshall & Sproats 2000). In order to fulfil this potential, wide-ranging reforms were required and local government was seen as the next level of government that could benefit from the introduction of managerialist principles, which had already been integrated into the state and federal public sector.

Period 2: 1990 onwards

The 1990s were years in which the local government sector across Australia was subjected to significant reform and redefinition, resulting in comprehensive changes to its management, legislation and structure, influenced by similar reforms in Britain and New Zealand (Aulich 1999; Marshall 1998). The reforms of the 1990s were largely driven by national concerns with micro-economic reform (Aulich 1999; Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999; Worthington & Dollery 2002), although there was also a growing recognition among state governments that their prescriptive micro-management of local government activities was hindering effective and

⁵⁴ According to Chapman (1997b) a total of \$88.74 million was provided to local government to fund a range of programs between 1969-1970 and 1985-1986.

efficient governance at the local level. Between 1993 and 1996 each state independently reformed its local government sector with the central purpose of improving efficiency and effectiveness of operation (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999). It has been claimed that in general⁵⁵ this economic focus in the reform of local government was offset by a commitment also to reinforce its civic foundations, reflected in local government legislative reforms during the period, and described below (Marshall & Sproats 2000; Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999). Governance reforms in most states involved redefining the roles and responsibilities of government and non-government actors in local governance. These efforts were focused on setting clear objectives for state and local governments in relation to local governance, reducing duplication, increasing efficiency and as a consequence cutting costs (Considine 1997). These reforms emphasised enhanced community involvement in local governing processes and attempted to ensure that councils became more accountable and responsive to the communities they serve (Aulich 1999; Wensing 1997b). Key aspects of the reforms made in the 1990s, discussed below, include the integration of governmental technologies aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the local government sector; and legislative changes to make councils more accountable, transparent, fair, open and inclusive and to reaffirm the democratic values that underpin local government.

A new approach to local government management: economy, efficiency and effectiveness

The integration of managerialist principles into local government's organisational and structural procedures was a key aspect of the reforms made during the 1990s (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999). According to MacKinnon (2000, p.294), the inter-linked practices and technologies of managerialism provide 'political actors with the means to introduce, enact and legitimate strategies of institutional reform'. These reforms helped shift the focus of local government administration from 'an adherence to formalised processes and procedures' to an 'emphasis on optimal use of

⁵⁵ In the state of Victoria there was much less emphasis on reinforcing the democratic role of local government. For a description of the reforms to local government there between 1992 and 1997, see Kiss (1997).

resources and achievement of results' (Tucker 1997, p.82). Recall that managerialist principles were introduced via the extension of technologies of NPM to the local government sector, bringing it in line with other public sector reforms that had been underway since the 1980s (Caulfield 2003). Such technologies therefore included contractualism, devolution, disaggregation, private sector management practices, performance management, auditing, cost cutting, competition, and clientalism.⁵⁶ Caulfield (2003, p.33) describes NPM as holding 'appeal as a solution to making governments more transparent, client oriented, and generally more efficient in their operations'. NPM is thus particularly appealing to local government, which is increasingly required to operate in an environment of resource constraints (Caulfield 2003). Newnham and Winston (1997) observe that the shift in focus brought about by managerial reforms has allowed local governments to unburden themselves from some direct service delivery and focus more on cultural and economic developments in locales for which they have responsibility.

The spread of managerialism through all levels of the public sector has been criticised on numerous fronts. Davies (1997) claims that the implementation of NPM technologies has collectively contributed to a hollowing out of the state.⁵⁷ He also raises concerns about the risk of 'elevating the quantifiable over the worthwhile' with the 'new emphasis on indicators' (Davis 1997, p.209). MacKinnon (2000) highlights how the accountability aspects of managerialism are an effective means by which Federal and state government actors can maintain control at the centre and steer local government activities to ensure they are consistent with and actively delivering state and national policy objectives; COAG is one such example. Considine (1997) points out that the shift in focus from a concern with inputs to valuing outputs within a real or imagined market 'assumes that public sector activities may be given a meaningful status as products' (Considine 1997, p.58). However it is not clear 'that in describing organisational functions as separate

⁵⁶ According to Caulfield (2003, p.14), clientalism 'includes a range of techniques designed to engage the taxpayer as consumer of government services and thus, it is argued by the reformers, to impose a discipline on the provider of those services. The techniques used include public consultation, citizens' charters, performance pledges, stakeholder engagement through partnerships and the like'.

⁵⁷ Other commentators argue that state power has not disappeared, but instead has been 'redeployed from social welfare concerns and economic management to the enforcement of the market model in virtually all aspects of everyday life' (Brodie, 1995, p.51, quoted in Johnson 2000, p.6).

measured units (products) we encompass all, or most of their meaning' let alone the relationships among them (Considine 1997, p.58). Despite these concerns, evidence suggests an intensification of trends in NPM rather than a retreat from them.

In 1995, all Australian states and territories signed an agreement with the Australian Government to implement the National Competition Policy (NCP), resulting in the imposition of a business environment on the local government sector (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999)⁵⁸. Ryan (1997, p.168) describes the impact of NCP as involving 'a shift from managerialism to contractualism'. Under NCP, corporatisation and privatisation have become the 'preferred options for public sector reform with attendant demands for commercialisation, contracting out, contestability and competitive tendering' (Ryan 1997, p.168). The privatisation⁵⁹ agenda was introduced in the late 1980s and 1990s under the Hawke-Keating Labor governments to increase Australia's competitiveness in the global market place. The Howard Liberal-National Coalition Government then took privatisation significantly further in the late 1990s and early 2000s, using a range of technologies—divestment, withdrawal, outsourcing (contractualism), liberalisation and user-pays—as a means of major public sector reform (Aulich & O'Flynn 2007, p.373). Of most concern for local government was the principle of competitive neutrality. The implications of this principle for the sector is that the profit-making activities of councils are now subject to the same statutory constraints and market forces as private enterprise, and tax immunity and cheap borrowings have been removed. Each state also had considerable discretion in how it implemented the policy and most states have used the relevant clause to limit the impact of competitive neutrality on the local government sector (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999).

⁵⁸ An accord was also signed between the Commonwealth of Australia and local government in which local government made a commitment to implementing federal micro-economic and urban reform programs and its social justice and regional development strategies and the federal government recognised increased role played by local government in Australian federal system (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999)

⁵⁹ Aulich and O'Flynn (2007, p.370, original emphasis) define privatisation 'as the ways in which there are substitutions for government-owned, government-funded and government-provided services by non-government agencies and private funding mechanisms'.

In Tasmania, the NCP was implemented through a partnership agreement between the State Government and all Tasmanian councils, signed in 2003. The aim of the agreement was to reform inter-government financial relations with a focus on ‘those financial arrangements that involve exemptions, subsidies or concessions that distort government decision-making’ (State of Tasmania 2003, p.6). The agreement was negotiated on the basis of a revenue neutral outcome for both spheres of government. However, the

outcome did not involve full reciprocity of taxation arrangements but involved a trade-off that saw the cessation of levies paid by councils, the payment of payroll tax and land tax by councils and the payment of rates by the State Government ... *The process has resulted in Local Government actually gaining revenue* with the possibility of additional rate revenue as present unallocated Crown land is identified and valued (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2004, no page, emphasis added).

That said, LGAT notes that the introduction of the NCP

required councils to move to a more cost reflective arrangement for the provision of certain activities in councils. Full cost attribution across specific operations of councils has tended to focus on and foster a shift to a user-pay culture (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2007a, p.6).

Providing the legislative underpinnings for local government (micro-economic) reform

Between 1990 and 1997, all states reviewed and redesigned their local government legislation, providing the legislative underpinnings for the micro-economic reforms described above. As noted by Wensing (1997a, p.91),

legislative changes have provided the necessary framework for wider micro-economic reforms in local government, to improve its performance orientation, its accountability, and its relations with other spheres of government. The changes have also tended to encourage, if not require, a whole-of-community and whole-of-government approach to the governing of local communities.

Many of the old local government acts were overly prescriptive and unduly restrictive, inhibiting effective government at the local level. The new local government legislation provided councils with significant capacity for local decision-making by reducing detailed prescription and increasing autonomy. Councils were also granted general competence powers to provide for the peace, order and good government of municipal areas (see for example Government of Tasmania 1993, s20.1(c)). These new powers enabled ‘councils to undertake any activities necessary for them to fulfil the functions and powers delegated to them’ (Aulich 1999, p.14).

Increased autonomy was accompanied by legislative requirements for greater accountability and higher levels of performance management and quality assurance (Marshall 1998; Marshall & Sproats 2000; Wensing 1997b). Councils were now required to develop and make publicly available strategic and operational plans and annual reports, including summaries of financial statements. Councils were also obliged to provide enhanced opportunities for citizen participation, in part by simplifying local government processes, reducing the need for specialist interpreters, and thereby making local government decision-making more transparent and open (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999). To ensure councils would be more economically efficient, there was now an expectation that they contract out many services and functions, and seek competitive tenders for such contracts.

New legislation in all states contained provisions to reaffirm the democratic values that underpin local government, offset the predominantly economic focus of local government reforms, and compensate for the loss of representation as a result of amalgamations (2000; Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999). These provisions included a clarification of the roles of councillors and council employees to ensure elected members are ultimately responsible for decision-making, and provisions that senior managers and staff report to council through a general manager or chief executive. The provisions also reinforced the representative duties of councillors (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999).

This clarification of roles provided the ‘certainty of approach and direction to facilitate long term planning for strategic resource use’ required in the new

managerial administrative environment (Newnham & Winston 1997, p.117). The new legislation enshrined 'the principle of participation as important to local government' (McKenna 1995, s.4, p.3) and included 'requirements that councils establish mechanisms which ensure citizens have access to, and can participate in, council decision-making' (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999, p.42). Participation in strategic planning processes was the predominant mechanism for achieving these ends (Marshall & Sproats 2000). Other mechanisms included ensuring council meetings were open to the public, determining that the public had access to relevant documentation, and encouraging councils to hold referenda and polls to allow community actors to express their views on local government matters (Marshall, Witherby & Dollery 1999). The capacity of these mechanisms to address adequately the representational deficit has been questioned, given that most states

confined their recommendations for enhanced participation to the establishment of lower level consultative mechanisms—such as public forums, customer service centres and newsletters—to encourage community involvement. This [reliance on such mechanisms] was very much a passive approach to participatory democracy. None recommended the adoption of measures which would actually require councils to become actively involved in citizen participation ... review committees in most states believed that appropriate management structures and processes would provide the most effective means of fostering democratic participation (Marshall & Sproats 2000, pp.497-8).

Enhanced citizen participation was a key objective enshrined in each of the new local governments acts developed by the various state governments during the second period of local government reform under discussion here. According to McKenna (1995, s.4, pp.3-4), participation was included in local government legislation because 'participation responds to the potential for local communities to control their own affairs' and should be thought of by local government actors as 'a vital element to be enhanced rather than a burden to be discouraged'. The extent to which councils have been able to fulfil this mandate is variable and may depend on a range of factors including council size and rate-base and their capacity to attract skilled political and bureaucratic change agents.

Finally, in many states, Tasmania included, substantial reforms were made to planning systems and state planning statutes in parallel with the changes to local government acts (Wensing 1997a). These changes and their effects are discussed in more detail here later.

Structural reform through amalgamations

Amalgamations were perhaps the most contentious feature of micro-economic reforms in the local government sector. They were viewed by state reformers as integral to addressing ‘overall pressures for accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency in local government’ (Worthington & Dollery 2002, p.508). Various amalgamation programs in all states were designed to achieve increased efficiencies associated with the purported economies of scale and scope available to larger local government units (Worthington & Dollery 2002). As explained by Marshall (1998, p.650),

as size increases the unit cost of tasks and services diminishes. In particular, it is felt that the administrative costs of councils can be reduced by rationalizing staff, plant and equipment, and streamlining service provision. At the same time such moves would increase purchasing power and the scope to employ more specialized personnel and equipment.

Worthington (2002) cites numerous pressures driving the widespread deployment of local government amalgamation agenda. The demographic, employment and infrastructure profiles of local government had changed such that many geographical boundaries became increasingly anachronistic. Community demands and expectations that local government provide a wider range of community services had increased, and smaller councils had neither the financial nor human resources to meet these expectations. State governments were seeking the administrative simplicity afforded by having fewer larger local government units and their granting agencies were under increasing pressure to account for the external costs of inefficient

councils. Yet, the evidence that municipal mergers⁶⁰ actually resulted in greater (economic) efficiencies is inconclusive and international research suggests that parallel amalgamation processes in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada have produced little in the way of (cost) benefits (Marshall, 1998). That these economic considerations were able to dominate the agenda may be attributable to the 'apparent public apathy towards questions of local governance [allowing] state committees greater discretion in their consideration and treatment of democratic issues' (Marshall 1998, p.654). Indeed, it has been suggested that the economic rationalisation and efficiency agenda underpinning pressures for amalgamation may have marginalised considerations of other local government functions, including representation, participation, access and regional identity. Amalgamations substantially reduced direct representation as the proportion of councillors per head of population declined. Such representational deficits were expected to be offset by the inclusion of increased requirements for community participation in local government decision-making processes. Strategic management practices, in particular, included provisions for increased citizen participation, especially in setting the strategic directions of councils. However, the extent to which strategic management can achieve this goal has been questioned, given the external pressures for councils to focus on management structures at the expense of civic values (Marshall & Sproats 2000). So while

the majority of states do value the democratic dimension of local government ... it is clear that consideration of democratic values has taken place largely in terms of a reform agenda driven by economic and managerial priorities (Marshall 1998, p.654).

In summary, by the end of the twentieth century a substantial change in the status, roles and capacities of local government had occurred. Councils across Australia had shifted their focus away from being an administrative arm of state government responsible for services related to 'roads, rates and rubbish' to a 'new era of policy development, strategic planning and competition' (Chapman 1997b, p.1); from a

⁶⁰ It also noteworthy, in passing that during the period of local government reform there was a relative lack of attention to, or consideration of, alternative models to amalgamations in structural inquiries (Dollery & Johnson 2005).

simple model of administration to a complex and relatively sophisticated model of management. Embodied in this shift was an increasing recognition at all levels that councils are 'involved in governing as well as managing' (Chapman 1997b, p.2). However, according to Newnham and Winston (1997, p.108) and further demonstrated in the Huon Valley Council case study, the

move away from actions that were defined and closely regulated, to an organisation governed by broad aims and objectives, has created some confusion among local government practitioners on their role within the system.

Local governments had been reconstituted with new and specific powers to govern the resources of municipal areas in the interests of the communities they serve. The extent to which local governments can achieve this end may be constrained by their remaining organisational instruments through which to implement state and federal policy objectives at the local level, particularly those underpinned by economic fundamentalism. Indeed, Wensing (1997b, p.35), suggests that the

difficult challenge facing local government is to manage the pressures for change in a way that benefits the whole community and not just the whims or demands of state and Commonwealth governments.

Having outlined the broader national and state contexts of public sector reform and described the reforms of the local government sector in Australia, I now turn to the local government reforms in Tasmania and discuss their specific effects of these reforms for governing in the Huon Valley municipal area.

The Modernisation of Local Government in Tasmania

Between 1990 and 1993, councils in Tasmania participated in a far-reaching modernisation process that profoundly changed the structural, organisational and governance characteristics of local government in the State. Prior to 1993, there were 46 municipal areas with populations ranging from less than 500 to in excess of 60,000 persons. There was an equally significant disparity in the economic efficiency, financial capacity and vulnerability of local government units. Eighteen

of the 46 councils were dependent on grants, receiving at least 50 per cent of their income from other levels of government supplementing the income councils were able (or willing⁶¹) to generate by their own rating system⁶² (Local Government Advisory Board 1992). The reforms were therefore designed to encourage some evenness through greater efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability to community, flexibility, innovation, inclusive and open decision-making processes, and equity in the provision of services across municipal areas (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991). They were a partial response to numerous pressures on the local government sector, including ‘decreasing external assistance and increasing demands arising from an ageing infrastructure and from increasing service delivery costs’ (Roodenrys 1995, p.29). At the time, the Tasmanian Government was also experiencing significant financial constraints associated with rising debt levels and decreasing discretionary income. Indeed the State was

near bankruptcy, prompting the development of a set of challenging fiscal reforms to government structures intended to make Tasmania nationally and internationally competitive (Stratford 2008, p.165).

Thus local government modernisation was also ‘aimed fairly and squarely at promoting Councils’ capacity to participate in the broader Australian micro-economic reform agenda’ and was viewed by the State Government as a ‘vital strategy in the overall reform of the public sector in Tasmania’ initiated in 1989 (Roodenrys 1995, p.28). This claim is reflected in the following:

The difficulties facing the Australian economy have given great impetus to micro-economic reform at all levels of government and through all parts of the Australian economy. Of particular significance to the state and local government spheres, micro-economic reform within public institutions and a rationalisation of services between the three spheres of government provides a broader and more urgent

⁶¹ It is a well-established trend among Councils to desire to keep rates low, in the (misguided) belief that to do so is a reflection of council efficiency no matter that it contributes to a declining capacity to function effectively.

⁶² Rating systems refer to the rates and taxes charged to property owners within a municipal area for services provided by Council.

context within which the modernisation of local government is taking place (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.1).

The Tasmanian Government had made numerous attempts to reform local government with major inquiries in 1939, 1965 and 1974 all recommending widespread municipal amalgamations (Local Government Advisory Board, 1992). These early attempts tended to be unilateral and non-consultative and, according to Roodenrys⁶³ (1995, p.28), ‘produced nothing but resentment and opposition from Councils and nothing but frustration for the State Government.’ Recall that in 1989 the Labor Party was elected to power as a minority government with the support of the Green Independents under the leadership of Premier Michael Field, MHA⁶⁴. The Field Labor Government in Tasmania initiated a local government reform process using a new approach and opting for ‘a *negotiated* process [that was] highly *collaborative* and *co-operative*’ (Roodenrys 1995, p.28, original emphasis). This multilateral approach—referred to as the modernisation of local government—was oriented to consensus outcomes and reportedly established a ‘very real sense of ownership, partnership, responsibility, and leadership with a strong mutual commitment to change’ (Roodenrys 1995, p.29). Indeed the apparent success of this period of reform has been attributed to the level of support from and influence that local government was able to exert on the process (Haward & Zwart 2000). The commitment by the State Government to work in partnership with councils enabled local government leaders to sell modernisation as an opportunity rather than a threat ‘so long as local government can be part of the opportunity and help to guide the process’ (Municipal Association of Tasmania 1990 p.33). The partnership model of

⁶³ Rudi Roodenrys was formerly employed as the Director of Local Government in the State’s Local Government Office. He was also the Executive Director of the Local Government Board’s 1997-98 review of local government boundaries, discussed towards the end of this section.

⁶⁴ The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord dominated Tasmanian politics for much of the period between 1989 and 1992 and brought with it a brief era of more progressive politics with a greater focus on social justice and environmental issues (Haward & Larmour 1993). The terms of the Accord placed various demands on the Government; key among them was the resolution of forest issues in the State (Sandford 1993). The formal Accord collapsed in October 1990 ‘over disagreements related to the development of resource-extractive industries in general and forestry in particular’ (Stratford 2008, p.165). The Field Government then governed in minority until it lost the next election in 1992 to be replaced by the Liberal Government. The Liberals attempted further rationalisation of local government in the State in 1997, a move that, along with the privatisation of the Hydro-Electric Commission of Tasmania, cost them government at the next election.

governance was later expanded under the Bacon Government when the Labor Party was returned to power in 1998 and as explained below.

Inter-governmental cooperation in the reform process was underpinned by a Modernisation Agreement between the State Government and the Municipal Association of Tasmania, developed and supported (at least initially) by all Tasmanian Councils (Wensing 1997a).⁶⁵ This agreement committed the parties involved to four major elements of reform: a review of municipal area boundaries; the preparation of the (new) *Local Government Act 1993*; a review of the roles and functions of State and local governments to identify and reduce areas of overlap and duplication; and a review of the relative revenue raising capacities available to each level of government (Roodenrys 1995). The overall objective of local government modernisation was

to identify, and to implement where possible, measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Councils without sacrificing their capacity to respond to the needs of the communities that they serve (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.1).

In 1987 the Liberal State Government under Premier Robin Gray established a Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB), with strong representation from Local Government⁶⁶ to report to the State Government ‘on the appropriate structure and number of Councils ... and any other matters which might bear on the efficiency and effectiveness of Tasmania’s Councils’ (Roodenrys 1995, p.29).

⁶⁵ Of significance to the experience of local government modernisation in the Huon Valley, members of the Port Cygnet Council strongly resisted amalgamation and while they were ultimately merged into the Huon Valley Council along with Esperance and Huon Councils, they did so under duress and insisted on retaining an advisory committee that was viewed by many as a *de facto* council and was eventually disbanded by the Huon Valley Council as it was considered disruptive to the process of creating a whole of Valley governmental identity.

⁶⁶ The membership of the board during the modernisation period included the representatives from councils, the Institute of Municipal Management, the Municipal Association of Tasmania, the Australian Local Government Association, the State Grants Commission, the Local Government Office of the State Government.

The vision for a modernised local government sector developed by the Local Government Advisory Board was one in which local authorities had the following characteristics, quoted verbatim:

- The ability to develop policies and make decisions based on adequate and readily available professional advice;
- A multi-disciplinary corporate structure which ensures input from the widest possible range of opinion from both community and professional staff;
- A general competence power which gives the authority sufficient flexibility to permit innovative practices and programs as considered appropriate;
- A clear definition of the respective roles of elected members and staff;
- The ability to use modern technology to ensure that “larger” can remain “local”;
- The ability to bind together and service communities effectively over a larger geographic area;
- The ability to see the role of its own authority in the overall governmental system;
- The ability to develop local plans and strategies within the framework of State and regional strategic plans;
- The awareness of the community demand for increasing openness and accountability in Local Government affairs (Local Government Advisory Board 1992, p.43).

In the following sections I describe the outcomes of the modernisation process; implicit within this description is an account of the extent to which the vision outlined above was realised. This work forms the context of a later discussion dealing with the dynamics of change in local government as experienced by government and community actors in the Huon Valley.

Bigger is better: local government amalgamations

Local government rationalisation to maximise efficiencies thought to attend economies of scale was a key aspect of the modernisation process in Tasmania (Local Government Advisory Board 1991). In pursuit of this goal, the number of councils was reduced from 46 to 29 through a state-wide program of amalgamations designed to increase in the average size of municipal areas and achieve economies of scale and scope.⁶⁷ Amalgamations were also intended to create local government units that have the 'capacity and resources to service their communities efficiently and effectively' (Local Government Office 1995, p.33). At the same time the resultant local government units

should be small enough to preserve the local community element in which each citizen feels able to be politically effective or to have his or her views given proper consideration (Local Government Advisory Board 1990, p.24).

Past attempts to reform local government had created significant sensitivities among the local government sector towards amalgamations and State Government representatives were at pains to communicate that the modernisation process was about much more than simply adjusting municipal boundaries (Municipal Association of Tasmania 1990 & 1991).

Seven guidelines were developed to assist the Local Government Advisory Board in making recommendations on the rationalisation of extant municipal areas and the creation of new local government units. These guidelines were grouped under three categories: (1) geographic, social, and community of interest; (2) economic/financial independence, viability and diversity; and (3) planning and management capability (Local Government Advisory Board 1992). Amalgamations mainly affected smaller

⁶⁷ In Tasmania municipal areas now range in size from 80 to 9,750 square km² and population from 877 to 64,057 people. The Huon Valley Municipal area is 5497 km², with a population in 2006 of 14,001 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006f). It has a rate base of \$9,895,670 (Huon Valley Council 2008a, p.46). In addition the Huon Valley Council receives financial assistance from the Federal Government under the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*. In the financial year of 2006-2007 the Huon Valley Council received \$2,517,101 in federal assistance and was estimated to receive \$2,690,110 in the financial year of 2007-2008 (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2009a, p.175).

councils, many of which were abolished by mergers with neighbouring municipal areas. The majority of the larger cities were left largely unchanged (Balmer 2002).

Local Transition Committees (LTCs) were established for each of the new councils to make arrangements such as drafting operational plans, developing human resource plans, and making decisions about the locations of council meetings (Roodenrys 1995). LTCs consisted of an equal representation of elected members or officers from the outgoing councils and were overseen by a State Transition Committee, whose members were drawn from State and local government as well as the relevant unions and local government associations. The strategy of using LTCs as opposed to appointing interim administrators, as occurred in Victoria, was apparently considered a risky strategy. However the approach paid off, as the

sense of ownership and control that the transitional arrangements generated in members of the LTCs unleashed enormous energy and enthusiasm that converted even the most strident objectors to boundary change (Roodenrys 1995, p.31).

A further round of local government amalgamations was attempted in 1997/98 by the then Rundle Liberal Government, in part a response to the Nixon Report, a Commonwealth inquiry into the Tasmanian economy (Nixon 1997). In that report, the fragmentation of local government was considered a key factor undermining the capacity for effective local governance. Concerns were also expressed that

many local government authorities in Tasmania lack the size and financial capacity to individually offer efficient infrastructure and services to their communities (Nixon 1997, p.71).

Documents prepared by the LGB recommended the number of councils in Tasmania be reduced from 29 to 11. Only the two councils of Flinders Island and King Island would be spared, due to the 'costs necessary to promote service delivery arrangements which would be acceptable to residents of these island municipalities (Local Government Board 1997, p.2).

Under the Board's proposals, the smallest council – a North East council – would have a population of more than 17,500. The largest council – a greater Hobart council ... would have a population of nearly 152,000. The average population of the nine mainland Tasmanian councils would be in excess of 50,000 (Local Government Board 1997, p.2).

Close reading of the review documents suggests that the main concern driving the push for further amalgamations in 1997 was a perceived need to improve further the economic performance of the local government sector and thus the economic performance of the State.

Local Government plays an important role in the overall governance of Tasmania and this review by the Local Government Board leaves it in no doubt that a further reduction in the number of councils would make a significant contribution to improving the economic fortunes of this State. The evidence ... of the financial improvements available in the cost of council operations is overwhelming. So is the evidence of other improvements necessary to underpin the economic, social and environmental health of the State (Local Government Board 1998, no page).

As in 1993, efficiency and effectiveness of local government were key concerns of the 1997 inquiry. The LGB (1997, p.17) defines efficiency 'as the use of resources (inputs) in a manner which produces the desired service or products (outputs) with minimum waste'. Effectiveness is defined as 'the production of outputs which meet the predetermined objective (outcome)'. Paralleling the 1993 process again, the LGB (1997, p.23) emphasised that increased efficiency should 'not unduly impact on councils' capacity to interact effectively with their residents' and 'needs to be balanced by considerations of effectiveness measures on councils' capacities to meet the needs of their communities in a timely and responsive manner'. The LGB (1997, p.208) concluded that

the restructuring of councils will generate considerable efficiencies in comparison with present Local Government arrangements in this State. These efficiencies will in part be financial, as a result of economies of scale and scope. Other efficiency improvements will be evident in councils' improved capacities for strategic and operational planning, environmental management and in the administration and management of the councils' affairs.

The LGB suggests there is a real dilemma for local government in carrying out their roles as follows:

Residents clearly expect their councils to operate in as efficient a manner as is reasonable; inefficiency will obviously have an adverse impact on either the level of rates and charges or on the range and quality of services which a council can deliver. On the other hand, residents also expect their council to be effective in the way in which it carries out its tasks. They not only expect the councils to achieve their goals and objectives but, in a manner which is publicly accountable and timely and which provides ample opportunities for public consultation and participation (Local Government Board 1997, p.16).

There was significant controversy surrounding the proposed amalgamations. As the LGB (1998, no page) states, ‘to say that the concluding stages of this inquiry have been carried out against a backdrop of turbulence and controversy is somewhat of an understatement’.

A new Local Government Act

The drafting of new local government legislation was also instrumental in realising the objectives of modernisation.

After many years of relative stability, each sphere of government is undergoing—and no doubt will continue to experience—significant change not only in the manner in which each operates but also in the range of services for which each is responsible. The management of this process of change will require local government legislation that is equitable, responsive and that provides councils with the flexibility and freedom that they will require if they are to fully participate in the reforms (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.1).

In Tasmania, local government legislation had not been properly reviewed since 1962 and was inhibiting the effective operation of local government (Roodenrys 1995; Wensing 1997b). The now repealed *Local Government Act 1962* was some 600 pages in length and, according to Roodenrys (1995, p.31), was “time warped” back to the beginning of the twentieth century, and was the ‘greatest impediment to

meaningful change within Councils'. The provisions of the *Local Government Act 1962* no longer reflected the 'social, economic, financial or management principles or philosophies' of local government (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.3). Furthermore, the narrow prescription of the *Local Government Act 1962* severely limited council's capacities for independence of action and responsive decision-making (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991).

The new legislation was designed to provide local government with greater flexibility and freedom, shifting focus away from prescribing municipal activities to identifying outcomes to which local government should aspire, a shift expected to encourage innovation and reform (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991). The granting of general competence powers was intended to provide local government with the capacity for local decision-making needed to achieve these goals and respond to the needs of their constituents. This shift in focus was accompanied by new requirements for more effective consultation by Councils with their communities and the provision by Councils of increased opportunities for citizen participation to be facilitated by more transparent and open procedures. The new legislation also provided for the clarification of the roles of elected members and appointed staff, the introduction of appointive CEOs (general managers) and greater measures of accountability through audit and performance management. All of these changes are indicative of the broader managerialist trends overtaking the public sector discussed above. In Tasmania, the clarification and redefinition of the roles of elected mayors and appointed general managers signified a major cultural change. Many of these mayors had held the position of warden under the previous local government legislation. In this role they had a significant role to play in operational matters and it took these mayors some time to adapt to the fact that these duties and powers were now vested in the position of general manager.

Provisions were made in the new *Local Government Act 1993* for councils to be able to establish special committees to assist Council in its decision-making and management and planning activities⁶⁸. These provisions were included in response to

⁶⁸ For example, under Section 24 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, a 'council may establish, on such terms and for such purposes as it thinks fit, special committees'.

concerns raised by numerous councils that there would be a loss of communities of interest as a consequence of amalgamations. According to the Local Government Act Steering Committee (1992, p.67), these councils

have pointed to, for example, high levels of direct community participation in the provision of services or local development aspirations that are quite different to those that are likely to be pursued by a new and larger municipality.

When making these provisions, concerns were expressed about the potential for such committees to contribute to

a destabilisation of Council business by exposing local government processes to manipulation by well organised minorities potentially leading to community division and conflict (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1992, p.68).

There were also concerns that ‘such a provision usurps the powers of Councils and the authority of Council members as duly elected representatives of the community’ (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1992, p.68).

The collaborative and cooperative approach to local government modernisation highlights the new status of local government as a more equal partner in inter-governmental relations. This status as a partner with State Government was initiated by the Field Labor Government, enshrined in new legislation and strengthened under the Bacon Labor Government with the introduction of bilateral or other intergovernmental partnership agreements designed to drive key performance goals of mutual interest or benefit.

A new planning system

In Tasmania, development approval and the management of land resources is the responsibility of local government and incorporates decisions related to streetscape and other place-making activities. Indeed, local governments regard these as core functional responsibilities (Balmer 2002, no page). Recall that in all states substantial reforms were made to planning systems and planning statutes in parallel with the

changes to local government acts as part of widespread local government modernisation programs (Wensing 1997a). In Tasmania these reforms resulted in the development of the Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS) and while they were contiguous with others in local government they were not necessarily attributable to the same generative forces that prompted those other reforms.⁶⁹

The planning system reforms were initiated under the Labor-Green Accord by the Field Labor Government in response to demands from the Green Independents and were then further implemented by the Liberal Government in 1993/1994. The RMPS consists of a suite of ‘core and adjunct legislation’⁷⁰ for resource management and planning based on internationally agreed principles of sustainable development⁷¹, (Stratford 2008, p.167). Significantly, three key industry sectors—forestry, mining and marine farming—were exempt from the RMPS to ensure the legislation passed through parliament (Stratford 2008). These exemptions contribute to ongoing tensions surrounding the use and management of the State’s resources and are relevant here, in particular, as they relate to forestry amongst others. Its exclusion has severely limited local capacities to mitigate, let alone regulate, the impact of the forest and timber pulp and paper industries. Indeed, in some cases it would appear that those local government actors who are supportive of forest industries use their narrow jurisdiction as a legitimate reason to ignore some community concerns about the impact of forestry on the quality of life of municipal residents.

⁶⁹ Other trends were more influential in the formulation of the Tasmanian system, including Australia’s engagement in (inter)national ecologically sustainable development agenda, and reforms to resource management and planning systems in other countries, such as the introduction of New Zealand’s pioneering Resource Act 1990 (Stratford 2008).

⁷⁰ The RMPS is supported by the following legislation: Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993; Resource Planning and Development Commission Act 1997; Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal Act 1993; State Policies and Projects Act 1993; Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994; Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995; and Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act 1999. A further 16 Acts are relevant to the operation of the RMPS, including the Local Government Act 1993 (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003).

⁷¹ For the purposes of the RMPS sustainable development is defined as follows:

Sustainable development means managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while:

- sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations;
- safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems; and
- avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003, p.2).

The purpose of the RMPS is to ‘achieve sustainable outcomes from the use or development of the State’s natural and physical resources’ (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003, p.6). There are five objectives of the RMPS, two of which make direct reference to the importance of public participation in decision-making processes concerning resource management and planning, identified below:

- promote the sustainable development of natural and physical resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity;
- provide for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land and water;
- encourage public involvement in resource management and planning;
- facilitate economic development in accordance with the objectives set out above; and
- promote the sharing of responsibility for resource management and planning between the different spheres of Government, the community and industry in the State (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003, p.6).

The RMPS also lists six principles considered fundamental in the consideration of how the State’s resources are used or developed, including inter-generational equity, conservation of biodiversity, a precautionary approach, social equity, efficiency and community participation (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003). There are a further five elements required for the effective implementation of the planning system. These are strategic planning, performance rather than prescriptive assessment processes, a whole of government approach, public participation and the monitoring of the state of the environment (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003). It is clear that the community is considered an important stakeholder in establishing the parameters for the use or development of resources through their participation in developing council strategic plans and planning schemes; something that has been described by one planning consultant as *setting the limits of acceptable change* (Key Informant 05, 2001).

However it is apparent that there is insufficient citizen participation in strategic planning processes, a result of both inadequate participatory processes and public

apathy. Instead community actors tend to react to individual development proposals where they have limited opportunities to influence decisions, especially if the proposal is for a use permitted under the relevant council's planning scheme. This situation contributes to substantial frustration and conflict amongst the various actors involved in decision-making processes. These observations are also significant given the critical role ostensibly afforded to planning in enhancing citizen participation in local government decision-making processes alongside its roles in place-making and community capacity building.

One effect of the RMPS has been the attempt to depoliticise the decision-making processes in relation to individual development applications by distinguishing between Council roles as a representative body and as a statutory planning authority. However, in practice, politics (that is, the expression of and responses to sectional interests) remains a dominant force in making development approval decisions. The *LUPAA*, the central legislation underpinning the RMPS, designates Councils as planning authorities responsible for the preparation and administration of planning schemes; certification of amendments to planning schemes; assessment and approval of applications for planning permits for the use and development of land; and the enforcement of planning scheme provisions and permit conditions (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2003). When acting as the planning authority, councillors have a statutory duty to make decisions based on criteria established by the council's planning scheme, which has the status of subordinate legislation. The planning scheme must in turn be consistent with the objectives of the RMPS and reflect the agreed directions for resource management and development controls for the municipal area set out in the council's strategic plan. Community actors may make representations to council in support of or against a development proposal; however the final decision must be made on the merits of the case and not in response to political pressure from constituents.

Councillors have found it difficult to manage what has been described by one key informant as an *uneasy dysfunction* between their roles as elected representatives and their roles as members of a planning authority (Key Informant 05, 2001). The problem is exacerbated by the fact that councillors tend to remain vigilant to *the political consequences of their actions* (Key Informant 05, 2001). As a result they

frequently ... *make political decisions in planning cases* and as this research participant further explained:

They don't understand. They make decisions as though they are representatives of the community, when really they should be making decisions on planning as though they are stewards of the environment within the framework of the objective of the Act ... The two [roles] overlap... because the objectives of the Act are underpinned by ... sustainable development, community participation and community values (Key Informant 05, 2001).

Such problems aside, this participant was at pains to point out that the RMPS framework *is essentially the right one and we need to teach people to use it ... to generate an understanding amongst everybody and teach them the skills of participation and assessment and goal setting* (Key Informant 05, 2001). To do so could resolve the confusion and conflict that arises when decisions on individual developments are hijacked by attempts to resolve bigger issues that could have been addressed prior in strategic planning processes.

Accountability to the community

A key intention of the modernisation program in Tasmania was to shift the emphasis of local government accountability away from State Government towards their constituents (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991). A range of mechanisms was included in the new local government and planning legislation to achieve this goal, the most important aimed to increase transparency as well as accountability and to enhance opportunities for community participation. As in other states, there were also new requirements to develop and make public strategic and operational plans and annual reports including summaries of financial statements. Additionally, council meetings were now required to be open to the public. Community consultation and participation has been described by the Local Government Board as having the 'potential to improve the quality of representation overall and ensure that it is more equitable, inclusive, diverse and balanced' (Local Government Board 2002, p.5, emphasis removed). According to Chapman (1995, p.21 quoted in Wensing 1997, p.97), representation

of local community views and their incorporation into policies at the local level ... is an essential part of recognising councils as governing bodies and not merely agents acting on delegated authority.

Enhanced community access to decision-making processes was primarily to be achieved by citizen participation in strategic planning processes. Under s.66 (1-4) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, all councils are required to produce a strategic plan for the municipal area in consultation ‘with the community in its municipal area and any other authorities and bodies it considers appropriate’.

Since the new act in 1993, there was a massive turn around. The old act was ‘you’re accountable to the Minister’; the new act broadly [is or] should be ‘you are accountable to the community’. I [now] hear mayors and senior local government people say ‘well we’re going to have to consult our community about that’, [and these are people] who 10 years ago wouldn’t even have thought of it ... And ... the Board [has] been promoting [the idea that] council reports have a standard format ... and now one of the compulsory headings is community consultation: it’s absolutely fundamental (Key Informant 02, 2002).

Yet, there is evidence that numerous councils are having difficulty in achieving such goals due to competing demands on their human and fiscal resources. One explanation for such difficulty is that councils are constrained by requirements to respond to state and federal demands in order to demonstrate improved organisational and financial performance. In this vein, the Local Government Division of the State Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC), in partnership with LGAT and the Local Government Managers Association (LGMA), established a framework of key performance indicators to enable Councils to measure their organisational performance, benchmark their operations, identify best practice, monitor trends over time and improve accountability to the community (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2007). Additionally, the LGB, whose members are appointed by the Minister responsible for local government,⁷² conducts regular

⁷² Ministerial appointment applies to all members except the Director of Local Government, who holds a statutory position on the Board.

reviews of councils and other specific reviews at the Minister's request.⁷³ These reporting requirements, while partly designed to improve local government's accountability to constituent communities, may in fact constrain the capacities of the different councils to respond fully to community needs and aspirations.

According to Marshall (1998, p.649), under such pressures 'management focus tends to narrow to operational activities such as service delivery and corporate procedures', which are easily quantifiable and reportable. Participation, in other words, in setting clear strategic direction and operational imperatives for economic efficiency, may be at odds, and there is evidence that

some councils pay lip service to [consultation and participation], some councils only take notice when they want to, when the community is telling them what they want to hear. We've [LGB] actually done reviews where we have challenged councils [and told them] that they are not listening to their communities, that they are not taking it seriously and they got very upset with us, but that's what our role is (Key Informant 02, 2002).

The reluctance of councils to fully embrace community participation in local government processes is not simply about navigating these odds, however. A more general recalcitrance has contributed to significant tensions between community and local government actors. Indeed, during the inquiry into local government modernisation, the Local Government Advisory Board (1992, p.58) found that where

the questions of greater community participation was raised with Local Government representatives ... there was a frequent view expressed that, as a whole, Councils did not see the need for wider and more effective community participation as an outcome of modernisation. It has been evident to the Board ... that very few Councils had informed their communities about the modernisation proposals, much

⁷³ The Local Government Board is a statutory body established under the *Local Government Act 1993*. The Board's roles are to conduct a general review of each council at least once every eight years; to conduct supplementary and specific reviews of councils that concentrate on a specific topic or topics at the request of the Minister; to carry out reviews of single and joint authorities; and to provide general advice to the Minister at his or her request (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2008a).

less invited communities to participate in the formulation of Council's submission, or participate in the Hearings.

Nevertheless, the

Board has a strong view that community participation, as a political and strategic input to the modernisation/restructuring processes, is imperative, if the benefits of modernisation are to be understood by, and flow on to, communities (Local Government Advisory Board 1992, p.58).

Although the intention of modernisation was to create a model of municipal government more oriented to local communities, state and federal governments have remained important stakeholders, and substantial reporting requirements accompanied the new general competence powers to monitor and audit local government financial and governance activities. Like its counterparts, in other states the Tasmanian Government retains the legislative power to dismiss a council and insert an administrator and, while reluctant to exercise such powers, in principle it maintains substantial potential influence over local government activities.

A new era of State-local government relations

Between 1997 and 1998, a further round of local government amalgamations was attempted in Tasmania by the Rundle Liberal Government. Unlike the 1993 amalgamations, undertaken in a climate of consultation, the attempt in 1997 to rationalise further the number of municipal areas was pushed from the top down and provided insufficient time for consultation with local government. The State Government gave the LGB only six months within which to prepare and submit its final report (Haward & Zwart 2000). In the end, the attempt generated *very acrimonious* relationships between State Government and local government actors (Key Informant 04, 2003), and ultimately failed due to a legal challenge mounted in the Supreme Court by the Devonport City Council, Central Highlands Council and Southern Midlands Council, coupled with a change of government. In 1998 the incoming Bacon Labor Government was thus presented with a significant challenge in repairing State-local government relationships and developed a partnership program as a means to overcome the *hostility and acrimony between the two spheres*

of government ... and introduce a new way of dealing with one another (Key Informant 04, 2003). These governance reforms were initially driven by Premier Bacon, who had *a real vision* and was *totally engaged* in the reforms as a *transformational process*, with a focus on re-engaging local government in an ongoing dialogue between local and State government to rebuild the relationships between the two. Partnership agreements were considered a critical tool by which to get State and local government actors *to pass across things that they have held to themselves as being their own ... and in terms of the alliances they can make* (Key Informant 04, 2003).

A series of bilateral, regional and state-wide partnership agreements between State Government and local governments have now been entered into as a means of finding ‘ways of better serving Tasmanian communities through a cooperative approach between the two spheres of government’ (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2008b, no page number). These agreements are also viewed by the Tasmanian Government as ‘integral to implementing the benchmarks set by Tasmania *Together*’ a twenty-year social, environmental and economic plan for the State also initiated in the early years of the Bacon Labor Government (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2008b, no page),

There are two objectives underpinning the partnership agreements.

1. With the local community, identify opportunities to work in partnership with Local Government to progress agreed social, economic and environmental issues for local government areas (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2008b, no page).
2. Ensure effective service delivery arrangements to meet the reasonable needs of all residents including, where appropriate, options to improve coordination of joint service delivery arrangements to address gaps and overlaps in service delivery (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2008b, no page).

In 2007, 28 councils had entered into bilateral agreements. The exception, the Huon Valley Council, is yet to sign an agreement, but has entered into negotiations with

the Tasmanian Government.⁷⁴ Issues covered in bilateral agreements are wide-ranging, and typically include infrastructure, economic development, environment and land management, roads and transport, community development, education, sport, recreation and tourism, information and communications technology and financial arrangements.

Regional partnership agreements have also been entered into with three regional affiliations of Tasmanian councils—Cradle Coast Authority, Northern Tasmania Development and the Southern Councils of Tasmania, of which the Huon Valley Council is a member. Three issue-specific partnership agreements have been signed in the south of Tasmania in addition to four state-wide partnership agreements and one tripartite partnership agreement.

The development of partnership agreements reflects the need for joined-up solutions to service delivery where there is vertical, horizontal and lateral integration within and across levels of government, government agencies and non-government sectors (Ryan 2002). Such moves to develop mechanisms for greater integration are expected to result in greater co-ordination in policy development and implementation (Ryan 2002). According to Ling (2002), joined-up government is one means by which to manage intra-state relationships and open the state to different forms of participation by different interests. Strategies of joined-up government also have the potential to provide new ways of working across organisations, new means of accountability and incentives and new ways of delivering services (Ling 2002). The partnership agreements in Tasmania are significant step in this direction.

⁷⁴ In discussions with a member of the Local Government Division, it was noted that the Huon Valley is one of a number of councils that *are fiercely of a notion that they know what's best for them* (Key Informant 04, 2003). This participant would not be drawn to comment any further on that observation except to say that *some significance could be taken from the fact they* [the Huon Valley Council] *had not come on board* (Key Informant 04, 2003).

Summary

The reform of the local government sector in Australia resulted in fundamental changes to local government functional responsibilities, organisational structure, legislation and intergovernmental relationships. Central to these reforms was the introduction of a range of governmental technologies designed to improve local government economic efficiency and overall effectiveness and make councils more accountable, transparent, fair, open and inclusive. The key mechanisms of change were the integration of managerialist principles into local government organisational procedures, the reform of local government legislation and structural reform through amalgamations. A further significant element of local government reforms was the requirement that local government provide enhanced opportunities for citizen participation. The involvement of citizens in strategic and land use planning processes was considered a particularly important means by which to give effect to this goal. The territory between the two goals of economic efficiency on the one hand and enhanced participation on the other is inscribed with tension and contradiction. Indeed, Chapman (1997) has argued that local government reforms have put economy, efficiency and effectiveness ahead of the capacity of government to govern. Furthermore, it is unclear whether local government reforms 'will operate to the detriment of participation, responsiveness or democratic values' (Chapman 1997b, p.16).

The map of a reformed landscape of local government practices provided in this chapter will be shown in chapter six to have had significant impacts and effects upon the constitution of Geeveston as a place and on Geeveston people who, through the GSRG, sought to engage in the conduct of conduct on their own terms. The changes to local government have also challenged long standing ideas about how to govern and be governed among community and government actors in and associated with the Huon Valley Council. In the next chapter I case study provide some insights into the effects of the reforms for Huon Valley Council, its councillors, council employees and a selection of community actors.

Chapter 5

The effects of local government reforms in the Huon Valley

In Western democracies, local government reform discourses have placed citizenship and participation at the centre

of state-civil society relations in which citizens, playing an active role in the constitution and governance of society, offer a way forward in a context of growing social fragmentation, life opportunities, and expectations. Active citizens are defined, not through consumerist power, or primarily as passive electors in representative democratic elections, but as democratic agents, empowering themselves through their challenges to the activities of institutions and organisations which shape their everyday lives (Raco & Imrie 2000, p.2188).

In the Huon Valley, long-standing ideas about how to govern and be governed have been called into question as a result of the new discourses and practices of government, analysed in the previous chapter. These neoliberal technologies of government have incorporated rural locales into a wider net of governmental relations that produce new social and spatial forms of regulation that highlight the active citizen and the responsible community. Such emphases challenge extant conceptions of the role of local government and the role of citizens in local governing processes.

The process of local government modernisation was difficult for local government and community actors in the Huon Valley. Change processes, particularly those related to amalgamation, entrenched a negative relationship between local government and community actors, many of whom were not ready for the adjustments that followed. Indeed, almost ten years post-modernisation, when the primary data for this research were collected, local government and community actors in the Huon Valley were still working through how to respond to the (not so) new rationales and technologies of government that accompanied modernisation. Problematic experiences and challenges associated with managing change are especially evident in interviews with councillors and council officers and, in particular, their responses to questions about how best to manage the pressures for

enhanced citizen participation, which have emerged in a local government environment where the political culture is one of representative rather than deliberative or participatory democracy. The new local governance system described in the previous chapter provides significant opportunities for citizen participation in principle; however, evidence from the Huon Valley suggests that not all community and local government actors, are in a position to make the most of these opportunities. Certainly, among local government actors, there are disparate views about the role of community actors in local government decision-making processes and how to accommodate and manage their participation.

In such light, the purpose of this chapter is to analyse councillors' and council officers' understandings of the role of community actors in local government decision-making processes by drawing on insights from in-depth interviews and observational work. The analysis and discussion are revealing in terms of how local government and community actors are adjusting to the changes in local governing processes. The chapter also forms a context in which to examine, in chapter six, the creation, activities and achievements of the GSRG community-local government partnership. There I also examine the effects of that partnership in re-constituting community and local government actors' understandings of the benefits and limitations of inclusive governing practices. The material practices of governing in the Huon Valley documented here highlight a paradox of liberal-democracy—the irreconcilable tensions between equality and liberty (Mouffe 2000) and more specifically between identity politics and the universalism of citizenship (Purvis & Hunt 1999)—and provide salient insights into the challenges that adhere to attempts to make democracy work under these conditions, ideas that are developed in chapter seven.

Constituting citizenship and participation in the Huon Valley

Whoever it is that gets to be considered a citizen (that is, a member of the political community) in the Huon Valley provides an important subtext to governance there, where issues of citizenship and participation are layered, complex and the source of numerous tensions among and between councillors, council staff and community actors. These tensions are played out when citizenship is used as a mediating practice that connects individuals and the various levels of government (Barry 1996) or alternatively isolates or excludes specific individuals or groups (Mouffe 1992).

Political identity in general and citizenship in particular are constituted in the relations among local government and community actors, as well as legislation, regulations and rules that contain statements about the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Councillors are key actors in local governance, providing an essential link between local government and the community. Council staff, under the direction of the general manager, are key to implementing policies set by Council and can act as significant gatekeepers in terms of the transmission [translation] of information to and from the Council. How councillors and council managers constitute citizenship provides a foundational context for thinking about how these local government actors understand what it means to govern, how they see the role of community actors in the processes of local government, and how they think about the distribution of access to political representation and opportunities for participation among the various interest groups within the municipal area.

At interview, councillors and council managers acknowledged that citizenship signifies an individual's membership of a political community. In principle, as members of a political community, the Huon Valley's citizens have certain rights and obligations in relation to political participation. In practice, the rights and obligations of citizenship are often narrowly or poorly understood, ill-defined, and frequently contested by local government and community actors alike. This lack of clarity creates tension and conflict, for example when community actors request or are asked to become involved in decision-making processes such as those determining strategic directions to manage the resources of the municipal area. Many community actors are therefore unclear about what is expected of them and about what they can reasonably expect from council; in some cases community actors expect too much and in others too little. Local government actors also become frustrated when community actors erroneously or innocently request a level of participation in

governance that the council is unable (or unwilling) to provide; for instance, when seeking involvement in issues over which council has no jurisdiction.⁷⁵

Such confusion undermines participatory processes (such as public meetings, community-council committees or consultation) which are thought to have a greater chance of success when rights, responsibilities and options are clearly defined and communicated to all involved. For example, at a public meeting to gather input from community actors to the development of the Huon Valley Council's strategic plan, some participants focused on issues related to forest industries, an area over which the council has limited jurisdiction. As noted by one councillor, some of the issues raised at the meeting

were completely out of council's hands ... people have got to realise what jurisdiction council has ... As a council we should've put some guidelines up ... [for instance in relation to a request that there was no logging of old growth] ... well it's not a council issue; we can't enforce that (HVCR 01, 2002).

The foregoing discussion highlights the general point that clarifying and communicating the rights and obligations of citizens is important. So too is the opportunity to revisit regularly the question of whether those rights and obligations are appropriate or sufficient. However, if that debate is restricted to councillors alone, and if limited opportunities are given to citizens to challenge their decisions on such matters, further tensions may arise.

In the Huon Valley, councillors and managers believe that citizenship is something to be extended to all residents of the municipal area and whom, they considered, should be more or less equally represented. Two councillors demonstrated a broad understanding of whose interests should be considered in governing processes that crossed generations and the formal boundaries of the municipal area and include future generations, future residents, absentee landlords, visitors to the area, and

⁷⁵ Other areas where it is considered inappropriate for community actors to be involved are outlined in Schedule 4, section 10 (1) of *Local Government Act 1993*, which relates to closed council meetings. This section states that a council meeting **may** be closed to the public to discuss a range of confidential, human resource, business and legal matters listed in this Act. However, under section 10A (1c) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1931* 'the meaning of the word "may" is to be construed as being discretionary or enabling, as the context requires'. This means that a simple majority of Council can vote to make any of the abovementioned matters open to public scrutiny, however in practice the consequences of doing so may outweigh the benefits.

others who may be indirectly affected by the decisions of the Huon Valley Council⁷⁶ (HVCR 05, 2002 and HVCR 11, 2003). Another councillor distinguished between ratepayers whom he claimed should have greater representation and influence and non-ratepayers who should have less representation (HVCR 04, 2002). This councillor was adamant that

local government was never meant to be politicized. I think it was about providing services, and people pay rates for a service and we're losing sight of the rate payers ... the customers in local government (HVCR 04, 2002).

This position reflects both a traditionalist and a new corporate approach to government expressive of the desire to limit participation in governance to those who pay. The elderly and the young were two groups of community actors singled out for special consideration by numerous councillors who considered that these actors were likely to be marginalised in local governing processes given widespread assumptions about their reduced capacity to participate.⁷⁷

Following his first election to the Huon Valley Council, one councillor told me of the disappointment he felt about the changing nature of citizenship in the municipality:

I don't think there are citizens anymore. I think there's people that live in an area and ... they work in another area and most of their lives are spent away from ... where they actually live ... I consider a citizen is one who stays in their backyards, working around here [within the locale/community] and they join forces with the rest of the citizens to improve this area or to the community good (HVCR 09, 2003).

The position of this councillor may be an expression of the anomie that, according to communitarian critiques (see for example Etzioni 1997; Putnam 1993 & 1995), has accompanied the liberal approach to governing which has become dominant in the western democracies (Mouffe 1992). It may also reflect the apparent division

⁷⁶ These two councillors are members of the Tasmanian Greens

⁷⁷ Indeed the Huon Valley Council has made particular efforts in providing services and opportunities for youth. The Council's Youth Service provides a wide variety of programs and activities for young people aged 12 - 24 years including a youth advisory committee, youth outreach programs, holiday programs, a youth outreach van, a youth arts project and a young parenting program (Huon Valley Council 2008b).

between ‘locals’ and ‘newcomers’ to the Huon Valley noted earlier; one resulting in the differential treatment of community actors by some councillors. Another councillor, also a ‘newcomer’ to the Huon Valley, expressed concerns that while all residents as citizens *had a right to be treated fairly and equally*, not all were. According to this councillor, *different people are treated according to who they are, who they know and who they associate with* (HVCR 11, 2003). For example, while there is a rhetorical commitment to fairness and equality among councillors, in practice the right of citizens to speak is measured differently by councillors. Fewer rights are accorded by the main faction in Council to those who sympathize with or attempt to advance socio-ecological imperatives and so challenge the *status quo* and the precedence given to imperatives of economic development. It is noteworthy that the values of the majority of councillors tend to align with those of the State’s Labor Government, the forest unions, and Forestry Tasmania. In council meetings and other fora, these councillors apparent reluctance to engage with the views of those citizens who hold and actively promote environmental ideologies denies the worth of their input and their democratic right and responsibilities to participate in policy formulation (Catt & Murphy 2003). These machinations gesture to the need to observe a larger duty, described by Rayner (1997, p.16) in the following terms:

Those in power have a duty to listen, and must not dismiss the speaker as a mere protestor or tedious dissident. This is the key, the philosophical vehicle of citizenship: the feeling that we are all individuals of intrinsic worth and entitled to be taken seriously.

In conversations with Huon Valley councillors, and from observations of Council meetings, it became apparent that the majority of councillors view citizenship as a *universal* right and prefer to disengage actively with the possibility of according constituents the *particular* right to a (political) identity (Isin & Wood 1999). For these councillors, accepting and making space for the expression of multiple political identities is incompatible with (representative) democracy and is read or understood as a destabilizing, undermining and weakening force rather than one that augments and strengthens their capacity to govern. This desire for a universal / homogeneous political identity is evident in the following quote from a senior Huon Valley Council manager, who notes that, after the amalgamation of the Port Cygnet, Esperance and Huon councils,

*the [newly formed] council spent a lot of time trying to get people to say we are the Valley, we're not Cygnet, we're not Esperance, we're not Dover or we're not Huonville, we're the Huon Valley ... We've really consciously emphasized the Valley as a way of trying to get people to accept that the Valley is **one community**... The [name] Huon Valley Council ... got rid of Cygnet, Esperance and Huon to **form a new identity** (HVCOF 03, 2002, emphasis added).*

What it means to be a member of this newly constituted political identity and regional community is still being contested by community and local government actors. Indeed, the need to provide spaces for *different* voices to be heard in a considered and respectful way has become important in the Huon Valley given the increasingly diverse needs and values of its population. As explained in chapter one, the demography of the Huon Valley has changed as a result of a combination of the out-migration of farming people coupled with the in-migration of (typically urban) people seeking alternative lifestyles. The so-called 'newcomers' bring with them a set of values that are often significantly different from those of the 'locals' who remain. This new diversity within the population is acknowledged rhetorically in the Huon Valley Council's most recent strategic plan which lists diversity as 'the most distinctive characteristic of the Huon Valley community' (Huon Valley Council 2002-2007, p.3).

The Huon Valley community holds many strong and different views about local issues and tends to identify strongly with a local town or area, as well as the Huon Valley as a whole ... There is a dynamic character to the Huon Valley that is a strength if it is managed well by an organisation such as the Huon Valley Council (Huon Valley Council 2002-2007, p.3).

The use of the term *manage* in the quote above is intriguing in relation to diversity and conflict in local governing practices. From my research it would appear that the term means to discipline, manipulate and control the diverse interests of Huon Valley residents in order to better administer, regulate and monitor those interests for ends that are considered by the *majority* of councillors to be in the best interests of the Huon Valley community as a whole. The word manage may also mean to succeed in accomplishing a task; yet, distilling and combining such diverse interests into a strategic direction to guide local government actors in their decision-making on specific issues has proved challenging for the Huon Valley Council. In short, diverse

interests within the municipality and the conflicts they produce have yet to be 'managed well' by council and these tensions are echoed in how councillors and council managers have viewed the role of citizens in local government decision-making and other processes. It is to an analysis of the responses of these local government actors to questions about the role of community actors in local government processes that I now turn.

Contesting the role of community actors in governing the Huon Valley municipal area

Understandings among Huon Valley councillors and council managers of citizenship discussed above provide a subtext over which are layered diverse constitutions of the role of residents in decision-making and other processes of local government. In conversations with these actors it became evident that there are discrepancies between certain rhetorical and material practices that reflect the acute tensions over whether how and with what effects residents can be (are) involved in the business of governing the municipal area. The attitudes of these local government actors about the role of citizens in local governing processes tend to reflect the fundamental divisions within the Huon Valley Council and among Huon Valley community actors. The ways in which Huon Valley councillors and council managers constitute the role of community actors in local government decision-making processes affects how these actors engage in and engage community actors in participatory processes.

Participation is a fundamental expression of active citizenship, which in turn is considered important to ensuring effective, fair and equitable local governance, and to the resolution of common problems at various scales, from the township to the municipal area and beyond. The Huon Valley Council uses numerous strategies for involving community actors in local government processes (discussed below) and while the majority of councillors and council managers value participation in principle, in practice these actors find participatory processes challenging. In the Huon Valley, participatory processes are often adversarial, in part as a result of the longstanding divisions within the Huon Valley, but also because participants have disparate expectations of their roles in such processes and their capacity to influence outcomes. In these cases, local government and community actors have tended to leave such processes disillusioned, further polarised and increasingly reluctant to engage (productively) in participatory processes in the future.

At interview, all councillors acknowledged the important roles that community actors have in contributing to governing processes in principle, especially in developing future visions and directions for the Huon Valley municipal area. Yet, the majority of participation tends to be reactive and focused on single issues (fights over individual development proposals, for example) rather than progressive and oriented to long-term directions for the Valley's communities of place, interest and identity (determining a landscape strategy for the Valley, for example). The significant increase in numbers of community actors attending Huon Valley Council meetings as members of the public gallery during the period in which Southwood was being assessed by the council and the RPDC is one example of the reactive participation that was evident in the Huon Valley in 2002. An analysis of the behaviour of local government and community actors at Council meetings also reveals some of the frustration among some community actors related to a perceived lack of openness, transparency and inclusiveness in Council decision-making processes.

Reactive participation: the (ab)use of public question time

Under the *Huon Valley Council Meeting Procedures By-Law 2001*, unless a meeting is determined to be a closed meeting,⁷⁸ it is to be open to the public. This by-law has since been replaced by the *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005*, which applies to all Tasmanian councils. It continues to be a requirement, under section 14 of these regulations, that Council meetings are open to the public. Members of the public who attend Council meetings are referred to collectively as the public gallery, as I will do here. During the period of my observations of Huon Valley Council meetings the public gallery was typically full to overflowing. On one occasion there were 200 members in the public gallery and the Council meeting had to be relocated to a larger venue. At other times when nothing controversial was on the agenda only a handful of community actors would attend Council meetings, providing some support for one councillor's observation that *the vast majority of the community don't trouble themselves with Council unless something goes wrong* (HVCR 02, 2002).

⁷⁸ See footnote on page 138 above for reasons why a Council meeting may be closed to the public.

During the period of my observations, the public gallery was often evenly split along ideological lines, manifesting as a physical separation of the warring parties (one group on either side of the room). The public gallery has been described by one councillor in the following terms.

You get the same mob from both sides that come to the council meetings and you get ... about three or four people there who have what I call lateral vision and are thinking but quite often don't express themselves too well. You then have the wolf pack [pro-development] on the one side and the galloping reindeers [pro-conservation] on the other and they are totally bigoted towards their own avenues (HVCR 08, 2002).

At each Council meeting, 15 minutes is allocated to public question time, to allow community actors to ask questions of Council. During the period of my observation of Council meetings it was apparent that public question time was fraught; used by many community actors as an opportunity to challenge those councillors who supported Southwood and forest industries in general. Their activist tactics—making statements rather than asking questions, heckling and making derisive comments about the position of some councillors—contravened the rules governing public question time. They also contravened the rules governing the expected conduct of members of the public gallery. According to one Huon Valley Council senior manager, there has been some confusion among members of the public gallery about what can be achieved by asking a question of Council during public question time:

... people only come to ask a question if they've got a beef or something ... and they sometimes have an expectation that they're going to get a decision made, whereas they can only ask a question and there is a confusion that the privilege⁷⁹ they've been given in asking a question will be followed through into an action (HVCO 03, 2002).

Under the Huon Valley Council's Standing Orders, only matters that have been listed on the agenda for a particular meeting can be considered by the Council. These

⁷⁹ Prior to 2005, public question time was provided at the discretion of individual Councils and could indeed be said to be a privilege. Since the introduction of *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005*, this *privilege* has become a *right*. It is now a requirement that 'the chairperson at an ordinary meeting of a council must ensure that, if required, at least 15 minutes of that meeting is made available for questions by members of the public' (State of Tasmania 2005, s.31(3)).

orders mean that it is not possible for the Council to make any decisions on other matters that may arise in public question time.

This research participant went on to explain that the

public gallery is a facility that if used properly by the public can be a worthwhile part of a Council meeting. Unfortunately it gets hijacked ... people use it for the wrong purposes ... for political point scoring ... I suppose that's part of the process ... it's just unfortunate that some people try and take advantage of it ... I don't think we've controlled public question time as well as we should have ... I think that people ought to be thrown out earlier ... I think that it's a matter of the mayor keeping control of public question time and not being frightened to throw out those people that have abused public question time and hurt the people that have been genuinely trying to use it properly (HVCO 03, 2002).

The Mayor, whose role it is to chair Council meetings, and to whom all questions must be addressed, deployed numerous strategies and tactics to silence (discipline) these dissenting voices. He would cut short questions with a perfunctory “next question please”; refuse to answer questions related to Council agenda items; and evict people from the public gallery whose behaviour was considered too disruptive. Indeed, during one meeting I attended, the entire public gallery was evicted on the grounds of disruptive behaviour. From my observations, the use of public question time by some community actors as a space of insurgent citizenship (Holston 1998)⁸⁰ appeared to be frustrating for all involved. Community actors were using public question time to try and secure a level of participation for which it was not designed; a consequence, according to one councillor, of there being *insufficient alternative opportunities for the level of participation these actors wanted* (HVCR 05, 2002). This councillor also noted that, from a council point of view, public question time has become *a very defensive interaction between the community and the council* as questions *tend to come in the form of criticism of council operations* (HVCR 05,

⁸⁰ Holston defines insurgent citizenship as attempts to ‘introduce new identities and practices that disturb established histories’ (Holston 1998, p.48). Holston (1998, p.48) explains that

Citizenship changes as new members emerge to advance their claims, expanding its realm, and as new forms of segregation and violence counter these advances, eroding it. The sites of insurgent citizenship are found at the intersection of these processes of expansion and erosion.

2002). Another councillor also spoke of the defensiveness of councillors as they attempted to negotiate such demands to account for their decisions.

I am quite embarrassed by some of the questions that ... [members of the public gallery] ask because they are so pointed; they're taking one of the councillors down a peg which is wrong. It's not what question time is about ... It makes you defensive and I'm sure most of the other councillors are to some degree ... and I think it's really bad on the staff as well, 'cause they basically have to defend themselves and their work ... Many of the questions can be answered without it being at question time (HVCR 02, 2002).

Another councillor suggested that

public question time is irrelevant at the Council meetings not for any other reason other than there's other avenues to address the ... Council ... in written format where you've probably got more opportunity to say what you wanted to say ... Then the Council's got a copy of that letter or question or thought and they've got more idea of what they wanted to express, instead of having to stand up in a room and quickly ask a question and then be told to sit down and I don't think a lot of them get an answer anyway ... I don't think public question time is benefiting anyone. Certainly [though] have the gallery for transparency and to make sure things are happening how it should be happening (HVCR 09, 2003).

Reference to the conduct of council and community actors during public question time is also made in the Local Government Board's general review of the Huon Valley Council (Local Government Board 2000). In a summary of public submissions to that review the Local Government Board (2000, p.147) noted that

Many of the residents who dissented from Council's views about environmental issues were also unhappy with the conduct of public question time during Council meetings. They expressed the view that:

- these sessions are poorly conducted;
- question time occurs after the main motions have been voted on;
- overhead projector slides of motions are small and difficult to read, and are not displayed for long enough;
- motions are often put without any debate;
- agendas are not made available to the public at Council meetings, but have to be collected from the Council office beforehand;
- they feel shut out of the decision-making process;

The Board also noted that one resident dissented from the view described above,

commenting that the Mayor and Councillors were harassed by a “continual barrage” at Council meetings, leading to the resignation of one elected member. He said that he was tired of the abusiveness and lack of generosity of these people, who he believes refuse to acknowledge recent huge improvements in land management, forest practices and the impressive cleaning up of the rivers ... (Local Government Board 2000, p.147).

In its response to these criticisms of the Huon Valley Council the Local Government Board (2000, p. 147, original emphasis removed) states that it was clear to them

that some residents with opposing views to the majority view of Council believe that they have a right to use question time to make dissenting statements ... [when] the Standing orders of the Council make it clear that question time is to be used only to ask questions.

That said, the Local Government Board (2000, p.147) acknowledged that ‘residents with dissenting views ... have a right to be heard’ but that the proper place for those voices to be expressed is during ‘strategic planning processes and Town Forums’. The Board was also satisfied that residents had sufficient access to the Council’s agenda, despite the fact that members of the public gallery are only provided with a table of contents at the meeting, making it difficult to follow proceedings and debate if any is entered into⁸¹. A full agenda is available on the Council’s website prior to a meeting and community actors can download and/or print the agenda from this source, or request a copy from the Council for a nominal fee prior to the meeting. Indeed, opportunities to influence the decision-making process occur prior to the meeting in the setting of the agenda over which the position of general manager has the *potential* to wield significant influence by determining what recommendations are put before councillors and in what form.

⁸¹ As part of the review of the *Local Government Act 1993* conducted over two years from 2002, the State Government developed the *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005*, to provide a consistent set of regulations governing meeting procedures across all Tasmanian Councils. Since the introduction of these regulations in 2005 all councils must make a copy of the agenda of a council meeting available free of charge to members of the public attending the meeting (State of Tasmania 2005, s.9 (4)).

In another Tasmanian Council, a number of copies of the full agenda, including attachments, are made available free of charge to members of the public gallery to refer to during Council meetings, as explained by a senior manager of that council.

We give the community the same as we give the councillors. The only thing ... we don't give them is the in-committee section, so they can sit there and read through it with the councillors ... We usually put out about half a dozen on our seats and usually we'll ... have 8 or 10 people come along so they can share between two ... [It] costs us ... about \$8 per agenda but we've always ... given the gallery the full agenda that the Council gets so nobody can claim that we are reading from a different hymn book than they are and they can see the advice [provided to Councillors by the professional staff] ... (Key Informant 03 2003)

According to this participant, such openness and transparency tends to *break down some of the criticisms of [Council] trying to be secretive* ... (Key Informant 03, 2003). While there is no legal requirement to provide full copies of the agenda to members of the public gallery, the fact that the Huon Valley Council chooses not to make Council agenda readily available in the public gallery may reflect a desire to maintain control over decision-making with the councillors and frustrate what councillors perceive as attempts by community actors to 'subvert' decision-making processes. It also does nothing to quell concerns about the perceived lack of transparency and openness expressed by numerous community actors and some councillors.

Community actors' attempts to influence decision-making processes during public question time are also disciplined by the Huon Valley Council's decision to prevent questions being asked about items on the agenda. One senior council manager explained the reason behind this decision thus:

I don't believe that [residents] ought to be able to ask questions relating to agenda items and my reason for that are a) the Judicial Review Act 2000⁸² requires that councillors come into a council meeting with an open mind on an issue and that they [residents] ought not be expressing opinions that might prejudice that view. Councillors should only make up their mind after they've heard the debate [among councillors] ... And I think the other issue is that articulate people can put incredible pressure on councillors by speaking from the public gallery (HVCO 03)⁸³.

Under the *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005*, while there is no direct statement preventing a resident from making a representation to Council on an agenda item, the regulations do allow Council to 'determine any other procedures to be followed in respect of question time' (s.31.7), leaving the decision to broaden or constrain community participation at council meetings entirely to individual councils. Additionally, from observations and from comments made by participants at interview it would appear that the capacity of community actors to influence the way councillors' vote is minimal. Furthermore, there have been accusations from participants that there is considerable caucusing among councillors prior to Council meetings during which time councillors agree to vote in a particular manner. If this practice is indeed occurring it is in breach of the laws of natural justice in which a person making a decision should be unbiased (impartial, unprejudiced and objective) and must act in good faith (be honest and have conviction as to the truth or falsehood of a proposition or body of opinion).

Another participant noted that the introduction of the *Judicial Review Act 2000* had provided legislative tools to restrict the influence of sectional interests and increase the fairness and rigour of decisions by requiring councillors provide reasons for not

⁸²The *Judicial Review Act 2000* brings administrative law to Council decisions. Under this Act councillors are required to apply the rules of natural justice to their decision-making, which amongst other things requires councillors come to the table with an 'open mind'; that is to be open to consideration of qualified advice. They must not come to the table with a totally closed mind. If it is apparent that a councillor has made a decision on an agenda item prior to hearing the debate at Council, an 'aggrieved person' can contest the decision of Council as a point of law in the Supreme Court.

⁸³In another (rural) Tasmanian municipal area, residents are allowed to make representations to Council on agenda items at Council meetings provided they notify Council of their intention to do so prior to the meeting. At that Council, they believe that members of the community have a right to make representations on agenda items (Key Informant 03). This participant acknowledged that while they always allow residents to make representations on agenda items, when the Council is considering planning matters, councillors should really limit their consideration to what's on the report in front of them because there would have been a formal objection period, and any objections submitted to the council would be included in the agenda (Key Informant 03).

accepting the expert advice on a particular planning development application (Key Informant 02, 2002).

Very much so and strangely enough [the] Act has really helped there because if an officer puts a recommendation to the council when it's sitting as a planning authority the assertion development say should be refused and the councils says no we will accept that. Then in the old days what would happen would be that the planning officer, even though he didn't agree with the decision, would be in a position where if this went to appeal he would have to dream up what the reasons were, but now councils are required, if they turn down a recommendation of the officer, to provide reason for the decision. If it's implicit in the officer's report then there's no problem but if they vote against that recommendation or do something different they have to be able to say what the reason is and that has been an enormously beneficial thing I think. They are actually having to give reasons and that kind of limits the political, the politics possibly.

The actions of the Huon Valley Council described above, while not stopping the involvement of community actors, have effectively limited the possible fields of action of community actors and have been interpreted by one councillor as follows:

I don't think participation is made easy for people ... I still think that [the majority of Huon Valley Councillors] don't really want participation because the kind of people that might start to participate might be slightly dangerous to the system as it exists at the moment ... I think maybe from that point of view Southwood has backfired in quite a major way because it gave people a focus, coming in and seeing what actually happens, and now there are a lot of people out there who are very unhappy about the way that council works (HVCR 11, 2003)

The Huon Valley Council now provides community actors with more information about meeting procedures in the hope that this will enable Council to better manage the participation at Council meetings. The council website has detailed information about meeting procedures and explanatory notes have been provided to members of the public gallery, along with a double-sided A4 flyer specifying the purpose of public question time and procedures to follow when asking a question.

Community consultation and participation strategies

According to the Local Government Board, and as pointed to above, the ‘proper’ place for dissenting views to be expressed is during strategic planning processes and town forums conducted by council (Local Government Board 2000). Given that the council’s strategic plan determines the long-term directions for the development and management of the social, economic, environmental and physical resources of the Valley on behalf of its communities of place and of interest, the meaningful involvement of community actors is critical. According to Marshall and Sproats (2000), enhanced citizen involvement was an important compensating mechanism to offset the diminished representation that would result from local government amalgamations. Strategic management and planning practices were seen as tools for promoting enhanced citizen participation. Yet, from my research, it was apparent that the majority of councillors view community actors as having only a minor role in the broader policy and planning decisions of council. Councillors acknowledge that community actors should be involved in the process, and under law council is required to consult with residents in the development of key policy documents including the council’s strategic plan and the planning scheme. However, opportunities for community actors to provide input and influence the outcomes of such policy development processes are minimal. For example, only one public meeting was held in Huonville to allow for public input into the development of the Huon Valley Council’s strategic plan, *Investing in Our Future* (Huon Valley Council 2002-2007). After all, *people can just hop in a car and anybody that's got an interest in it will come to that meeting* (HVCRC 01, 2002)⁸⁴ (there were more public meetings in various locations to communicate the final plan to residents). However, one councillor admitted that many residents *wouldn't be aware of these forums* to solicit community input or ... *the process* involved in developing council policy more generally. This councillor expressed their uncertainty in relation to how best to

⁸⁴ Efforts to engage community actors in the development of council policy appear to have improved more recently. For example, a draft of the Huon Valley Land Use and Development Strategy, a key component of the new Planning Scheme was placed on public display from 16 July to 17 August 2007 in Huonville, Cygnet, Geeveston and Dover and residents and other stakeholders were invited to make submissions to council on the strategy. Information sessions were also provided in these townships as well as in Franklin and the relevant documents were then made available on the internet. In November 2006 a 3 day community workshop was organised and facilitated by Cr Richardson out of which a community plan was developed. The outcomes of that process will be used to inform the development of the next Huon Valley Council strategic plan.

educate the public about how to present their ideas to council effectively (HVCR 07, 2002).

I attended this meeting with two colleagues who had been commissioned by the Huon Valley Council to prepare a report as part of the preparation of the council's strategic plan. At the meeting large sheets of paper were hung around the walls of the hall and people were invited to write down their visions and issues for the Huon Valley on these sheets. According to one councillor, many of the requests of community actors to council were related to matters that were beyond council's control.

Another councillor complained that when residents provide input during such processes they *have to realise what jurisdiction council has* (HVCR 01). When asked whose responsibility it was to ensure residents understood what was expected of them in participatory processes, this councillor acknowledged that council needed to provide participants with guidelines stating clearly the rules of engagement. Despite these initial difficulties, council officers who later conducted workshops around the municipality to communicate the final plan to residents, found it

was very easy to sell ... We went through the overheads explaining what is sustainability and what is the capital assets model and how it relates to the work that council actually does. We started to talk about very practical sort of examples of how the plan all fits together ... The community who had no appreciation ... of sustainability or [capital] assets ... were fine about it ... There was no dissent ... from [those with a] ... hard line conservative view point and ... also [those with a] liberal green ... viewpoint ... all the participants were comfortable with the approach (HVCO 04, 2003).

Participatory processes initiated by the Huon Valley Council have been limited to consultation rather than active participation, a strategy that highly circumscribes opportunities for community actors to control the outcome of decision-making processes. Indeed one councillor, an advocate of active participation and deliberative democracy, expressed his concerns that the Huon Valley Council

does not engage in as much community consultation to the level that I would like to see. That's where we get a lot of discord from our ratepayers because they feel that they're not being listened to and they're not having the opportunity to be involved as

they'd like ... I think there should be a lot more community forums and a process where community members can initiate forums rather than it always coming from Council and being controlled by Council (HVCR 05).

According to this councillor it is imperative that opportunities are provided for community actors to be *actively* involved in local government decision-making processes

because it's their community, it's not Council's community, it's the community's community. It's the place where, in most cases, they chose to live and they should have a say on the community life that [Council and councillors] are responsible for (HVCR 05).

In its submission to the Local Government Board general review of councils, the HVC has claimed that it is committed to 'broad and inclusive consultation' and lists numerous consultation practices as evidence of this claim (Local Government Board 2000, p.21). These practices include holding community meetings as needed to discuss issues of specific interest, for example the development of essential infrastructure such as sewerage schemes, road upgrades and usage and water schemes. The council also involves community actors in the development of a range of council strategies⁸⁵ through community workshops, community forums, surveys, interview with key stakeholders, and community representation on management committees (Local Government Board 2000). A day-long youth consultation program run by the council was attended by 127 young people who identified issues faced by youth in the Huon Valley. Additionally, the council has established numerous committees including 11 special committees, 13 hall management committees and eight informal committees. Annual town forums have been held in Dover, Cygnet, Huonville and Geeveston to discuss strategic issues and 'gain an indication of current issues of importance for inclusion in the annual operational plan' and numerous of community surveys have been conducted on specific issues (Local Government Board 2000, p.24).

⁸⁵ Such plans include the *Huon Valley Strategic Plan 1996*, the *Huon Valley Sport and Recreation Plan 1996*, *Huon Valley Land Use Strategy 1997*, *Huon Catchment Management Plan 1997* and the *Huon Valley/Kingborough Tourism Development Strategy* (Local Government Board 2000).

The Huon Valley Council identified the rationale behind its policy on community consultation and participation in a submission to the Local Government Board:

Council has primarily used consultation mechanisms that focus on gaining the community's view on specific issues rather than general and broad community consultation on a range of issues. Experience has shown that an effective form of consultation occurs when there is an issue which is of immediate concern to the community. Regular consultation through town meetings on a broad range of issues is not thought to be as effective. They have a danger of being perceived by the community as ... token in their nature, particularly if issues are raised on which the Council is unable to immediately act. Issue based consultations are usually held with the distinct purpose of attaining the community's thoughts prior to a decision on a course of action. Response is therefore immediate and interested persons can see that the issues they have raised are considered as a component of the decision making process. This form of communication will therefore be maintained via a range of consultation mechanisms – (workshops, stakeholder meetings, and surveys), together with a commitment to the use of specific issue committees as a mechanism for consultation. This approach will be supplemented by broad scale community consultation on strategic issues (Local Government Board 2000, pp. 25-26).

All councillors, when asked about the role of citizens in local government processes, expressed support for residents having input into decision-making. However, a majority expressed very clearly the view that residents should not be directly involved in making decisions; that role should be reserved for Council alone. A common view among these councillors is that *Councillors are elected to make decisions; if democracy works the way it should ... people should accept whatever the majority come out with* (HVCR 01 2002). Huon Valley councillors, in particular those who are members of the Futures Team, placed a strong emphasis on the efficacy of representative democracy. These councillors also stress the importance of maintaining decision-making control at the centre; *the day-to-day decision-making process should be ... with the elected members* (HVCR 04 2002). As pointed out by a senior member of the State Local Government Division:

Elected members have strong views on their roles and rights and to some extent they are right, elected members have a mandate just by the very nature of them having been elected ... If the people elect someone who 10 per cent of the community can't stand or even if they elect a Council which has a culture in the majority that 10 per

cent can't stand, that's democracy... So elected members do have a pretty strong notion about their own autonomy and their capacity to do exactly what they feel like in terms of decision-making (Key Informant 04, 2003).

The position of these Huon Valley councillors is also supported by a senior council manager.

As far as having a role in actual decision-making, I don't believe that the community should because I think democracy is designed in such a way that the community elects nine people to make decisions on their behalf, and you can't ... [do that] and then expect to make the decision yourself ... I think the elected councillors need to retain very strongly the decision-making responsibility... There is a strong responsibility on them [councillors] to consult and communicate with the community but the community ought not be making the decision (HVCO 03 2002).⁸⁶

Restricting the role of decision-making to councillors is also supported by a senior member of the Local Government Association of Tasmania.

Community should never make the decisions ... They don't have the authority... or the mandate... I have a right to vote and I'm choosing people to make decisions on my behalf as part of a broader community... If you empower the citizens to make the decision, well, you'll probably get mob rule; he who speaks the loudest wins the day (Key Informant 01, 2003).

The capacity of community actors to participate was also considered problematic by one Huon Valley council manager who commented:

Your average citizen is not particularly ... strategic in their thinking, so I think it's false to expect the average citizen to come out and get actively involved in strategic planning sessions. So if you can keep it at a very small local level such as the streetscape groups then that's probably as far as you're going to get in terms of strategic participation from your average citizen ... The community elects representatives, to a certain extent, to ensure that strategic planning happens and

⁸⁶ It is important to note councillors have no decision-making authority as individuals only as members of the collective that constitutes the governing body that is the Council (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2007b).

that's why employed staff exist to ensure that process is put in place (HVCO 02, 2003).

The above quote reveals the tokenism implicit in councillors' notions of community engagement, where participation is acceptable while ever it is limited to streetscape beautification, community hall management committees and volunteering. In this way, citizen engagement is restricted to activities that are 'far removed from any levels of real political power' (Heater in Kearns 1995, p.159). The issue this participant raises about the capacity of community actors to participate in strategic decision-making processes may reflect what Raco and Flint (2001, p.600) (amongst others) have identified as a

disjuncture in between community capacities and procedures of consultation which become geared to legitimising and supporting state action rather than providing institutional space from which to launch political challenges.

Even though the majority of councillors advocate maintaining decision-making control at the centre, they do acknowledge the importance of good information to underpin their decision-making and that residents provide an important source of local knowledge. For example, one councillor noted:

The day to day decision-making process should be done by the elected members. To underpin that, to make any good policy, is all about having good information and to have good information you must have structures to get people actively engaged in some way whether through community groups or working groups or getting people actively engaged ... then you can get good information [about] the expectations [of] the stakeholders or ... residents (HVCR 04, 2002).

Many strategies used by the Huon Valley Council to obtain such knowledge are restricted to consultation. However, consultation alone 'offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account [in the final decision]' (Arnstein 1971, p.78). Indeed, evidence suggests that there is a strong desire held by at least one senior council manager that councillors not be swayed by the opinion of residents in their decision-making. A councillor, one of two advocates of active participation, portrayed this council manager as being concerned that *community input appears to push councillors into decisions* (HVCR 11, 2003). According to this councillor,

it became quite clear that they [the majority of councillors and the senior manager] actually don't want community input, they want to go on the same way where the decisions are all made in Huonville Town Hall and then the community's told what to do or what's happening (HVCR 11, 2003).

The position of this particular senior council manager is that while *the Council need to facilitate mechanisms where they [councillors] can be informed of ... the views of the various people within the community ...* councillors then need to ... *sift it ... to digest it ... then **objectively** make a decision* (HVCO 03, 2002, emphasis added).

Throughout his interview this participant reiterated his objection to *giving community [actors] decision-making powers* (HVCO 03, 2002). He was adamant that it is the responsibility of Council and not community actors to make decisions and he feared that local government had swung too far towards participatory democracy:

the current community push is for transparency and consultation and participation and ... I just wonder whether or not ... we're going to end up with a disaster if everything has to be community consultative. Where does community decision-making come in versus council decision-making, where's the line ... ?

As has been noted elsewhere in relation to this case, the position of Council, LGAT, LGB and LGMA may in fact be reasonable at law.

Communities using public moneys must come under formal structures, such as special committees, or must be supervised by other formal means— such as when community development officers drive projects 'on behalf of' community. What escapes scrutiny here are systems of representative democracy and the failure, perhaps, of advocates of participatory democracy to more fully and accessibly articulate and materialise a range of mechanisms to open, flatten and radicalise systems of government and practices of governance ... (Armstrong & Stratford 2004, p.554).

There were also concerns about the impact of enhanced citizen participation on the maintenance of efficiency in Council decision-making processes:

It is a complex issue running a municipality and you want to be able to get on with it... I could see things being held up over trivial issues. I think at the end of the day

they [community actors] have got to have faith in the managers and the councillors (HVCR 07 2002).

However, from my observations of Council meetings and from casual conversations with members of the public gallery immediately after these meetings, it became clear that not all community actors do have faith that the councillors and professional staff will include their interests in decision-making processes. Indeed, there are significant concerns expressed by some councillors themselves that the majority faction in Council places too much faith in the General Manager and delegate too many of their responsibilities to him and by doing so, de-politicise decision-making on a range of issues. There was a real sense amongst these community actors that they felt that the General Manager was directing the decisions of council rather than the Mayor, who appeared to defer to the General Manager on many issues during Council meetings. While the relationship between the Mayor and the General Manager is critical in the effective management of a council, the apparent deferral to the General Manager has contributed to perceptions among some community actors that the Mayor is not fulfilling his role as leader of the community of the municipal area and chairperson of the Council.

A further reason to restrict decision-making to Council related to concerns about the representativeness of those community actors who wanted to participate in decision-making processes. The majority of councillors argued that these residents tend to be the noisy minority: *You've got to be careful...of very vocal minorities swaying decision-making... you've got to be careful not to be too open* (HVCR 07 2002).

Another councillors expressed their concerns that *we seem to get one particular type of person who wants to get involved and 90 per cent are 'green'* (HVCR 06 2002); a comment that reflects the entrenched 'anti-Green/environmentalist' attitude shared by those councillors who are members of the Futures Team. The experience of another participant was that no matter how well participation strategies are organised, the majority of people who become actively involved in strategic planning processes for example, tends to be *a tiny slice of the community ... [and in this case] ... articulate educated activists who are not at all representative of the community as a whole* (Key Informant 04, 2003).

The majority of councillors did however express concern that more residents should participate at a minimum by electing representatives and that they should do so in a thoughtful and informed way⁸⁷:

it's very important that people analyse their elected representatives and validate the performance of councillors (HVCR 04, 2002);

I'd like to see compulsory voting to start with because I think that forces their [residents] hand to a certain extent to be a little bit more involved and to understand a little bit more of what's going on (HVCR 06, 2002);

the role of the citizen I think a) is to vote, b) is to keep an eye on local government and what goes on and really to be a thinking citizen (HVCR 08, 2002);

if the public were to understand what the role of council is and whether councillors are addressing the ratepayers' needs they would probably elect better councillors and expect more of them. At the moment someone who agitates is more likely to get more votes than someone who does a lot of work (HVCR 03, 2002);

I don't believe as a council that we're selling to the community what we have and what we do and what we offer. That's something that needs to be addressed (HVCR 06, 2002).

Constituting representation and representativeness

The apparent reluctance among many, predominantly Futures Team, Huon Valley councillors to embrace participatory democracy is problematic, given the emphasis placed on enhanced community consultation and participation as a means to offset

⁸⁷ Voting for local government representatives is voluntary in Tasmania and is conducted via a postal ballot. The most recent local government elections were conducted in Tasmania in 2007. In the Huon Valley municipal area 65.9% of those enrolled to vote participated in the election by returning a completed ballot paper (Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2005). The participation rate in the Huon Valley local government elections in previous years was similarly high: 2000-01 (67.2%), 2002 – 03 (68.9%), 2005-06 (65.9%), (Local Government Division 2008, p.16). The number of people enrolled to vote has increased from 9,724 to 10, 131 persons since 1999 (Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2005). Approximately one third of those registered to vote are not residents of the municipal area (Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2005).

any democratic deficits resulting from amalgamations. Enhanced participation was also viewed as a means to restore community confidence in local government.

Access by the public to, and their participation in, the decision-making processes of Council are probably the greatest determinants of community confidence and satisfaction in their elected members. Increasingly the public is demanding open and transparent procedures from all levels of government and withholds support from those that deny a reasonable public scrutiny and accounting through those procedures. (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1992, pp.61-62)

A tendency to foreclose opportunities for active citizen participation also underscores the conflicts that accompany attempts to make/claim space for different voices and values in local government decision-making processes and further democratise representative democracy. As identified by Saward (2000, p.4, original emphasis),

[a] new emphasis on (variously) 'identity', 'difference' and 'diversity' in both monocultural and multi-cultural societies prompts us to ask again a venerable question of democracy: whose interests should be represented politically, and how can their effective representation be achieved?

In this context then, consultation and participation may be even more important given that it is unlikely that councillors can ever be truly representative of and/or fully comprehend the diverse needs and values of their constituent community.

The discomfort expressed by local government actors in and associated with the Huon Valley Council in response to suggestions that local government 'move away from a limited consultation model towards a more participatory framework' may also reflect their 'fear that any greater involvement by community actors in the policy process must mean less government control over policy outcomes' (Edwards 2001, p.79). It is no longer clear that representation and representativeness adhere to councillors alone; that is, as given, factual products of elections (Saward 2006). Indeed, the pressure for enhanced participation has generated tensions surrounding different definitions of the nature of representativeness, and of who and what constitutes representative authority (Raco & Flint 2001).

One way in which questions and conflicts about representation could be answered is to think through how local government and community actors could move beyond

the standard view of representation and start to think about it in terms of ‘a precarious and curious sort of claim about a dynamic relationship’ (Saward 2006, p.298). To do so, Saward (2006, p.297) argues, is to create opportunities to ‘take non-electoral representation seriously’, and acknowledge ‘the contingency and contestability of all forms of representation’. The potential for Huon Valley councillors to explore this line of thinking may be limited given that, at interview, most of them expressed a strong belief in their electoral mandate to make decisions on behalf of and in the interests of the municipal population and in most cases a particular section of that population:

you’re put in there by the people ... who empower you to do a job ... and the majority of people who put you into Council do so because they know you, they know what type of person you are ... [and] what your views are ... which certainly does tend to give you a certain empowerment (HVCR 10 2002).

Another councillor raised concerns about how councillors define their political responsibility and stated that he felt the mandate given to him by a *specific* community should direct his actions on Council.

Where do you define your political responsibility? Do you confine it to 10 percent of the population or to 51 percent or 75 percent, where do you define that, what do you define to be your statutory duty as a councillor? See ... if I was to vote not to have log trucks on any road I'd be doing it for either the people who live on that road, which is the minority or I'd be doing it for 20 percent of the people who are against log trucks which is not democracy. So it's better to try and take a managerial view to it and your statutory duty. The state law says that rural property can plant trees you can log trees, you can drive trucks on roads and can do all those sorts of things under state law and as a councillor, I think I would be grandstanding if I went to a council meeting and said I'm against this and against that and is that what the people voted me in there for, would it be representing the views of those people. I went on council ... to work for Geeveston. People would say to me, you represent the Huon Valley, so you've got to work for the Huon Valley, which you do ... [However] if the people of Geeveston and this area vote me in it's because they know me, they know what I am likely to do. If I suddenly go in there and decide that I'll change tack mid stream and go a different direction, that's not proper, it would be more ethical for me to leave council than to do that (HVCR 03, 2002).

Another councillor also stood for election to represent the interests of a particular section of the Huon Valley community.

I suppose the main reason for standing was because in the Dover area or this Southern area we wouldn't have had any direct representation, that's the main focus. Then there's obviously the broader Valley issues associated with it, but really I mean it was more for Dover and the south of Geeveston ... And if you haven't got direct representation, regardless of what they say, I mean if you haven't got a direct voice, you do tend to miss out (HVCR 10, 2003).

The positions of these councillors suggest some confusion in understanding of their role under the new local government act and associated legislation. As explained by the Local Government Board (2002, pp.6-7, original emphasis removed, new emphasis added):

The effect of this legislation has been to move the elected member away from being an advocate representing individual community members or ratepayers in a particular area. The role is now one of representing the *whole of the community*, of interpreting a range of data that is derived from community consultation measures and helping to set the policy and long-term direction based on much more comprehensive information.

The tendency of numerous Huon Valley councillors' to represent of sectoral interests was problematized by a councillor who suggested some councillors are also influenced by external actors.

I think it depends if ... you've got a backing from the forestry, what I call the gang of five on the Huon Valley Council will vote that way. Then you've got another four ... two greens and two sort of independent people who see things differently. But you've got the gang of five ... who always vote the one way ... that always follows the recommendations of the GM, constantly (HVCR 04, 2002).

The influence of sectoral interests was evident from my observations of decision-making at Council meetings. It became clear to me that for those councillors who are members of the Futures Team, acting in the best interests of the community as a whole, meant making decisions that satisfy a particular section of the Huon Valley community. This section of the community is composed of those residents who are

supportive of development and forestry and is constituted by these councillors as *the majority* and by extension their needs and values are seen as more legitimate than other community actors. Acting in the best interests of the community also involved silencing the voices of minority groups (and dismissing the concerns), particularly if they challenge the values of the majority of councillors and by default those of a perceived majority of community actors. Recall from Chapter 3 that these tendencies were brought into sharp relief as a result of the Southwood proposal, where sectional interests dominated Council decision-making and block voting was a common practice. As one councillor noted about the breakdown of Council voting on decisions during that time:

It's 5/4; we won't vote for them, they don't vote for us. Are we really both ... working in the best interest of the municipality? No, we're not, and I'm as guilty as anybody else. I'm not going to vote for one side of the fence if I can't get support from the other side of the fence (HVCR 06 2002).

Another councillor also highlighted the problem of block voting:

It's incredible. I think I've only had one thing that's got up in X years and yet I've always thought I was reasonably cluey [laughter], but [there is a] lack of willingness to change because of parochialness and blocked voting and no independent thought... (HVCR 08, 2002).

One key informant from the Local Government Board also raised concerns in relation to block voting on Councils. When councillors participate in block voting, it was suggested, they are *not deciding on the issue*, they are *deciding to side with people who happen to be people you find congenial* and acting in a way which should have nothing do with the decision-making process (Key Informant 02, 2002). This participant acknowledged that there *are bound to be political decisions on council* but in the case of block voting, councillors are failing to *vote on the merits of the case*, in favour of *voting with their mates* (Key Informant 02, 2002).

In the Huon Valley, claims to a universal representativeness made by Futures Team councillors are contested by some of the community actors with differing values and political beliefs. Furthermore, the extent to which other (non Futures Team) councillors, who may represent these minority interests, can meaningfully influence

the outcome of decisions is negligible and has been reduced further since the 2002 election. Then, seven members of the Futures Team were returned to Council, with only two councillors, one Independent and one Green opposing them. One newly elected Futures Team councillor described the different dynamics that attended this shift in the balance of power thus:

We are very lucky at the moment ... because the majority in council is a group of like-minded people ... I mean we're not a party ..., but we are a group of people who are reasonably likeminded, we want development but not at all costs and we do get on well ... so in that sense we are a very good Council at the moment, because we can get a lot done without a lot of conflict (HVCR 10).

The shift in the balance of power was experienced quite differently by councillors who are not members of the Futures Team. These councillors were left feeling ineffective. Any motions forwarded by them in Council were consistently defeated, and their opportunity to debate issues had become radically reduced.

Yes it's a very frustrating process sitting in council meetings [since that election changed the balance of power] ... It was much much more interesting when it was 5 to 4 because you never knew if one person would [vote with the opposition] and because they had to argue harder. Now they basically don't have to put up any arguments; they just go to the vote because it's much easier that way. They don't want to give anybody a platform where they can make logical arguments against what is recommended by the qualified advice... If [Councillor X] resigns ... then there's not even anybody to second the motion, you [won't be able to] get any discussion ... (HVCR 11).⁸⁸

Under the new systems of local government, problems associated with the quality of representation (such as those discussed above) have the potential to be offset. For example, according to Hindess (2002, p.34), a council's professional staff can

⁸⁸ Under section 16 (2) of the *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2005*, 'The chairperson of a council meeting is not to allow a motion to be debated or otherwise dealt with unless it has been moved by one councillor and seconded by another councillor'. If no one will second a councillor's motion (including amendments to a motion) the motion lapses unless the Chairperson waives the requirement for a motion to be seconded. Even if the motion is seconded or that requirement is waived, with the majority of councillors voting as a block, it is almost impossible to get an outcome in favour of the minority if the desired outcome challenges the position or outcome desired by the majority.

‘promote the common interest and in particular ... limit the impact of the representative part of government’. The capacity of these appointed government actors to fulfil such a role may be contingent on the relationship between elected members and appointed staff. The nature of that relationship is in turn contingent on a range of factors, key among them being the particular governing and management dynamics of a council. This dynamic is influenced by the characteristics of councillors, the mayor and the general manager. As Jones (1989, p.130), in a broader discussion of the changing role of councillors in Australia, explains:

[o]fficers and councillors become involved in a wide variety of roles, depending on the particular circumstances: the size of the authority, the intelligence of staff and councillors, the political climate, the personalities and politics involved, and the circumstances in the local community.

It is to a discussion of the particular characteristics of these dynamics—the types of relationships and power effects they produce within the Huon Valley Council—that I now turn.

Role of administration and elected members

As noted in the previous chapter, one effect of the modernisation of local government in Tasmania was to redefine and clarify the roles of the Mayor, councillors and the general manager. These roles were further clarified during the review of the *Local Government Act 1993* in 2003. Such clarifications were sought in order to ensure that elected members and community actors were better informed about the generally held expectations of people in these key positions within local government. These reforms reinforced the role of councillors in policy development and the role of council officers is the day-to-day administration required to develop and implement such policy, including the provision of expert advice to councillors. The purpose of this role clarification was to create a clearer separation between the democratic functions of Council and the administrative functions of local government bureaucracy. Previously, during the inquiry into local government modernisation in Tasmania, the importance of providing clarity of roles and responsibilities had been noted.

Effective and efficient local government depends critically not only on the quality of a Council's staff, but also on its organisational arrangements, the interaction between elected members and the staff and the effectiveness with which administrative and management responsibilities are delegated by the Council to those staff (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.34).

Under the previous *Local Government Act 1962*, the Mayor was designated as the CEO of the council and thus responsible at law for ensuring the efficient and effective running of the council administration. While many Councils delegated this responsibility to the council clerk, in numerous other councils the Mayor retained an active role in the day-to-day administration. This factor was seen to inhibit the efficiency of local government operations, which in itself had become burdened by 'the increasing complexity of local government operations and the resulting expansion of specialised professional expertise required of Council staff' (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.35). The active involvement of Mayors in the day-to-day management of local government was also considered to place an unfair burden on them given their position is only part-time. Furthermore, Mayors are elected for their skills as representatives and policy makers rather than their skills as administrators and managers, and their involvement in these activities arguably interferes with their capacity to fulfil their representative and policy development roles (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991). The new *Local Government Act 1993* introduced an *appointed* CEO, the general manager, to replace the elected CEO. It is now the general manager rather than the mayor who is responsible at law for the day-to-day management of the council.

There have been some concerns raised about the extent to which the administrative arm of local government has been strengthened, in particular the position of general manager, and the impact of this change on the capacity of local government to fulfil its democratic function. For example, councillors may be reduced to figure-heads approving policy developed by professional staff, especially if there is a strong general manager. The democratic role of councillors may be further undermined if a Council makes extensive delegations to the general manager, thus removing decision-making on those delegated responsibilities from the public (democratic) domain. In the Huon Valley Council, a minority of councillors has raised concerns about the extent to which the majority faction have delegated responsibilities to the general manager and the power effects of such delegations. There is also concern that

the choice to delegate the functions and powers of Council may in fact be a reflection of the calibre of these councillors and/or a particular interpretation of their role—more company directors than democratic representatives—leading to an over-reliance on and reluctance to overly scrutinize the performance of the general manager. One councillor suggested that

a lot of people who are currently councillors don't want to know [the finer details of legislation and planning schemes related to local government] because it's going to complicate their life too much, they think we can just leave it to the general manager and he'll look after everything (HVCR 11, 2003).

The willingness of the majority of councillors to approve extensive delegations is underpinned by their significant support for and confidence in the incumbent general manager. When asked at interview about the level of importance they attribute to this position, these councillors made the following comments:

[The General Manager is] really the main man (HVCR 02, 2002).

I think it's THE most important role. He's the guy that's charged with keeping us out of trouble and managing the budget, managing the workforce. If you haven't got a good general manager, I don't believe the council could work (HVCR 03, 2002)

I think the role of the general manager is very important, I think it's a critical job. ... I think his role is very important. He's basically the managing director of your company (HVCR 06, 2002).

I think it's extremely important ... more important than I thought before becoming a councillor (HVCR 07, 2002).

Another councillor felt the position of general manager *is as important as [people in] local government generally believes it is (HVCR 05, 2002)*. This councillor also raised concerns that in some local governments, the general manager is *the public face of the municipality*. This role should be reserved for the Mayor *who is the democratically elected as leader for the municipality*. It was also noted that *there is some disquiet in terms of the size of the salary of the general managers generally speaking coupled with a huge variation between the salary of a general manager and the salary of the sub-managers*. Finally, *because the general managers collectively*

have a lot of power and influence in local government ... it is difficult to implement changes to address these concerns (HVCR 05. 2002). Other Huon Valley councillors expressed concern that the position of general manager has been delegated too many responsibilities.

In March 2009 I viewed the register of delegations (with guidance from a manager responsible for overseeing legal matters pertaining to the operations of the Huon Valley Council). From my evaluation of the delegations register, it appeared that the majority of delegations are uncontroversial and relate to matters in the day-to-day management of council operations. These delegations do improve the capacity of local government employees to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. A few delegations in particular have been deemed by some councillors as problematic in the Huon Valley Council. They include tenders, investments and the delegation to approve/refuse to issue a permit for development applications that are discretionary under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1994*. In relation to tenders, one councillor raised concerns that the Council has delegated the authority for the general manager to determine and approve *tenders up to \$250 000 without coming back to Council ...* According to this councillor such a delegation *gives too little accountability* (HVCR 11, 2003). A key informant from the Local Government Board expressed their concerns about this delegation in the following terms:

I can understand why some councillors would find that objectionable. I mean what's the annual rate income, down there? Let's say it's \$5 million, [\$250,000 is] 5% ... [However], if there was a good code of tendering that the council has signed up to and that the tendering process was open and the decision was thoroughly transparent ... then there wouldn't be so much of a worry ... if I were general manager I wouldn't want that delegation (Key Informant 02, 2002).

Accountability measures in relation to tenders and contracts have now been strengthened. The 2004 review of the *Local Government Act 1993* led to the development of the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2005*. These regulations stipulate that councils were required to adopt a code relating to tenders and contracts by 1 January 2006. The Huon Valley Council published its code for tenders and contracts in 2005 'to provide a policy framework on best practice tendering and procurement methods' (Huon Valley Council 2005, p.2). Within the code it is stated that,

in accordance with Delegations No.1 (ii) and (xxxvi) and on receipt of the Evaluation Report the General Manager may determine the preferred tenderer [sp] and accept the lowest tender up to an amount of \$250,000 excluding GST for works, services, materials, goods, plant, vehicles and equipment (Huon Valley Council 2005, p.9).

A senior manager explained the benefits of extensive delegations to the general manager in the following terms.

Extensive delegations... to the general manager [allow us to] get on and do lots of the day-to-day management ... rather than having to refer them back to Council. That[process] has a number of benefits. It separates the Council from the day-to-day operations, [allowing councillors to focus on] setting policy. The utilisation of the delegations ... also enables the general manager to empower his officers so they can make decisions ... and the majority of people, particularly professional officers, like to be able to make decisions, it is part of job satisfaction [and] their professional standing in the organization. [Delegations] ... also enable you to be able to have a relationship with the community or with your customer that you can listen to him [sic] and make a decision rather than having to take it back to Council ... If Councils have the confidence to delegate it helps the organization but with that delegation comes a responsibility that you must use those delegations responsibly (HVCO 03, 2002).

A discussion of the issue of delegations is recorded in the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Huon Valley Council 11 February 2009. In these minutes it states that a key strategy of the Huon Valley Council's strategic plan is to 'ensure Council meetings concentrate on policy and strategy matters in accordance with Council's statutory role' {Huon Valley Council 2009: 11 February, p.136; also see Huon Valley Council 2002-2007, p.20}.⁸⁹ In the minutes referred to above the use of delegations is presented as an option available to Council to ensure it meets this strategic goal. It is claimed that the use of delegations is designed to improve

⁸⁹ Another key strategy listed in the same section of the strategic plan is to 'recognise Tasmania *Together* benchmarks and goals as they relate to local government' (Huon Valley Council 2002-2007, p.20). Goal 8 of Tasmania *Together* specifically refers to 'open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future' (Tasmania *Together* 2006, pp.22-23). The objectives of this goal are as follows: Provide an opportunity for all Tasmanians to participate in decisions that affect their lives; support the participation of young people in decision-making; all levels of government are accountable; and government services are accessible and responsive and information is available' (Tasmania *Together* 2006, pp.22-23).

customer service, streamline the administrative activities of Council, improve the efficiency and productivity of Council, ensure legislative compliance and improve responsiveness to customer needs (Huon Valley Council 2009: 11 February).

Summary

In this chapter I have drawn out and analysed participants' perceptions of the role of community actors in local government processes. In so doing I have highlighted how long standing ideas about how to govern and be governed in the Huon Valley have been called into question as a result of the spread of neoliberal discourses and practices of government. This analysis indicates that the majority of Huon Valley councillors have resisted the call to actively include citizens in local government decision-making processes. These councillors choose to limit participation to informing and consulting community actors and as a result ensure that decision-making authority and the capacity to effect change, between elections, remains firmly located at the centre with councillors, the general manager and by delegation other council managers.

It is also clear that the *Local Government Act 1993* (and subsequent reviews of that act), while providing significant power to Council, has reinforced the position of general manager, and by delegation the local government bureaucracy. On the one hand, that has the potential to de-politicise decision-making and arguably achieve more balanced outcomes. On the other hand, by taking the decision-making process out of the political realm, these structural and functional changes have the potential to undermine the democratic process. The fact that supposedly better outcomes can be achieved by removing decision-making from the political realm raises questions about the capacity of representative democratic systems of government to deliver outcomes that are not overly influenced by the effects of real politics and real rationality. That is, the extent to which 'legitimate positions of power within a highly authoritative system ... makes possible deception ... and the hiding of political agendas if necessary' (Ploger 2001, p.239).

While all councillors agree that the status of citizenship should be extended to all who live in the Huon Valley, such inclusiveness quickly erodes in the face of conflicts that arise as community and local government actors work to constitute the identity and membership of the Huon Valley political community. Such conflicts are

intensified as a result of Futures Team councillors' reluctance to engage with the views of those citizens who hold and actively promote a 'green' ideology, denying the worth of their input and their democratic right to participate in policy formulation. Futures Team councillors and some senior council officers actively constitute the identity of these community actors as tedious dissidents and as a result feel their concerns can be legitimately dismissed. While diversity is considered a key characteristic of the Huon Valley community, Council's capacity to make space for different voices and values is circumscribed by the power effects generated by a desire among the majority faction to *fix* the identity of the Huon Valley political community in a particular way.

The dominant attitude among councillors and senior managers is that community actors should not be directly involved in making decisions; that role should be reserved for Council alone. However restricting community actors' input to passive forms of participation means that there can be no assurance that community actors' concerns and ideas are taken into account in the making of any final decision. For the majority of councillors democracy ends at the ballot box; once elected, councillors should be free to make decisions with only moderate reference back to the community. Yet the need for multiple forms of representation throughout decision-making processes means that the participation of community actors in these processes cannot be reduced to electing councillors once every two years. The desire among many councillors to remove conflict from local government decision-making processes and to minimise opportunities for debate reflects a limited understanding and/or acceptance of the possibilities inhering in politics proper.

It is in this governmental/political context that the GSRG emerges and it is to a description of the creation, activities and effects of the GRSG that I now turn.

Chapter 6

The creation, activities and effects of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group

In Chapter 3, I outlined a number of local and global influences that contributed to significant changes—largely perceived as negative—in Geeveston and its local environs, especially for Geeveston people. In Chapters 4 and 5, I described the changing context of local government in Australia and Tasmania and its effects in the Huon Valley with a particular emphasis on how local government actors constituted citizenship and participation. Evident in these chapters was the emergent idea of local government as being for community and to help community, often via partnerships. The opportunities created by the new governance have enabled some community and local government actors to experiment with different approaches to governing in which community actors take a more active role in decision-making processes related to a range of strategies for township revitalisation.

In this chapter I describe the formation and activities of the GSRG, examine the extent to which actors involved in the group were able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them, and analyse the effects of the group's activities for community capacity building through place-making in Geeveston. These foci are important in relation to my research questions because discourses of community mobilisation and empowerment—which the GSRG may represent—need to be understood in a wider context in which the responsibilities of individuals and communities to play an active role in local governance (Raco & Imrie 2000) are emphasised.

In the political discourses and practices of neoliberal government, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, community has become the object of governance and citizens have been reconstituted as moral subjects responsible to self, family and community for the future—viable or otherwise—of their locale (Cheshire 2006).

Rose (1996a, p.352) describes the change as ‘a way of governing ... through instrumentalizing the self-governing properties of the subjects of government themselves in a whole variety of locales and localities’. In this approach to governing there is a heightened ‘emphasis on the personal responsibilities of individuals, their families and communities for their own future well-being’ (Rose 1996a, p.327). It also ‘involves new conceptions of those who are to be governed and the proper relations between the governors and the governed’ (Rose 2000, p.1399), as evinced in the previous chapter.

Geeveston people expressed a reluctance to have anything to do with the Huon Valley Council when first provided with the opportunity to be involved in a partnership for township revitalisation. Their initial response had been that they *didn’t want anything to do with council* (GRSG member 2003). Their reluctance may reflect their feelings of being disenfranchised from local government since the 1993 amalgamations, explained by one GSRG Member (2003), they

were coming off amalgamation. Cygnet was very anti-amalgamation. We (Geeveston) were too ... the council didn’t talk to the community enough about the amalgamation. So the council was almost isolated in community attitude.

Another participant thought Geeveston people were generally *disillusioned with the attitude of government* [at all levels] *towards small towns* (HVCR 03 2000). This participant also criticised the Huon Valley Council for not communicating with Geeveston people and then involving them in decision-making. Instead, *they [the Council] make a decision and it just happens. The Council should work with the people concerned to develop an area* (HVCR 03 2000). Numerous others described Geeveston people as feeling neglected by the Huon Valley Council and removed from decision-making processes, which were now concentrated in the regional centre in Huonville.

The anti-council position of certain Geeveston people changed when they realised that, by entering into a partnership with the Huon Valley Council, they could gain access to funding that had been set aside for improving the township. Further, by entering into a partnership these Geeveston people would be able to determine to

a large degree how any funding and a range of other council resources were deployed in Geeveston.

The GSRG partnership represents a different mode of engagement between Geeveston people and the Huon Valley Council. As has been demonstrated elsewhere (see for example Gates 1999), such partnerships present opportunities to test new ways for council and community actors to work together to achieve collective goals and manage common challenges. Previous engagement by Geeveston people with the Huon Valley Council had been described by research participants as dominated by apathy. The general lack of interest and drive among Geeveston people was thought to be a result of the way they had been treated by government, business and the media over the years. One participant described his sense that Geeveston people had internalised a victim mentality, absolving themselves of responsibility for their own futures as no matter what they did they *were going to lose anyway*. Therefore there was apparently seemed to be no point in trying. This participant, and community champion in Geeveston, thought that Geeveston people *lacked confidence*, were *very negative* and felt defeated by events of the past 30 plus years; *like a dog that's been kicked and kicked* (GCA 11 2000). He acknowledged that while there are community leaders in Geeveston *who believe very strongly in the region, for each one that believed, there were a hundred who said "let it go"* (GCA 11 2000). He described Geeveston people as *having given up before they started* and as being *conditioned into expecting to lose things*. Geeveston people were thought to be the locale's *biggest asset or biggest downfall; it really gets back to the whole of community accepting change and doing something about it* (GCA 11 2000). Other Geeveston leaders and community champions talked to me about the resistance to their efforts to make positive change in the township and locale which they had also encountered. Such efforts were frequently greeted with negativity, evident in comments they had often received such as *it won't work* and *it can't be done* (HVCR 03 2000).

These descriptions suggest that Geeveston people, their sense of agency denied and local knowledge devalued, were unable to see where, how and to what extent they could play a role in making positive changes in Geeveston (Davidson 2003).

Indeed, in areas like Geeveston and the Huon Valley where there is a history of political and economic dependence, it is thought that the capacity for constructive political engagement and endogenous local economic development is diminished by underdevelopment and decision-making remoteness (Davidson 2003). One participant described this ennui as a culture of dependency:

We've had too many years of sitting back and letting government do it for us. We've become dependent on Canberra or the State Government to always pull the rabbit out of the hat ... People need to get up and help themselves. No amount of welfare or crisis support will be able to help them if they don't get off their butts and help themselves (HVCR 03 2000).

Evident in the above quote is the constitution of Geeveston people as needing to be subjected and as subjecting themselves to technologies of agency and citizenship (Dean 1999). The GSRG partnership emerges as a form of governance that works 'to unify, control, mobilise and regulate interactions between Council' (Armstrong & Stratford 2004, p.555) and Geeveston people using techniques of self-esteem, empowerment, consultation and negotiation. The formation of the GSRG created an 'interactional domain or 'actor-spaces' in which the conduct of actors is shaped as they work through their various desires, aspirations, interested and beliefs,' in their efforts to revitalise the main streets of Geeveston (Armstrong & Stratford 2004, p.555). By engaging in the partnership, Geeveston people transformed their status to become active citizens capable of managing their own risks and those of the Geeveston Township.

As described in the Geeveston Community Plan, the GSRG 'was formed ... to harness community energy and appropriately utilise Council resources to improve the presentation, amenity and community wellbeing of the township' (Huon Valley Council 2000, no page, see figure 6.1). The ensuing partnership presented an opportunity for those actors involved to use local governing processes in attempts to provide opportunities for enduring, strong and viable local futures for Geeveston as conceived by them. town's people.

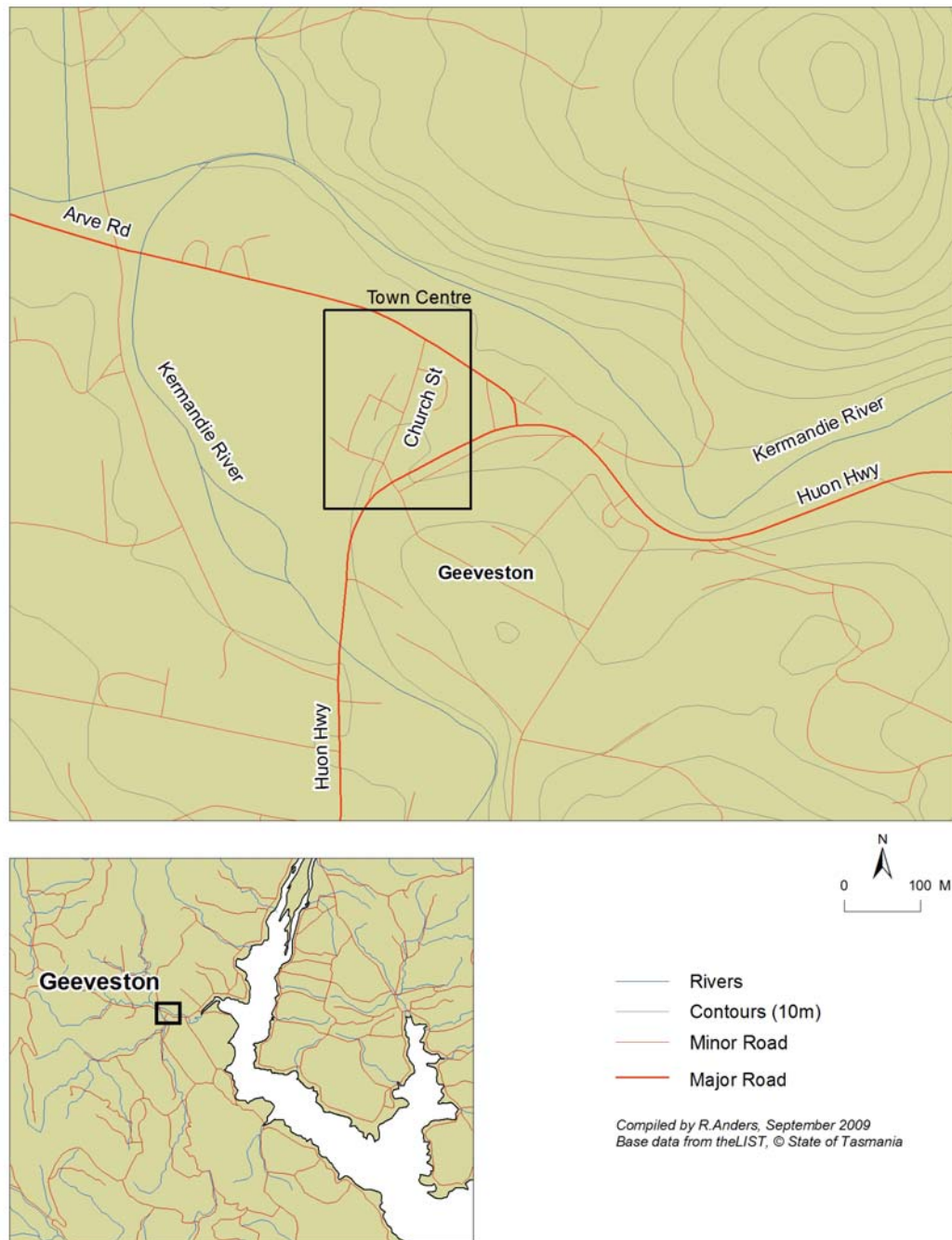


Figure 6.1: Geeveston and Geeveston town centre

The partnership enabled the development and implementation of a community plan, a landscape plan and a main street sculpture project, and it returned community and economic services and resources to the town. It even facilitated new initiatives, not least among them, the establishment of a branch of the Bendigo Bank in the town.⁹⁰

The approach taken by the Huon Valley Council in forming the GSRG for township revitalisation purposes mirrors similar programs and projects used extensively in other Australian towns, as well as in the United States where main street /township revitalisation programs have been used as a means to improve economic development, while emphasising

community self-reliance, empowerment and the rebuilding of commercial districts based on traditional assets: unique architecture, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community (Maine Development Foundation 2009, no page number).

The creation of the GSRG

The GSRG began in 1999 as a loose alliance between the Huon Valley Council and a selection of Geeveston people. The group *evolved rather than being planned* (HVCO 01) and represents an attempt by the then Manager of Community Development Services to experiment with, what was for the Huon Valley Council, a new approach to the problem of township revitalisation. In 2000, the original loose alliance was formally recognised by the Huon Valley Council as a community-council partnership, although the GSRG was not made a special committee of Council.

⁹⁰ Bendigo Bank is an Australian financial services group providing a range of personal, business and farm banking services. The Bendigo Bank originated in 1858 as a building society in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia. In 1998, the company developed the Community Bank concept to assist communities looking to return secure long-term branch banking services to their towns (Bendigo Bank 2008a). I discuss the formation of a dual-branch community bank in Geeveston and Dover as a franchise of the Bendigo Bank in detail later in this chapter.

The GSRG is a volunteer community group and membership of the group is open to all residents in Geeveston. Members of the GSRG are bound by the Huon Valley Council's volunteer policy and are covered by the council's group personal accident policy 'for injury whilst engaged in activities undertaken at the direction of or on behalf of the council' (Huon Valley Council 2004, p.3).

The GSRG was also the first of and model for five Streetscape Reference Groups (SRGs) developed by the Huon Valley Council to address township presentation in the Valley's major towns: Cygnet, Dover, Franklin, Geeveston and Huonville. They were also viewed by council as contributing to its community consultation and communication processes and as a means of accounting for the performance of the Huon Valley Council (Local Government Board 2000). SRGs receive funding from the Huon Valley Council on an annual basis. Their activities are governed by terms of reference designed to delimit and regulate the activities of each group (Huon Valley Council 2002; see Appendix 3).

The GSRG has two functions: to address issues of township presentation and to provide oversight for the development of a strategic direction for the revitalisation of the Geeveston Township (Huon Valley Council 2000). These functions involved GSRG members in making decisions in relation to the presentation, amenity, landscaping, main street design, thematic considerations,⁹¹ street furnishings and development within the boundaries of the Township (Huon Valley Council 2002). Ensuring that GSRG members do not exceed their role is closely monitored by council officers in various ways. For example, all meetings are attended by the Manager of Community Development Services who not only provides advice on policy, but also ensures that proposed activities are consistent with the purpose of the group. All quotes, tenders and purchases are organised by the Community Liaison Officer on behalf of the group to ensure that they are consistent with Huon Valley Council policies and local government legislation. The Manager of Community Development Services is also required to report

⁹¹ Thematic considerations refer to the development of a theme for the town. In Geeveston that theme is a forest theme and Geeveston is now promoted as Tasmania's Forest Town.

regularly to Council on the activities of the GSRG and all other SRGs in the municipal area. These safeguards are in place in part because of a key concern among councillors and council managers that SRGs *do not* become mini-councils. That fear is based on their assessment that acceptance by community actors of a ‘whole of Valley’ identity and governance approach is both emergent and fragile, and may be undermined if the SRGs act beyond the terms of reference set by Council. The Manager of Community Services was sensitive to these concerns reflected in the following statement in a report to Council on SRGs in 2002.

It is ... essential that the groups, when formed, accept that they are not a mini council. There can only be one Municipal Council for any area. The success of these groups in the past has been the acceptance of its members that the issues on which it focuses is restricted to the immediate town centre (and perhaps close surrounding areas) but does not expand to take in former municipal boundaries of issues which go beyond township development (Huon Valley Council 2002b: 12 February p.55).

At the core of the group, during the period in which primary data for this study was collected, were approximately 14 Geeveston people. Most of these members are retirees and many have lived in Geeveston all their lives, some with family ties to those who first settled Geeveston in the 1840s. Other members of the core group include the managers of the Forest and Heritage Centre, the community liaison officer of Forestry Tasmania, and Councillor and Deputy Mayor Laurie Dillon (who also, with his wife, owns and operates the Geeveston Post Office). A further 30 or so people have participated in the activities of the GSRG at one time or another, and continue to receive agenda and minutes. Among them are the local Police Sergeant, Forestry Tasmania’s Huon District Manager, and other Huon Valley Councillors.

The GSRG meets between 2pm and 4pm on the third Wednesday of every month in rooms provided by the Forest and Heritage Centre. It is chaired by Councillor Dillon. The meeting is attended by two council officers; the Manager of Community Development Services and a Community Liaison Officer who provides administrative support to the group. Although there is no requirement for meetings to be run in a formal manner, the business is organised by agenda posted

to members before each meeting by the Community Liaison Officer. My observations of meetings were that they are generally convivial – viewed in part as a social event for participants and providing regular opportunities for building bonding capital among them. Each GSRG member is sent a copy of the minutes following each meeting, whether they attend or not.

The mechanics of the group's creation aside, its formation also involved developing alliances between Geeveston people and the Huon Valley Council. It will be recalled that the Manager of Community Development Services and a Community Liaison Officer established the original alliance with a selection of Geeveston people, one of whom is Councillor Dillon. It was the job of these original members to prove to Huon Valley community and council actors alike the validity of a partnership between Geeveston people and the Council. In particular, the Manager of Community Development Services needed to demonstrate to councillors and council managers the benefits of involving community actors in making decisions about how to spend allocated funds for township presentation.

Such was this manager's uncertainty of a favourable reception by the majority of councillors that he refrained from publicly announcing the alliance until he had sufficient proof of the benefits to the Huon Valley Council. Indeed, five months elapsed before that proof by way of a formal report on the establishment of the GSRG was submitted by him to Council in March 2000 (Huon Valley Council 2000: 13 March). He also needed to reassure those Geeveston people involved in the group that working with, rather than in isolation from, the Huon Valley Council would provide the outcomes they jointly sought. The following quote is from a report presented to Huon Valley Councillors on the establishment and considerations of the GSRG presented at an ordinary meeting of Council, 13 March 2000.

To move forward and harness the obvious local energy it was agreed a Streetscape Reference Group be formed. The Group chaired by Cr Laurie Dillon had its inaugural meeting on 20 October 1999 and has continued to meet regularly since that time ... Over a few short months significant energy has gone

into the presentation of Geeveston. Visitors to the township over this summer can note the following:

- Clean toilets, freshly painted
- Planters complete with attractive flowering annuals
- Umbrellas
- Freshly painted line markings in the Town
- New waste bins

There has been a huge effort by the group known as the “Green Jackets” who originate from the Forest and Heritage Centre. Council staff such as Les Paul have also played a significant role.

Anecdotal evidence has been provided which suggests that anti-social behaviour in the township, including substantial vandalism, has reduced markedly over recent months. Taskforce members, at a recent meeting, believed that improvements are due to the following factors:

- Improved Township presentation
- Increased community pride
- Development of a designated freeskate area for young people

The Taskforce is continuing to meet and has recently agreed to give consideration to the development of longer term plans. These plans are hoped to address a thematic approach to the presentation of the township and will hopefully result in a continued improvement of the area in question. Such planning can also provide a sound base for Councils when considering the future allocation of streetscape funding (Huon Valley Council 2002-2007).

The choice to ‘test’ the partnership idea prior to formally presenting the proposal to a full meeting of Council was supported by then Mayor Greg Norris and Councillor Dillon. The decision to use such a tactic it may be related to a history of antagonistic relations in the Huon Valley, especially between community actors and the Huon Valley Council, and with the reluctance of either party to engage productively with the other. Geeveston people wanted little to do with the Huon

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Valley Council, and councillors and council officers were conflicted over how to involve community actors in local government processes and how to manage the effects of opening these processes to citizen participation. These tensions relate, in particular, to the different levels of support for, accommodation of, and/or resistance to the changes in local governing processes among councillors and council managers, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The preparedness of the Manager of Community Development Services to test the efficacy of a partnership between council and community actors under such circumstances reflects his understanding that local government decision-making processes can (and perhaps should) involve actors outside of formal government. The manager's actions were underpinned by *a strong belief in the importance of local people taking ownership of the physical and social spaces* in the Huon Valley's townships and their *right to be involved in decisions about how to organise and develop those spaces* (HVCO 01 2003). He also acknowledged the importance of professional support for residents as they sought to participate in streetscape and township improvements. For example, getting GSRG members to work with a landscape architect to develop an integrated landscape plan for the township *took them from gardening to landscaping* (HVCO 01). Involving community members in local government decision-making processes has the potential to produce manifold dividends for government and community, and that is apparent in the case of the GSRG. The activities of this group generated benefits for GSRG members, Geeveston people, the Huon Valley Council and other government and community actors associated with the group's activities and with the Geeveston locale. The effects of the GSRG also encouraged councillors, council managers and their staff to think through the benefits of involving local residents in decision-making for the municipality. At the same time, GSRG members, councillors and council managers realised a number of limitations to inclusive governing practices, which I discuss in due course.

The manager's approach to a council-community partnership also appears consistent with understandings of governing as constituted by the interconnections and interdependencies among myriad actors within formal government and civil

society (Goodwin 1998). His approach is additionally consistent with a key intention of the modernisation of local government in Tasmania; that councils have ‘transparent and open procedures that inform local communities about their Council and that encourage their participation in the process of local government’ (Local Government Act Steering Committee 1991, p.5). Indeed, since the 1993 restructuring of local government in Tasmania, community consultation has become a fundamental part of local governance across the state, as noted by a key informant from the Local Government Board:

I hear mayors and senior local government people say quite naturally “well we’re going to have to consult our community about that”, who 10 years ago wouldn’t even have thought of it... Community consultation, it’s absolutely fundamental (MKI Tasmania 02).

That said, this key informant acknowledged that there are still *some councils who pay lip service to [community consultation], only taking notice when they want to, when the community is telling them what they want to hear* (MKI Tasmania 02).

Activities of the GSRG and their effects on place-making and community capacity building

Recalling chapter one, places are fundamentally important to our senses of identity and community and the activities of the GSRG, that will be described in this chapter, have influenced profoundly the sense of place and community in Geeveston. In what follows I describe the specific main street revitalisation activities undertaken by GSRG members. GSRG members’ efforts in altering the fabric of the main streets—adjusting colour, texture, and style—highlighted and further developed the unique character and personality of the township and made more transparent the meanings that adhere in this place for these Geeveston people (and arguably many other Geeveston people). The act of reinforcing the physical qualities of the main streets makes these spaces more legible, comfortable and useable for many of its residents and visitors alike and has influenced positively the public image of Geeveston. The renewed townscape celebrates the main streets as a locus for social life and as sites for the

reconstitution of a particular sense of place and identity as *Tasmania's Forest Town*, which was reflected in the GSRG's various key initiatives, plans and goals.

Community Plan

The first task of GSRG members, on the recommendation of the Manager of Community Development Services, was to develop a community plan (see Appendix 4). The community plan is a set of practical objectives supported by actions to address longer term and strategic issues associated with the revitalisation of the Geeveston Township (Huon Valley Council 2000). GSRG members developed the following vision: that Geeveston would become 'a vibrant and attractive rural township which is environmentally and economically sustainable and promotes community pride' (Huon Valley Council 2000, no page). The vision provided a common purpose for the group and is reflective of the shared future they desired future for Geeveston.

Members of the GSRG determined four objectives to help achieve the vision and to focus the work of the group. They were to improve economic prosperity; build on the forest town theme; create a people-friendly town; and improve the landscaping of the township. The group also identified a number of 'future dreams', largely about developing tourism opportunities in the community and immediate surrounds. According to the then manager for Community Development Services, the community plan developed by the GSRG reflects the values of what he described as a very traditional element in the Geeveston population who tend to be focused on creating conditions conducive to economic development (HVCO 01 2003). That said, the manager acknowledged the presence of a very active Landcare group in Geeveston, suggesting an ecological ethic of care is not necessarily opposed to a pro-forestry, pro-development community.

The community plan was developed after a visioning session with group members, facilitated by a consultant contracted by the Huon Valley Council to work with members of the Group. The session provided GSRG members with an

opportunity to express their dreams and visions for Geeveston and then work through the practicalities of how to put those ideas into practice. The process enabled GSRG members to reconstitute Geeveston's future in a more positive light after many years of experiencing changes that consistently closed down or constrained social, economic and governmental activities in the town. The exercise was considered valuable by participants because it opened up the possibility that GSRG members (and others) could contemplate alternative futures for the township that, at the same time, celebrate its long-standing ties with forest industries. Further, it provided GSRG members with an initial insight into the opportunities now available to them as a result of their partnership with the Huon Valley Council.

The Community Plan was adopted in August 2000 after a period of public comment, where only one submission was received (GSRG Minutes, 16 August 2000). That submission was supportive of the proposed plan. The limited input from Geeveston people on the Community Plan may reflect their satisfaction with the plan. However, it may instead reflect a general lack of motivation and sense of capacity to make positive change from within. Research conducted in 2000 in Geeveston suggests many Geeveston people's capacity to respond positively and productively was diminished by the impact of the profound changes described in Chapter 3 (Armstrong 2000). The period of rapid social and economic change had undermined the confidence of many Geeveston people, who may have been resigned to their fate as victims of change (Armstrong 2000). Or they may have been waiting for an external actor—government, business and/or industry—to intervene on their behalf and provide the more positive future Geeveston people hoped for but didn't know how to achieve (Armstrong 2000).⁹²

Township landscaping

Township landscaping commonly comes under the concept of townscape design:

⁹² See also Gibson, Cameron and Veno (1999) and Rogers and Jones (2006) on the different ways regional communities respond to rapid social and economic change.

the art of giving visual coherence and organization to the collage of buildings, streets and spaces that make up the urban environment ... [to] ... improve both the legibility and the livability of cities, towns and neighborhoods (The Townscape Institute 2004, np).

In Australia there had been a long tradition of civic societies who were involved in localised projects related to town beautification; however these relatively genteel groups were rapidly subsumed by Chambers of Commerce and local government planners in the 1980s responding to concepts of 'The Economics of Amenity' (McNulty, Jacobsen & Penne 1985) and associated Main Street programmes. Inspired by the Canadian 'Main Street' program, the National Trust of Australia and the Arts Council (NSW) encouraged rural towns to undertake town beautification projects with a particular focus on the main street (Department of Planning (NSW) 1990). In many cases such projects involved converting the main street into a pedestrian precinct with garden beds of colourful flowers, groves of shade trees, small water features and public art installations. The National Trust provided guidance about heritage restoration of shops and heritage colour schemes because heritage tourism was seen as potential revenue for rural towns.

Prior to the Main Street programs, another townscape beautification program, the Tidy Towns Project, was developed in 1969 as a response to an anti-litter campaign. This project, where representatives of Tidy Towns present annual awards to encourage general tidiness in rural towns, has become very popular with rural communities across Australia. Although originally focussed on litter reduction and pride in civic tidiness, Tidy Town criteria now address town beautification, as well as environmental, social and economic sustainability within local rural communities. Many rural towns promote themselves as Tidy Towns, often displaying their awards at entries to the towns. Over 1,000 communities and 90,000 volunteers take part each year with projects contributing over \$100m in volunteer labour (Keep Australia Beautiful 2009). Indeed, some Geeston people have been active participants in the Tidy Towns movement, and according

to one research participant the town has been entered every year since 1994, winning prizes in each year.

Both Main Street and Tidy Towns, along with Landcare strategies, have become the most predominant forms of local community participation in rural towns. Because of the focus on enticing tourists, townscapes are often themed to reflect the town's history or particular natural features. Thus one finds Local Government strategic plans commonly define 'townscape' as

...concerned with the quality of the urban environment [and] ... a product of its setting, history and growth, and the changes that have occurred during its development. Townscape includes aesthetic, cultural, natural, historical and architectural aspects, and as such is more than just the physical built environment. The townscape incorporates features of the past (heritage) and of the present (Dunedin City Council 2004, p.13.1).

In the 1980s, The Joint Centre for Urban Design, Oxford Brookes University, UK, pioneered design techniques aimed at revitalising existing towns with a focus on legibility, useability, permeability, and sense of place; illustrated and described in their manual 'Responsive Environments' (Bentley et al. 1985). This approach has continued to be influential in the ways local government planners reflect townscape design in their planning schemes and associated documents and is clearly evident in the Huon Valley Council's Planning Scheme.

A key goal of the Community Plan involved addressing the physical appearance of the main streets of Geeveston. By addressing township presentation GSRG members were trying to *make the town an attractive place for tourists to visit and to supply the conditions for commercial investment* (GSRG Member 2003). One participant predicted that improving township presentation would help Geeveston people *feel good about the town, break down their negativity and enable them to see what opportunities they could create for the town and themselves* (HVCR 03 2002). Township landscaping was a key component of this process and involved developing an integrated township landscape plan in consultation with a landscape architect contracted by the Huon Valley Council to work with the Group. Prior to the formation of the GSRG and the development of the community and landscape

plans, activities to improve the amenity of Geeveston's main streets had been conducted but were *ad hoc* in nature. Individual Geeveston people had undertaken various activities with little or no coordination or support.

A brief for the Geeveston Landscape Plan was provided to the landscape architect so as to prepare a concept landscape design for the township that encompassed various places throughout Geeveston and enabled an attractive presentation of the township whilst providing a practical and resource efficient approach to material and plantings (Key Informant 08, 2004). The township plan was to be complementary to the existing landscape plan developed by the local Landcare group, based in the township and involving members of the GSRG. In the first instance, the plan was to focus on the town centre of Geeveston. Subsequent stages were to consider the Heritage Park area and town approaches (Key Informant 08, 2004). To maximise the opportunity for a 'consultative and inclusive' process, a subcommittee of five GSRG members was developed to work with the landscape architect in the development of the landscape plan (see Figure 6.2).

Numerous iterations of the plan were developed and the process involved a degree of conflict as two GSRG members persistently contested the species proposed for mature tree plantings. These GSRG members were thought by those involved to be uncompromising in their approach and made the process more difficult than it needed to be (Key Informant 08, 2004). These challenges were overcome and a final draft plan was presented to the full GSRG for approval (which it received).

The GSRG appears to have understood the importance of developing an integrated landscape plan and *with very little debate agreed to commit \$10 000—half their annual budget [provided to them by council]—to pay for its development* (GSRG member 2003). Indeed, despite the plan requiring substantial additional spending on large trees, GSRG members agreed to implement the plan in full. Their capacity to agree easily to the proposed landscape plan may have been facilitated by a \$100,000 grant provided to the GSRG for the landscaping project from the State Government. That such financial support was forthcoming

was described by one GSRG Member (2003) as a reflection of what happens *when government or authorities see people are helping themselves they want to be part of it because they want to be shown to be on the winning side.* The action of State Government in providing funding to the GSRG may also be understood as a reward for group member's 'can-do' attitude. It is also a clear statement about the conduct expected by government of community actors in other communities if they want similar benefits to accrue to them.

The initiatives of community actors who want to drive changes such as transformations in public spaces have not always been so well supported. One GSRG Member (2003) explained that it

hasn't always been easy to move into the main street and do the things we wanted to do... [For example] when we were trying to develop Heritage Park, some of the shop keepers in Geeveston talked it down and there was no encouragement at the higher level of the Huon Valley Council in those days.

Another pointed to there being a tendency among Geeveston people

to be conservative and not to get out in a public area and start working for fear of sticking your nose in or because it isn't the done thing to do something for nothing ... [But in the GSRG] we were allowed to be creative ... The landscape design is the one that we did. Having community input gives Council a bit more freedom to make decisions that it may get flack over otherwise (GSRG Member 2003).

As a result of their participation in the GSRG, in particular working with experts to develop the community plan and landscape plan, GSRG Members have come to understand the importance of planning.

We've learnt to work from them [plans]. When you're spending a lot of money you can't get it wrong. We have followed what [the landscape architect] designed to the letter because in the long run Geeveston is going to look wonderful when those trees grow (GSRG Member 2003).

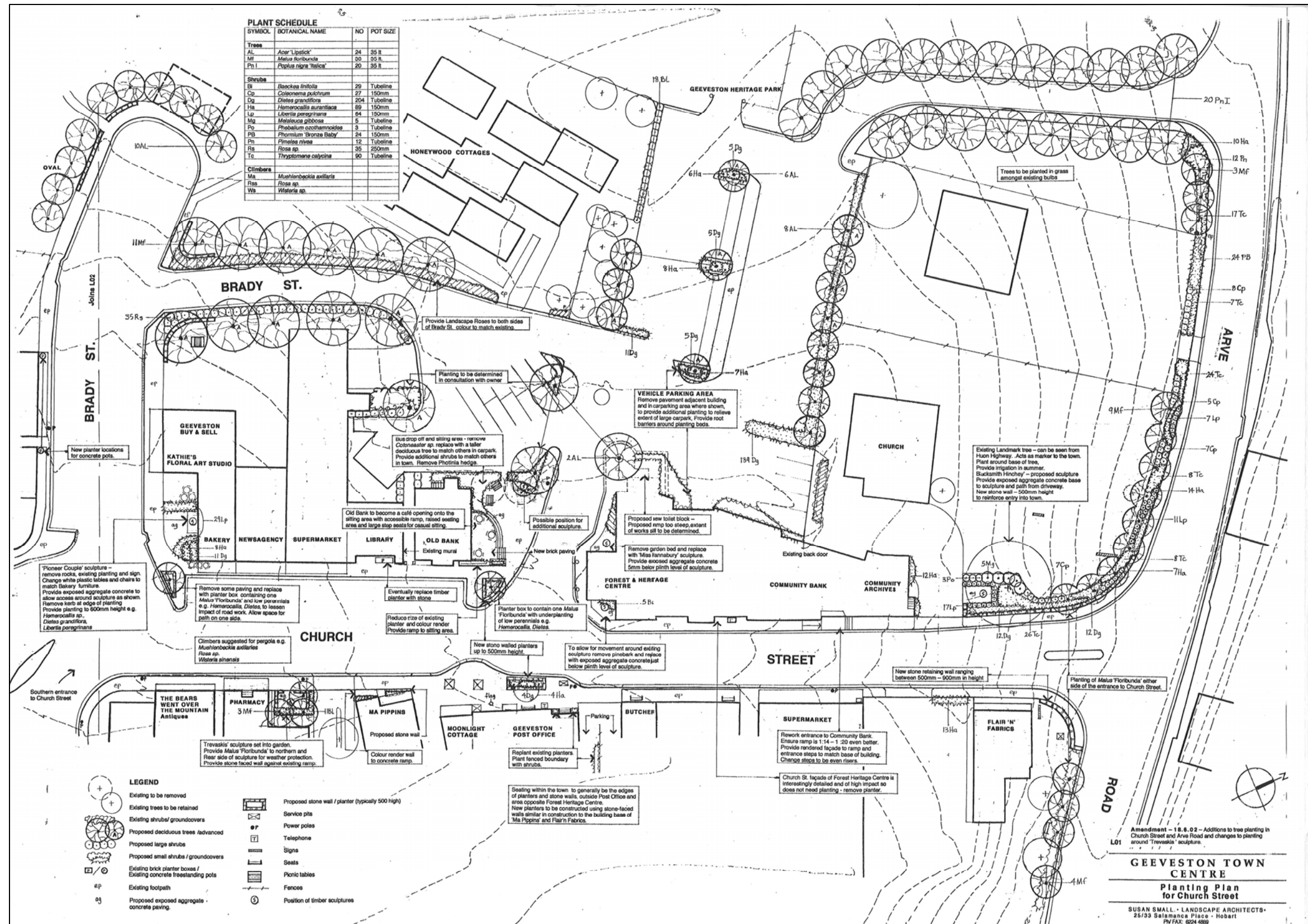


Figure 6.2: Landscape Plan for Geeveston Town Centre (Source: Small 2002).

Indeed, the landscape plan has become a significant factor in the GSRG, setting limits while simultaneously providing opportunities for responsiveness and flexibility (Armstrong & Stratford 2004). The limits or guidelines set by the plan enabled GSRG members to make minor decisions ‘in the field’ without having to take issues to a formal meeting of the group. Additionally, disputes can be mediated with reference to the plan, as suggestions that contradict the plan are more readily dismissed (Armstrong & Stratford 2004).

GSRG members were closely involved in implementing the landscape plan as they undertook the majority of plantings and continue to maintain the gardens. As noted by one GSRG member (2003) *when the GSRG spends \$1 they get \$2 worth* because of the high level of voluntary labour provided by GSRG members. That commitment and energy was expressed by one GSRG member (2003) who recounted the following story

a chap brought a lot of plants down, I don't know what the names of them are, they've got horrible names. Any way we were planting them and he's laying them out and at the end of it he was exhausted ... he said "I've never seen plants go in so quick", there were only about 8 of us.

The implementation of the landscape plan formed a large proportion of the work undertaken by GSRG members. The results have been profound (see figures 6.3 and 6.4). The townscape has been enriched and softened with colourful plantings, new paving in the main street, improved signage, and a redeveloped parking area behind the main street. Areas of the town that previously detracted from the appearance of the township have been cleaned up and/or repaired. GSRG members found reward for their efforts in the positive comments they received on the improved presentation of the township, as recorded in the GSRG minutes

The meeting noted that visitors from elsewhere in Tasmania and interstate had recently passed very positive comments with respect to the current presentation of Geeveston. It was noted that such compliments had not been received previously and that the town centre now offered a venue, which was welcoming and inviting to

visitors and was a precinct of which local community and business members could be truly proud (Huon Valley Council 2000:17 February, p.2).

At the same meeting, GSRG members

noted the recent decline in vandalism within the township and in particular acknowledged that the decline seemed to coincide with the improvements to the presentation of the town, together with the development of the freeskate facility for the young people of the area (Huon Valley Council 2000:17 February, p.5).

Three years later the Huon Valley Council received a letter from a Geeveston resident complimenting the efforts of the GSRG.

I am a resident of Geeveston and I have noticed people in this town and I know how proud of it they are. You hear people talking about it when you walk down to the shops. Tourists that come here have noticed how good it looks and that the sculptures of people that you have helped to get happening are also appreciated. It has also made it better for the traffic and buses on the road because the buses don't have to park on the main street. They have their own bus stop, which makes it easier for everyone. It has also made it easier for people with disabilities to get in and out of cars. In general it has made the town look a whole lot better to live in and looks much tidier (Phillips 2003, no page).



Figure 6.3: New signage at the entrance to Geeveston welcomes visitors to the town.

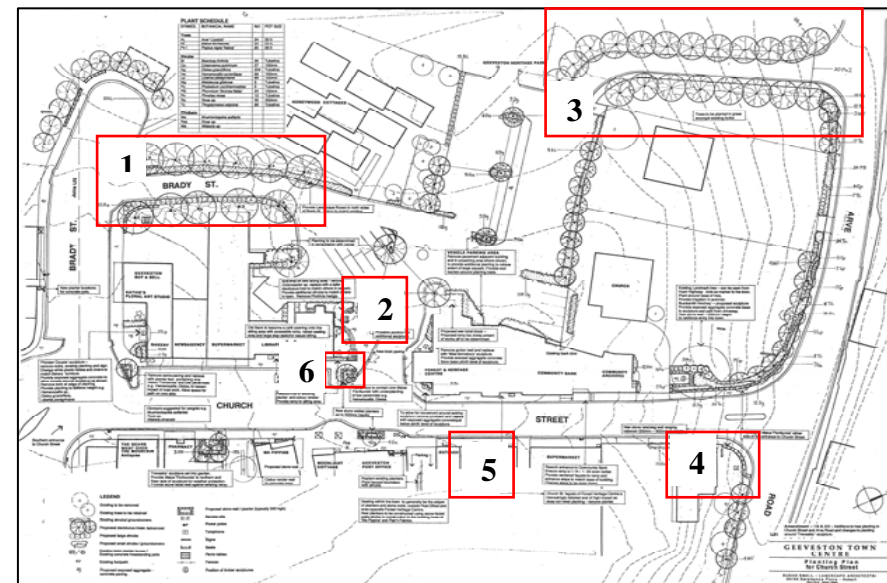


Figure 6.4: Selection of township landscaping features and other improvements around the town centre in Geeveston

Building on the Forest Town theme – the sculpture project

A key goal of the Community Plan was to build on the forest theme originally identified for Geeveston in the Huon Valley Council's 1996 strategic plan⁹³ (Huon Valley Council 1996) and to promote Geeveston as Tasmania's Forest Town. A public sculpture project became a key part of this goal. Sculptures were one of the three timber display ideas that were proposed and I focus on them here, as they became a most significant project with which numerous community and government actors became involved for a variety of ends, although ostensibly all contributing to the primary goal of township revitalisation. In this instance, community actors included influential forest and timber industry actors amongst others. Other objectives to promote the forest town theme included the development of a permanent display of old wood working tools in the Forest and Heritage Centre and development of a small functioning historic saw mill (Huon Valley Council 2000). Of interest here is the push by GSRG members to celebrate and reinscribe a component of Geeveston's identity that has been and remains at the centre of so much conflict in the Huon Valley and Tasmania more generally, namely forest industries. Previously such identification had generated negativity within the community, given the centrality of the debate over forest industries in Tasmania, especially from the 1980s onwards. Evident here is a shift in the relationship between place and identity from one focused on negative labelling, reduced civic pride and reinforced demoralization to one with a focus on civic pride and invested identity (Kearns 1995, p.167). This shift was also evident in the constitution of a coherent, positive, shared identity of citizen subjects and their community—not a fractured one of division and conflict—through processes of governance that stress the roles of such agency and technologies.

⁹³ In the 1996 Huon Valley Council strategic plan a goal of the planning services program was 'to build on the strengths of individual towns to enhance their amenity and improve their economies' (Huon Valley Council 1996, p.29). Developing town identities and preparing an urban design plan for each town were considered key to achieving this goal. The specific identities to be developed were as follows: 'Huonville as the centre for commerce and agriculture, Franklin as the centre for historical culture, Cygnet as the art and craft centre, Geeveston as the centre for timber and Dover as the centre for seafood and fishing' (Huon Valley Council 1996, p.30).

The idea of the GSRG sculpture project was first raised in June 2000, when Councillor Dillon detailed a proposal for the development of timber displays within the town, which was supported by the group. In July 2000, the GSRG agreed to approach three local artisans to provide submissions to the group and, as with the development of the landscape plan, a subcommittee was appointed to co-ordinate the development of timber displays throughout the town. In September 2000, the GSRG commissioned Geeveston resident Bernie Tarr to carve the sculptures for Geeveston. The first of eight sculptures (including a bas relief) commissioned by the Group was unveiled in March 2001. In his submission to the GSRG Mr Tarr expressed a keen desire to see Geeveston return to days of greater prosperity and community spirit. Prior to taking on the Geeveston commission he had specialised in smaller sculptures and the project provided an opportunity for him to develop a distinctive style of sculpture (see Figures 6.5–6.10, pp 206-211). GSRG members expressed a preference for supporting local talent where possible and had instructed the then Manager of Community Services on the granting of the commission as follows:

Here are some local people, local artisans; use them first. If you do no good with them go further afield, because the further you go away, the more it's going to cost and the less they might reflect what we are really about (HVCO 01, 2000).

During the life of the sculpture project, the sub-committee worked extensively with Mr Tarr over numerous meetings to develop the form and location of each sculpture. Subjects for the sculptures were mostly chosen for their historical significance and it was decided they would be located in the 'commercial' part of the town in locations where they would be relatively secure and have access to power for floodlighting (Huon Valley Council, 2000: 26 July). The results of such meetings were then put to a full meeting of the GSRG for final approval. Between July 2000 and May 2002, 20 meetings of the sub-committee were held. It was not uncommon for members to meet two or three times in a month, demonstrating the commitment of sub-committee members and of the sculptor. Additionally, research for the bas relief and the sculptures prompted GSRG members and other Geeveston people to re-engage with Geeveston's history and strengthen their sense of identity-in-place. The impact of the sculpture project in Geeveston was noted by Paul Lennon, then Deputy Premier,

(later serving as Premier of Tasmania from 21 March 2004 to 27 May 2008⁹⁴) at an event to unveil one of the sculptures.

We now have five former residents returned to this community in recognition of the contribution they made to shaping Geeveston and giving it the strong local identity it has always had (Paul Lennon Speech notes, unveiling of Jess Hannabury Sculpture 7 Aug 2003).

During the sculpture project numerous actors became interested and involved in the project. In particular, the GSRG was able to secure the support of Forestry Tasmania, Gunns Limited (the largest integrated softwood and hardwood forest products company in Australia) and, as already noted Paul Lennon.

GSRG projects and the associated developments of major enterprises such as the Forestry Tasmania Tahune AirWalk⁹⁵ provided State Government with an opening to inject \$400 000 of State Government money into promoting Geeveston as a major tourist gateway in Southern Tasmania. Paul Lennon used the numerous sculpture unveiling events in Geeveston to promote himself, his government and forest industries in Tasmania, and to highlight Geeveston's central place in those industries. On one occasion he was reported as stating that

the streetscape sculpture series had done much to firmly establish Geeveston as a focal point of Tasmania's timber production effort ... Local residents say that

⁹⁴ GRSR members requested that the Community Liaison Officer working with the Group send a letter of congratulations to Paul Lennon when he became Premier of Tasmania in March 2004 (Huon Valley Council 2004: 12 July). Such actions are indicative of how the GRSR works to build and maintain the networks they establish with other government and community actors as they work through how to achieve the goals of the Group. Other letters in which assistance to the Group is recognised have been sent to Gunns Ltd and Forestry Tasmania. GSRG members' appreciation of the efforts of Huon Valley Council actors are also recorded in numerous minutes (Huon Valley Council 2004: 19 May).

⁹⁵ The Tahune AirWalk is a key attraction of Forestry Tasmania's tourism venture in the Southern Forests, which opened in July 2002. Other attractions at the site include a visitor's centre, restaurant, accommodation, walks, fishing, a flying fox, and rafting (Forestry Tasmania no date). Geeveston provides a gateway to the Tahune AirWalk and many tourists have been stopping in the town on their way to and from this highly successful tourism venture. The AirWalk itself is a 597m walk amongst the trees gets which takes visitors 20m above the ground among the forest. The AirWalk includes a 'cantilever that is 48m above the river level, providing fantastic views of the forests and the junction of the Picton and Huon Rivers' (Forestry Tasmania no date, no page no.).

visitors regularly remark on the sculptures, indicating that the streetscape project is delivering positive benefits to the local community, as well as fostering local pride and building a greater sense of identity (*Huon Valley News*, 13.08.2003, pp.1 & 3).

The GSRG also used the opportunity presented by the unveiling of each sculpture to promote Geeveston, bring Geeveston people together and celebrate the achievements of the Group. These events were attended by local and State government actors who used the opportunity to strengthen their networks. Gathering in the main streets of Geeveston also enabled local and State government actors to strengthen their support among Geeveston people, an activity no doubt designed to pay dividends in subsequent elections. These occasions were also opportunities to provide publicity for Geeveston and reconstitute Geeveston's identity to internal and external observers as a strong and vibrant community making positive change; a place Tasmanians and tourists alike would want to visit.

Forestry Tasmania, which provided extensive support to Geeveston and the GSRG over many years through their Huon District branch, supplied timber for five of the Geeveston sculptures. Additionally, Forestry Tasmania separately commissioned Mr Tarr to provide a sculpture at the Tahune AirWalk, a forest canopy walkway and associated activities situated in the southern forests 45 minutes drive from Geeveston. The Huon district manager of Forestry Tasmania, Raymond Gouck, attending a GSRG meeting,

applauded and commended the Reference Group members for their vision to beautify Geeveston ... [advising] that Forestry Tasmania would continue with ongoing commitment and support of the Reference Group (*Huon Valley Council* 2001: 15 August, p.2).

The strength of the relationship between Geeveston people and Forestry Tasmania was further demonstrated by the company's recognition of the efforts of Geeveston people who have supported the work of Forestry Tasmania in the district. Forestry Tasmania dedicated a new walking track to the members of the Geeveston community who help out in Geeveston and in particular their contribution to the revitalisation of the Geeveston township area following the opening of the Tahune AirWalk (*Huon Valley News*, 14.01.2004, p.1). The efforts of the GSRG have

enabled the promotion of Geeveston as ‘the gateway to the far south and to the southern forests’ and the Forest and Heritage Centre in the town has become a chief point of sale for tickets to the AirWalk (*The Sunday Tasmanian*, 13.10.2002, p. 21).

The GSRG was also able to secure funding from Gunns Limited who provided \$12,500 to pay for the carving of five of the sculptures. In a letter sent to the sculptor by the company’s external relations coordinator (Price, 2001, no page) it was stated that

Gunns have [sic] a strong link to the Geeveston and Dover communities with Mr Gay’s (executive chairman and managing director) family operating sawmills in the region over many years, even playing football for the local team. Gunns have already committed substantial funds to the development of the “AirWalk” and with this in mind, will provide funding of \$12 500 payable in instalments of \$2500.

As the leading forest industries company in Tasmania it is no surprise that they chose to invest in this project. Such investments and support for community are useful to a company that remains at the centre of conflict over forest industries in the State.

A further source of funding was the Tasmanian Community Fund,⁹⁶ which part-funded a sculpture representing Olympic rower and fifth generation Geeveston orchardist, Simon Burgess.⁹⁷ The Tasmanian Community Fund provides grants to community organisations ‘that *make a difference* by enhancing well-being and

⁹⁶ Funding for the Simon Burgess sculpture provided by the Tasmanian Community Fund was originally awarded to the Huon Valley Regional Development Board to work with Geeveston school children ‘to design and paint a community mural on the side of the public library in Geeveston’ (Tasmanian Community Fund 2001, p.9). The grant was not utilised for the mural and it was suggested that the money be reallocated to fund the production of the Simon Burgess sculpture (Huon Valley Council 2003: 18 June). Other projects funded by the Tasmanian Community Fund include \$25,000 to the Dover SRG ‘to provide a safe and accessible foreshore walking track that will support residents and visitors to adopt healthier lifestyles’ (Tasmanian Community Fund 2004, p.12) and \$17,000 to the Geeveston Community Development Association ‘to construct a walking path along the Kermadie River to provide easy access for viewing platypus’ (Tasmanian Community Fund 2006, p.12).

⁹⁷ Simon Burgess became the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Geeveston-Dover Community Bank in 2006.

improving social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Tasmanian Community' (Tasmanian Community Fund no date, no page).

The sculpture project, while successful in many ways, tested the capacity of the GSRG to manage what became a complex process of negotiations among the sculptor, the sculpture sub-committee and the GSRG. As recorded in a Huon Valley Council file note (Doyle not date), questions were raised about the effectiveness of the sub-committee, the members of which appeared to be unduly influenced by the sculptor who was found to have unrealistic expectations about the management of the sculptures. Conflicts emerged between the sub-committee and the wider GSRG when a difference of opinion emerged about how and to what extent the sculptures could be maintained once installed in the main street. Further tensions were generated by the sculptor 'expressing views and receiving feedback from a number of other community members outside any sort of committee structure' (Doyle no date, no page). A dispute also emerged between the GSRG and the sculptor over the copyright issues in relation to the sculptures when a proposal was put forward by the managers of the Forest and Heritage Centre to develop postcards and key rings based on images of the sculptures. These were to be sold in the Forest and Heritage Centre with a proportion of the profits returned to the GSRG.

It will be necessary if this project is to continue for there to be an acceptance by Bernie that the Streetscape Reference Group (as a collective body) has the final say on issues relating to the presentation of sculptures. It will also be necessary for Bernie to understand that he has no maintenance obligations and that an outside art piece will be subject to weathering by the elements (Doyle no date, no page).

These issues were resolved through the negotiating skills of the then manager community development services. An agreement was reached between the Huon Valley Council and the sculptor over copyright and the ongoing maintenance that allowed for the production of the postcards and key rings and ensured that any requests for ongoing maintenance by the sculptor would be appropriately remunerated.

There are now five sculptures strategically positioned throughout the townships that contribute to the overall character of the township, have re-engaged Geeveston people with the town's history and strengthen their sense of identity-in-place.



Figure 6.5: Example of sculptures in Geeveston. Heritage Couple.

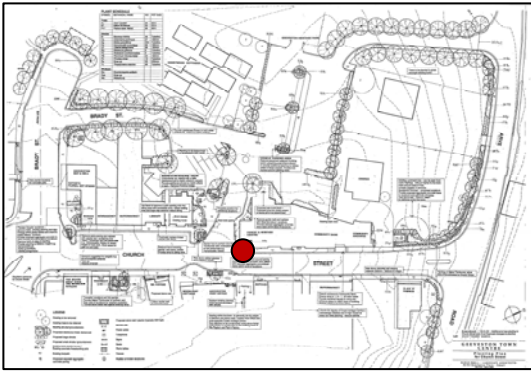


Figure 6.6: Example of sculptures in Geelong: Bill Trevaskis, former Geelong Pharmacist.

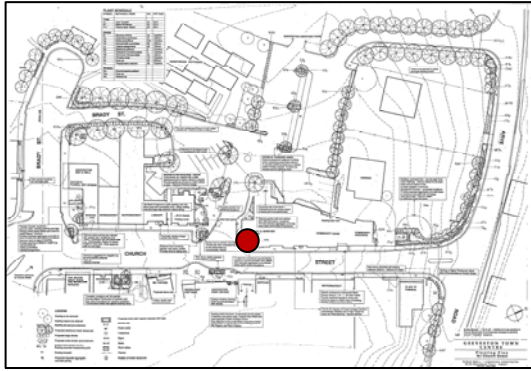


Figure 6.7: Example of sculptures in Geelong: Jim Wotherspoon, Geelong Policeman 1912-1992.

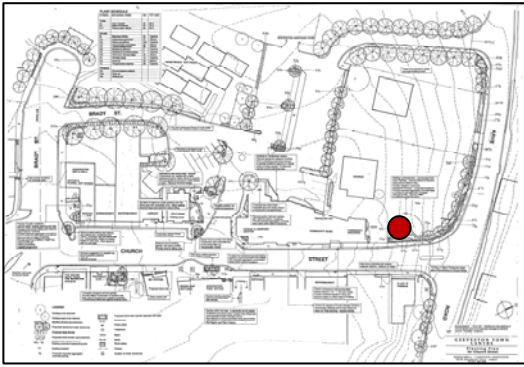


Figure 6.8: Example of sculptures in Geveston: Jim Hinchey, Village Blacksmith.

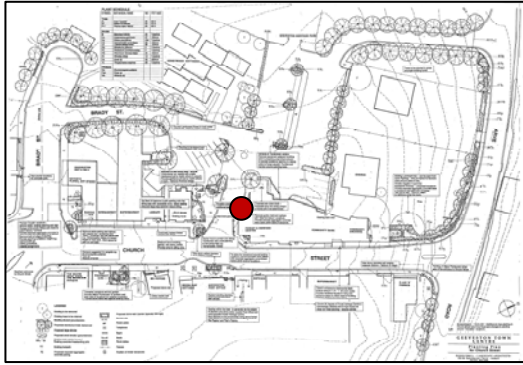


Figure 6.9: Example of sculpture in Geeveston, Jessica Hannabury.

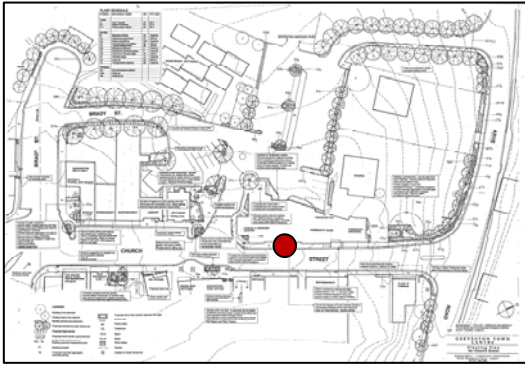


Figure 6.10: Example of sculptures in Geeveston, Simon Burgess, local orchardist and Olympic rower.



Figure 6.11: Geeveston People gather in the main street at one of the numerous events to unveil sculptures in Geeveston.



Figure 6.12: Sculptures in Geeveston were typically unveiled by the then Premier of Tasmania, Paul Lennon and presented an opportunity for political networking, as demonstrated in the image to the right, where the Premier is talking with councillors, senior council staff and community leaders in Geeveston.

Bendigo Bank

The return of banking services to Geeveston was considered by GSRG members as immensely important to the economic prosperity of the township and its people. The re-establishment of a bank in Geeveston was one of four objectives developed to improve economic prosperity throughout the locale and surrounding area. The other objectives were to fill all shops in the main street, develop a bakery in the town centre and encourage tourists to visit and spend money in Geeveston (Huon Valley Council 2000). All of these objectives were achieved. As explained in the previous chapter, Geeveston lost its local banking services when they were centralized in Huonville.⁹⁸ It was thought that the economic leakage to the regional centre might be stemmed if Geeveston people could be encouraged to bank and shop locally. For Dillon (2008, no page no.),

The driving factor was that we felt that our communities had not been well served by the withdrawal of banking services from the region. Along with the loss of banking went a loss of retail business, a loss of infrastructure and jobs. Of particular concern to us was the loss of community determination. The greatest challenge was to sell the idea of a community actually buying shares in, and owning their own bank branch. A bank branch that would return the services they wanted and when they wanted them, a bank branch that actually listened to its community concerns because it is truly part of the community.

Councillor Dillon and Glenn Doyle, Manager Community Services and Stuart Thorn, Huon Valley Business Enterprise Centre⁹⁹ undertook a research trip to Victoria in April 2000 to investigate whether the Bendigo Bank Community Bank® model could work for Geeveston and Dover. In July 2000 the idea of developing a

⁹⁸ The Trust Bank, the last bank in town, closed in 1996.

⁹⁹ The Huon Valley Business Enterprise Centre provides 'advice and support to those needing assistance with the establishment of a small or medium business enterprise development' (Huon Valley Council 2007, no page no.). The Centre was jointly funded by the State Government and the Huon Valley Council, however the Huon Valley Business Enterprise Centre failed to secure further funding from the State Government and the Huon Valley Council withdrew its financial support as well. Business services in the Huon Valley are now provided by the Kingborough Business Enterprise Centre and the Huon Valley Council has since created a section of council that provides support for economic development in the municipal area.

community bank in Geeveston was discussed at a GSRG meeting and it was noted that

an opportunity existed for the return of banking facilities to the Geeveston township. However the success or otherwise of the bank would rest entirely with the enthusiasm and commitment displayed by the residents of the Geeveston community' (Huon Valley Council 2000: 12 July, p 3).

One month later, a Community Bank Steering Committee was formed to drive what would become a three-year process to establish a dual-branch community bank located in both Geeveston and Dover. Committee members worked with Stuart Thorne of the Huon Valley Business Enterprise Centre, who commissioned a consulting company to undertake a feasibility study (MGI Meyrick Webster Consulting 2001). Its commission was assisted by a donation of \$12,500 from MHR Mr Harry Quick, federal member for Franklin, the state electorate in which Geeveston and the Huon Valley are located (Huon Valley Council 2000: 20 September). The Steering Committee's efforts were also aided by a federal grant of \$12,500 that had originally been secured by the Huon Valley Business Enterprise Centre for the development of a rural transaction centre, part of a program of 'regional solutions' provided by the then Howard Liberal-National Coalition Federal Government.¹⁰⁰ Rural transaction centres (RTC) were designed as a means to 'put services back and introduce new services to smaller rural towns' (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2008b, no page). Such services may include: financial services, post, phone, fax, internet, Medicare Australia Access Point (Australia's public health insurance program), Centrelink (an Australian Government Statutory Agency, assisting people to become

¹⁰⁰ The RTC program was one of five programs designed to address regional development by working 'in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions' (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2008a, no page number). Developing an RTC program was as a condition of the partial privatisation of Telstra (an Australian publicly owned telecommunications company). The *Telstra (Further Dilution of Public Ownership) Act 1999*, outlines six aspects of what was referred to as the social bonus, one of which is the allocation of \$70 million over 5 years to establish RTCs (Commonwealth of Australia 1999a, Part 9). The RTC funding became available on 1 July 2000 and closed 30 June 2005.

self-sufficient and supporting those in need), facilities for visiting professionals, printing, secretarial services, tourism, involvement in employment schemes, insurance, taxation, Federal, State and Local Government services, and library services (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2008b).

RTCs were considered by one participant to be an inappropriate solution to returning services to Geeveston. According to this participant, *a [rural] transaction centre can only work if the principal service provider is willing to allow this service to be accessed in that transaction centre* (HVCO 03, 2000). Therefore, if the service provider is unwilling to join the transaction centre then Geeveston people would still need to travel to access those services elsewhere perpetuating the economic leakage from the town. I also infer from this participants' comment that even though the intention of this regional development program was for rural transactions centres to be 'managed by the communities themselves who tailor services according to their specific needs' (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001, p.7), the model did not give Geeveston people sufficient control over what and how services were provided. It also may be that this participant, amongst others, felt that what Geeveston needed was a physical bank rather than a virtual one and that once the bank was there other services would flow on from that. Regardless of their disapproval of the RTC model, one participant acknowledged that *if we hadn't got that \$12,500 ... we would not have started* on the community bank project (GSRG member 2003).

This diversion of federal funds from developing a RTC to pay for a feasibility study for the community bank was not appreciated by the Federal Government funding agency as described by one GSRG member (2003),

the rural transaction people came over about two months ago and we were sitting down in the bank ... it had been refurbished and it was beautiful ... and we had [a branch] at Dover at the same time and I said "this is what you've got for your \$12,500", and they said "we gave you \$12,500 for a rural transaction centre where is it?" [Laughter from other members of the group].

This participant went on to point out that in the process of developing the community bank they *were able to get 400 odd people involved [who] put their own money up to do all this in a regional area ... that's a 'regional solution'*¹⁰¹ *it's a tremendous outcome* (GSRG member 2003). Apparently, the program's representatives reportedly expressed concern about the diversion of funds; however they did not require that the funds be repaid. The actions of some GRSR members to divert the RTC funds was perhaps somewhat more self-determination than the federal government intended when it made a commitment to work in partnership with rural and regional communities so they can 'lead their own development and realise their full potential ... to find local solutions to local problems' (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001, p.11 & 21). Indeed, it may have presented difficulties in terms of accountability as the purpose of the funds for RTCs were specifically outlined in legislation to enable 'people in rural areas to have access to services and technology that enable them to obtain information or carry out transactions' (Commonwealth of Australia 1999a, S.48(1a)). Strictly speaking, the community bank fulfils that criterion; however, I suspect that the intention of the RTC program was for more than one service to be returned to regional towns.

The process of forming the bank involved the organisation of numerous public meetings, the distribution and return of hundreds of surveys to gauge support for the Bendigo Bank's community bank concept, the commissioning of a feasibility study and the raising of a minimum of \$500,000 capital through a public share offer process to cover the costs of establishing the bank. Raising these funds required a significant effort on behalf of the steering committee, GSRG members and other committed people who tirelessly petitioned residents in and around Geeveston to support the community bank concept. Many Geeveston people were initially cautious about the community bank project, a fact that was noted by the consultants preparing the feasibility study:

¹⁰¹ This participant is making reference to the Liberal-National Coalition Federal Government regional development strategy that contained numerous programs designed to strengthen regional communities (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001). The Geeveston Online Centre has received funding under the Regional Solutions Programme established under this regional development strategy (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2002).

Most people interviewed in Geeveston believe that having a community bank would increase stability and reassurance in the area. However, it is thought that the pessimism of the last ten years or so could have affected the level of support for a community bank, with people somewhat apathetic believing that the community bank will not go ahead. Consequently, it is believed that rather than proactively pursuing the initiative, some people are adopting a 'wait and see' approach. Furthermore, it is felt that there would be a huge amount of disappointment in the area if the community bank does not go ahead, further fuelling pessimism (MGI Meyrick Webster Consulting 2001, p.10).

Indeed, the community bank project was described as 'extremely challenging' and one that took 'longer to progress than originally anticipated' (Huon Valley Council 2001: 15 August, no page). As Cr Dillon (2003, p.11) recounts

We not only had to sell the idea of buying shares but also the need for the community to use the bank once it was in place. Initially we struggled. Separating the two key concepts was at times difficult to get across. The community had the perception that, because other banks had left them high and dry, then it must be because the provision of banking services in a region like ours is not financially viable.

It is a testament of the dedication of all those involved in the project that the Steering Committee was ultimately successful in securing 385 shareholders¹⁰² who between them committed \$600,000 to the Geeveston & Dover Community Bank, a commitment of approximately \$1,500 per shareholder in a region where the majority of people aged over 15 years were earning somewhere between \$6,000 and \$30,000 per year (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001).

A number of key actors were thought to be critical to the success of the community bank endeavour and included Glenn Doyle, Manager of Community Services, Huon Valley Council and Stuart Thorn, Huon Valley Business Enterprise Centre (Dillon

¹⁰² The Premier and Deputy Premier of Tasmania at this time, the Hon Jim Bacon MHA and the Hon. Paul Lennon MHA were reportedly among these shareholders (*Huon Valley News*, 14.5.2003, pp. 1-2).

2003). The efforts of Glenn Doyle were given particular attention by Cr. Dillon (2004a, p.2) in his Chairman's report in which he stated that he 'would particularly like to thank Glenn Doyle for the work he did to get this project up and for his guidance through our first 14 months of trading'. The support of the Huon Valley Council was also recognised at the opening of the Community Bank in Geeveston, where Councillor Dillon was reported as stating:

We have good support from the Huon Valley Council – our Council has developed an ability to facilitate successful outcomes, and this is a good example – the premises in Geeveston have been provided by Council rent-free for two years whilst banking is established (Huon Valley News, 14.5.2003, p.2).

Forming the community bank is also thought to demonstrate the capacity of people to work together to develop positive futures for the Geeveston locale, reflected in the following statement.

The decision to form Huon Valley Financial Services Ltd and the impact our Community Bank® branches have had on the region clearly demonstrates that local communities can work together for mutual benefit (Dillon 2004a, p.2).

The Geeveston and Dover Community Bank was opened by the then Premier of Tasmania, the late Hon. Jim Bacon MHA on 8 May 2003 (The Dover Branch was opened by Paul Lennon on the same day). It is one of 212 Bendigo Bank community banks established throughout Australia and the first to be established in Tasmania¹⁰³ (see Figure 6.13). Establishing the Geeveston and Dover Community Bank created six new jobs in Geeveston, two full-time and four part-time. The Bank is owned as a franchise by community shareholders. The franchisee is Huon Valley Financial Services Limited. The Bank is governed by a board of 12 directors, all community members from Geeveston and Dover and one from Kingston (the next major centre 20 minutes drive north of Huonville on the way to Hobart). The inaugural chair of

¹⁰³ Bendigo Bank has branches in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie; however these are not Community Banks ®.

the Board was Councillor Dillon. The current chairman is Simon Burgess, appointed 25 July 2007. Other chairmen have included Laurie Dillon (May 2003 – Nov 2005) and Stuart Thorn (Nov 2005 – June 2007).



Figure 6.13: Bendigo Bank, Church St, Geeveston

Support for the return of banking services to Geeveston (and Dover) was demonstrated at the opening of the bank with its attendance by numerous Geeveston people and local government actors including the Mayor, General Manager, and Councillors Wilson, Dillon, and McKibben. The day before the official opening of the bank, a four-page advertising feature was placed in the Huon Valley News with 21 advertisements from businesses within the Geeveston and Dover local areas welcoming the Bank to Geeveston and Dover and congratulating all those involved in its establishment (*Huon Valley News* 14.5.2003, pp.8-11). The feature article also included a section that introduced the staff of the new bank.

According to one participant involved in the bank, the philosophy of the Geeveston and Dover Community Bank is to return to what he described as *the old way of banking* in which developing *relationships with customers* is considered an important component of the business (GCA 12, 2003). This approach has been credited by the branch's manager as contributing to the success of this initiative:

The continued positive manner in which our Community Bank® branch has been accepted and supported by people from both within and outside our immediate area has been beyond my expectations and only goes to show that there still is a need for good old fashioned, face to face banking services (Huon Valley Financial Services Limited 2007, p.4).

This ongoing support could also be attributed to

Geeveston people having a sense of ownership of the bank and understanding that the future of the bank is dependent on their commitment to supporting it rather than [having] decisions made by a head office located in another state (GCA 12, 2003).

The community bank model was developed by Bendigo Bank in response to the many requests they received to open branches in rural and regional towns and suburbs where banking services were no longer or had never been available. The community bank model which ‘involves local people in solving their own banking needs’ was thought to be a better approach than simply replacing the same type of banking arrangements that had failed there before (Bendigo Bank 2008c, no page no.). The solution developed by Bendigo Bank, is for local communities to

own and operate a Community Bank® branch of Bendigo Bank. Through a local, publicly-owned company, they invest in the order of \$400,000 to \$500,000 to establish their own branch banking business. We provide all the banking infrastructure and support and the community company and Bendigo Bank share all branch revenue. Whatever is left over after the community company pays its branch running costs, it keeps as profit (Bendigo Bank 2008c, no page no.).

The community bank model gives shareholders a say in how the profits of the bank are used and, as shareholders tend to be people from Geeveston and the surrounding area, the profits can be directed towards issues of concern to Geeveston people. Fundamental to the community bank concept is the capacity for local branches to ‘play an active role in enhancing the long term economic prospects’ of the locale in which they are situated (Bendigo Bank 2008b, no page no.). The Geeveston and Dover Community Bank has been able to do this through a community grants

program that provides sponsorship to worthy local causes, described as ‘community based organisations engaged in service activities or sporting cultural and other pursuits’ (Huon Valley News 27 October 2004, p.4). Individuals or groups can apply for amounts of up to \$500 a year and there is a total of \$3000 available to be awarded in each financial year. These funds come from ‘a discretionary payment Bendigo Bank makes to Geeveston and Dover Community Bank branches under its Market Development Fund’ (Thorn 2006, p.2). With the first round of grants made available in 2006. The following community groups have received financial support from this grant program: the Far South Community Association; the Geeveston Out of School Hours Group; Cygnet Scouts; Huon Valley Council’s Youth Council; the Melanie Harris Trust; Geeveston Guides; Huonville Swimming Club; Tahune Mountain Marathon; Huon Valley Golf Club; Geeveston Golf Club; Geeveston RSL; Geeveston Bowls Club; Dover Golf Club; Dover Bowls Club; Southern Shootout; Huon Hoofbeats; Relay for Life (Huon Valley Council); Huon Eldercare; Camp Quality; Huon Volunteer Transport; Huon Yacht Club; Kermandie Football Club; Dover Golf Club fund raising day; Huon Netball Club; Huon Agricultural Show Ladies Committee; Geeveston District High School; and Eclectic Exhibition Group (Francis 2008; Thorn 2006).

Board members have also been working since then with the Huonville/Cygnet Community Bank Steering Committee to help build support to establish branches in those towns. As with the GSRG model which was extended to other towns in the Huon Valley municipal area, Geeveston people have again engaged in an innovative approach to building strong local futures that other Huon Valley townships following. Geeveston has gone from being a pariah to the leading light of the Huon Valley as it takes these ideas out into the broader Huon Valley community, contributing in no small way to an increased self esteem among many Geeveston people.

In summary, through the activities described above, GSRG members engaged in what Relph (2008, p.320) describes as a practical sense of place; ‘all means of design, planning, making, doing, maintaining, caring for, transforming, restoring, and otherwise taking responsibility for how somewhere looks and functions’. In the process, group members came to understand and appreciate the values of

collaboration in place-making; of drawing on the knowledge of local people about the place and the way people feel about, use and understand the history of Geeveston as a place (after Yencken 2000). Collaboration generates a sense of ownership among participants that would not have been achieved so readily had council gone into the township and tidied up the town without reference to Geeveston people. The collaborative approach in turn was empowering for the majority of participants who were provided with the opportunity to determine how to (re)shape the environs of the township; a process that provided group members with the opportunity to reinscribe more coherently theirs and other Geeveston peoples' sense of place in and place-attachment to Geeveston. By altering the fabric of the main streets, adjusting colour, texture and style, its warmth and vitality and senses of safety, security, comfort and invitation, GSRG members were able to highlight and further develop the unique character and personality of the township and make more transparent the meanings that adhere in this place for these Geeveston people (and arguably many other Geeveston people). The act of reinforcing the physical qualities of the main streets also influenced positively the public image of Geeveston and created a distinctive place-identity as *Tasmania's Forest Town*. The activities of the GSRG also helped revive existing 'third places' a term coined by Oldenberg (2007, p.146) to describe the 'great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work'; places considered by Oldenberg to be critical to building healthy communities and fostering civic mindedness.

Having described the specific activities of the GSRG I now turn to examine the effects of the group's activities for citizen participation in processes of the Huon Valley Council and the extent to which they influenced the uptake of different governing practices within the Council. I also discuss the limitations of the GSRG model an especially in terms of the groups' representativeness, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency. I finish this section with an overview of the future of SRGs in the Huon Valley and the introduction of new township development committees to replace SRGs in all major towns except Geeveston.

Effects of the GSRG for citizen participation in processes of the Huon Valley Council

The creation and operation of the GSRG resulted in a reordering of political relations between a group of community actors and local government actors within the Huon Valley Council. As a local *governance* initiative, the GSRG has provided a means of changing and improving the Geeveston locale through the

development of new shared interests; the presentation of additional means of social interaction; the improvements of services and of the physical and social environment; and as a result of all these things, an enhancement of place attachment (Kearns 1995, p.168).

Participation in the GSRG partnership has enabled some Geeveston people to reconstitute the meanings of citizenship and participation and thus their own political subjectivities. As noted by one council manager, *the people that I've been working with have been saying "look, this town is not what outsiders make it [out to be] and we are going to prove them wrong" and I've been really encouraged by the enthusiasm or preparedness of the Geeveston people at last to make a difference* (HVCO 01, 2000). The success of the GSRG has contributed to a growing confidence among some Geeveston people in the value of their participation in local government processes, in particular, working with local government to create positive futures for Geeveston. The partnership has also helped to overcome Geeveston peoples' estrangement from local government and to build positive and constructive community-council relationships for those people involved.

The GSRG partnership model seems to support the observation of one participant about the critical need *to involve the community in decision-making, to keep them informed and let them know that they count* (GCA 11 2000); and of another participant who stressed the importance of *getting people to believe in themselves and get them to think that nothing is impossible* (HVCR 03 2000). The critical role local government can play in such local endogenous development and the contingency of success was emphasised by one GSRG member who pointed out that

if people in the right place like the Community Development Manager and the General Manager ... take the right view (which they do these days) they can make or

break the attitude of community. If you get ten [community] people who want to go and do something and these guys [local government managers] say they'll have nothing to do with that, you may lose those ten people, they just walk away and nothing is done... (GSRG group interview 2003).

GSRG members, who previously described not wanting anything to do with local government, now accept that local government is *a key component for better or worse* in their community and that the partnership with the Huon Valley Council has *facilitated an easy involvement for people* in the revitalisation of the Geeveston Township (GSRG group interview 2003). Indeed GSRG members now view the GSRG partnership as a *happy confluence of initiatives* that has resulted in manifold positive effects within Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council itself (GSRG group interview 2003). The collaboration has reportedly *changed the attitude of [a selection of Geeveston people] towards the Council and it has made these people understand more about how [local government] operates* (GSRG group interview 2003). Participants in the GSRG have also gained a better understanding that *... local government has limited resources and ... will prioritise its work ...* (GSRG group interview 2003). These Geeveston people now understand that rather than deliberately *neglecting* Geeveston, as previously thought by Geeveston people, the Huon Valley Council, faced with limited resources, made the decision to prioritise essential infrastructure improvements over township presentation in all of the Valley's townships.¹⁰⁴ What is less clear is whether GSRG members understood the complex challenges facing Huon Valley councillors and council managers in coming to terms with the changing roles of local government, elected members and community actors in the new *governance* environment.

¹⁰⁴ That some Geeveston people have now come to understand the decisions of the Huon Valley Council immediately post-amalgamation should not be read as a justification of the Council's failure to communicate effectively these decisions to the Huon Valley Community at large. Indeed it is worth noting that the re-organisation of local government in Tasmania from 1991 to 1993 involved significant change to the lines of accountability of local government. Prior to 1993 local government was primarily accountable to State Government. From 1993 onwards local government became primarily accountable to the communities of place and interest within the boundaries of the municipal area. The change required considerable adjustment among local government officers and elected members and in the Huon Valley, councillors, council staff and community actors are still coming to terms with the implications of these changes.

One effect of the GSRG has been to influence a degree of change in the way Huon Valley councillors and council officers constitute the role of community actors in decision-making processes of local government. Some Huon Valley councillors, managers and their staff have gained a greater appreciation of the benefits of, and opportunities created by, working in partnership with community actors on what has traditionally been considered the core business of elected members and employees of the Huon Valley Council (Stratford, Armstrong & Jaskolski 2003). The further democratisation of local government processes that has occurred as a result of the GSRG partnership has also challenged and in some cases augmented extant conceptions of the role of community actors in local government processes among Huon Valley councillors and managers. Interactions between councillors, council staff and community actors through the GSRG *have resulted in both council and community growing to understand the other's perspective ...* (HVCO 01 2002). This participant also claimed a *cultural shift had occurred with more staff now thinking through the benefits of participation* (HVCO 01 2002). Despite the attempt through the GSRG partnership experiment to make space for community actors in local government processes there remain disparate views among Huon Valley councillors and staff about the extent to which local government processes can and should be further democratised. Their reactions reflect in part the limitations of the GSRG model. Most councillors expressed open support for the model, while others raised significant concerns about the representativeness, accountability and transparency of SRGs in general. Council managers, while generally supportive, were concerned about the demands on council's immediate and longer term resources. In the sections that follow I document and discuss the perceived benefits and limitations of the GSRG and the SRG model of community-local government partnership in general, with specific reference to place-making and community capacity building.

Benefits of the GSRG community-government partnership model

Huon Valley councillors and council officers were generally supportive of community helping themselves and in the main applauded the SRG model based largely on the perceived success of the GSRG. The SRG model was thought to be a *good way of getting community involved in council processes* as they were *not bureaucratic* and allowed *community actors to take greater ownership of their towns*,

providing *tangible outcomes on the ground* that help community actors *to see what is achievable* (HVCR 03, 2002). The local township level is considered by at least one councillor as a good level at which to involve community actors in decision-making processes, while accepting that such actors will always also be involved in the larger council issues (HVCR 01, 2002). The active participation of community actors through SRGs appears to have provided a refreshing change in community engagements with council where councillors had felt that *the vast majority of the community won't trouble themselves with council unless something goes wrong* (HVCR 02, 2002). One councillor thought SRGs provided *a good avenue for the community and the council to meet in the middle on common ground* (HVCR 09 2003). Another councillor highlighted how *the GSRG gave those [council officers] involved an opportunity to engage positively with the community* and to resolve to some degree the lingering tensions between a selection of community and council actors post-amalgamation (HVCO 01, 2002). For example, one councillor's participation in the Huonville SRG helped him to *realise that [community actors] would actually help ... it wouldn't just be me carrying the can for any decisions made or actions taken* (HVCR 02, 2002). This councillor was one of a number of councillors who expressed frustration with decision-making processes of local government. In particular, they were disappointed that local government decision-making processes had become so politicised (and thus conflictual and adversarial). Some councillors were also exasperated by the bureaucratic 'red-tape' they had to wade through in developing policy and making decisions on proposals put before them. As noted by one councillor,

it takes so long to do things ... to get things up, for things to happen ... When you're in a council meeting you want something done and they [council officers] have to do reports and all this sort of stuff, whereas I come from a background where you want something done, you just go and do it, or you get someone in to do it ... (HVCR 02, 2002)

By contrast, SRGs had a level of immediacy in terms of outcomes on the ground that these councillors found more satisfying than the slow and seemingly circuitous decision-making they engaged with around the Council table on a monthly basis.

Indeed, one councillor suggested the GSRG could be a model for Council as it was *a group of likeminded people that just wanted to make the town go and really that's what Council should be* (HVCR 02, 2002). This comment reflects a desire, evident in conversations with this and other councillors, to eradicate the conflict that dominates Council decision-making processes in the Huon Valley. Indeed, there is an implicit acknowledgement that governing is easier in an environment where there are minimal differences of opinion. This councillor went on to explain that

it should be fun being a councillor [laughter] ... you don't mind a few heart aches and everything else but basically it should be reasonably enjoyable. You shouldn't be giving yourself an ulcer over it, which I think a fair percentage of us do on both sides of the fence (HVCR 02, 2002).

These comments reflect the emergent capacity of many councillors, many of whom have not yet grasped the full meaning and potential of local government as a democratic and thus political forum for the resolution of common dilemmas through less conflictual, antagonistic means.

In the Huon Valley, councillors acknowledged the extent to which council resources were maximised through the SRG model and the GSRG in particular. By working with community actors, council can more efficiently and effectively allocate scarce resources to township improvements, provide community actors with the improvements they want and need and reduce negative feedback to council. As noted by one council manager,

all the townships needed smartening up and council could've gone in and done it and then ... there would have been some flack; there would have been some people say no don't do it this way. So in terms of managing a process that council would otherwise have done I think they [SRGs] have been a terrific way of giving community input and ownership of developing their own towns... I certainly see them [SRGs] as a very positive initiative with lots of benefits to both council and community (HVCO 02, 2003).

Further, given the level of in-kind support provided by community actors through the GSRG, council is able to develop the physical assets of the township at a lower cost

than if council had to develop those assets alone. As noted by one senior council manager,

From a council perspective [working with community is] important as it allows us to increase the value of our dollar through voluntary contributions, which I think in turn ensures that the community look after the asset better (HVCO 03, 2002).

The same council manager also highlighted how a significant effect of the GSRG is in the contribution the partnership has made to building positive relations between the council and community actors. According to this council manager the GSRG has

done incredible things for the relationship between council and the community... I think we've gone from an organization that was viewed very negatively to an organization that's viewed very positively within the community particularly in Geeveston... Because of the animosities within the [broader Huon Valley] community whenever council moved into an area to do road works or capital works, whatever it did it was wrong... Streetscape is a way of trying to get the community to participate and actually take ownership and let's be honest they become ambassadors for council because if you go and criticise the decision that they have made they will defend their decision and it's not council defending the decision it's the community defending the decision it's made (HVCO 03 2002).

While there were multiple successes resulting from the SRG initiative, significant limitations of the SRG model became evident and it is to a discussion of those limitations that I now turn.

Limitations of the GSRG community-government partnership model

While there was general support for the idea of community actors helping themselves and working with council to improve the presentation of the Huon Valley's major townships, there was no consensus among councillors on the appropriateness of the SRG model when it came down to the finer details of how the groups functioned. In particular, concerns were raised by some councillors about the representativeness, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency of SRGs. There were also concerns

among council managers about the demands SRGs were making on council's immediate and longer term resources.

One councillor was adamant in his concern that these groups be made accountable, and he became a key driver in the development of terms of reference to govern (regulate and control) the conduct of members of SRGs. This councillor stated that he had

never seen anything presented to him to benchmark the performance of these groups; it's all subjective ... Council allocates considerable sums of dollars to these groups and these groups make decisions that they're going to spend this money here or that money there and I don't think it's ever done in a strategic sense ... What I'm talking about is making them accountable. If you give an allocation to a SRG, they normally go off and make the decisions, spend the money how they see fit. It's never reported back to Council ... If you're going to set up streetscape committees dealing with ratepayers' money then we have to have a process for dealing with it; an accountability process (HVCR 04, 2002).

Accountability, transparency and democratic control are considered key to good governance, and as technologies of performance are useful techniques for restoring trust in the activities of professionals and institutions (Dean 1999). Indeed, the desire for a higher level of reporting to Council reflects broader concerns among two councillors about the extent to which Council had delegated decision-making authority to the general manager and through him to other section managers of the Huon Valley Council. Yet, such technologies of performance may be counterproductive, if taken to extremes. For example, one councillor expressed concern about a push to bring SRG decisions back to Council for approval. The desire for such control at the centre was thought by some to undermine the self-determination of SRG members (considered important to the operation of SRGs). It also reflected a lack of appreciation of the benefits to the Huon Valley Council of the activities of SRGs, and the GSRG in particular whose members *who are doing a lot of work with no cost to other ratepayers* (HVCR 06, 2002).

In response to concerns about the accountability of SRGs, terms of reference were drafted, presented to Council and approved in February 2002 (Huon Valley Council

2002 & 2002a: 12 February). A copy of these terms of reference is provided in Appendix 3. It is noteworthy that prior to the creation of such terms of reference, the GSRG had provided at least two reports to Council on its activities in March and September 2000 (Huon Valley Council 2000: 11 September & 2000: 13 March). The Council had also been provided with a copy of the GSRG Community Plan, which had been used by the group strategically to deploy funds allocated to the group. All GSRG (and other SRG) meetings are attended by a Councillor, the Manager of Community Services and a Community Liaison Officer providing further accountability back to Council for the actions of these groups. The Councillor chairs the meeting and the Manager of Community Services is responsible for ensuring that expenditure is undertaken in accordance with administrative procedures and represents the Huon Valley Council's interests in all SRG matters. All minutes are prepared by the Community Liaison Officer who also obtains quotes and organises contractors in line with council policy. Thus, while it would seem that accountability processes were more robust than indicated by the councillor's comments above, once, the terms of reference were established they provided a clear delineation of the role of SRGs and could be used to regulate the activities of the members of each group. In this way the Council structured the possible fields of action of SRG members and could now govern their activities, but from a distance (Foucault 1982a, Rose, 2000).

Representativeness and inclusiveness

The discursive and material practices of the GSRG suggest a very inclusive form of community governance. Indeed the terms of reference for the GSRG state:

Membership of the SRG shall extend to all who live, or have a direct interest in the Geeveston township, and attend the Reference Group Meetings. Strong representation from those with commercial operations within the township is encouraged (Huon Valley Council 2002, section 3).

The extent to which SRGs were representative and inclusive was a further concern raised by some research participants. In addition, my observations of GSRG meetings and how the majority of members dealt with points of view informed by

different values revealed material practices that in fact engendered practices of exclusion. Indeed, the lack of representativeness of SRGs was used as a reason for not expanding the terms of reference of these groups beyond township presentation to, for example, provide a point of contact for council to engage community actors in consultation on broader issues of the Huon Valley municipal area. The membership of SRGs was deemed to be too fluid and open, and group members may not always have had the capacity to make decisions that are *for the benefit of everyone* (HVCRC 09 2004).

As with all SRGs, the GSRG membership is not fully representative and there is some concern that these groups should not be making decisions on behalf of the whole community (Smee 2004). A number of factors contribute to the lack of representativeness of SRGs. Firstly, SRG meetings are held during working hours and effectively restrict opportunities for the involvement of those interested community actors who work (especially those who work in locations remote from their township of residence) and can only participate after hours and on weekends; this is particularly the case in Cygnet (HVCRC 05, 2002). And, while the majority of the GSRG's core membership consists of semi- or fully-retired people and some people who work in the township, other Geeveston people who would like to have been more involved have been effectively excluded because of their work commitments and the refusal of group members and council staff to change meeting times. Arguably, what is at greater issue here is not so much the timing of meetings—which is perhaps always going to be difficult as meetings held in the evenings may exclude elderly members or those with young families—but that effective participation in the GSRG seems to be possible only if a person physically attends meetings. There appeared to be little other means of influencing decisions made by the group. Thus, such direct forms of democracy do not always address the problems of diversity, equity and fairness evident in representative democracy more generally as discussed in Chapter 5.

A second factor contributing to problems of representativeness is the failure of the GSRG to attract and/or hold the participation of a wider cross-section of Geeveston people. While meeting times contribute to the problem, of greater impact is the GSRG's core membership which shares one dominant ideology and has been

described as ‘closed and often antagonistic to new members and their ideas’ (Smee 2004, p.1). This criticism was viewed as ‘seriously offensive’ by the chair of the GSRG Cr Dillon (2004b, no page no.), who accused some new GSRG members as ‘trying to encourage us to do things we had in previous years decided not to do’. Furthermore, ‘many of the “new” outside ideas are not new or deemed viable and are in many cases exploiting the willingness of the volunteers to carry out their own ideas’ (Dillon 2004b, no page no.). In a telling statement about the degree to which the GSRG has taken ownership of place-making activities within the Geeveston township, Cr Dillon (2004b, no page no., emphasis added) states that ‘those parties wanting to carry out their ideas in Geeveston are free to do so *subject to the sanction of the group* [GSRG]’.

During observations of numerous GSRG meetings it became apparent to me that those expressing values different from the (conservative) majority were made to feel unwelcome and in some cases these people stopped attending meetings (Armstrong & Stratford 2004). One ex-member of the GSRG, who along with their partner *were attracted to Geeveston because of the work of the GSRG and invested in property in the main street*, found that their *values and ideas were not well received by the GSRG* and they were made to feel that they didn’t belong (one time GSRG member 2003). When asked why some members are accepted more readily than others, participants in the focus group with GSRG members responded that

it all depends on people’s attitudes... People who come here who have an open mind and who don’t try to change the town are fairly well accepted. If outsiders come in and they start telling us how we should run our town the local population doesn’t like it. Part of the problem of people trying to change or make us different...[is that] you’ll often get people turn up at meetings who throw ideas on the table that you have thrown out five years ago and sometimes it’s hard to handle (GSRG members 2003).

There was also a sense that no matter what the group did they could not ensure that a broader cross section of the Geeveston community might be involved in GSRG activities, evident in the following comment

A broader cross section of the community age-wise or any other wise would be desirable. How to achieve this I know not. Advertise, invite, make membership just by attending, minimise bureaucracy, make meetings less formal or make them more formal ... [or allow] each member to talk only once to a subject and limit that one utterance to say not more than one hour at a time [group laughter](GSRG member, 2003).

A failure to engage young people in Geeveston

How public space is managed plays a big part in constructing the social climate in which young people and others interrelate, and whether or not conflicts and tensions will predominate in any particular locality. A negative regulatory environment can make young people feel unwelcome, and frustrated at what they perceive to be unfair and unjust policies and policing practices. A positive approach, on the other hand, is one which respects the views and rights of young people, and that invites young people to be part of the solution (White 1998, p.21).

Young people have not been active participants in township revitalisation efforts in Geeveston. Engaging youth in streetscape issues proved to be a problematic issue for GSRG members, many of whom appeared to be struggling to bridge generational differences and overcome their disappointment in the prevalence of anti-social behaviour and perceived apathy among young people in Geeveston. Arguably streetscape and township revitalisation programs are inherently issues for young people, for whom, along with other community members, the planning and design of streets has major implications for their quality of life (White 1998). However, dominant members of the GSRG did not hold this view. They were more concerned about the impact of the ways in which youths were (ab)using the spaces within the township on the township revitalisation efforts of GSRG members, activities in which young people in Geeveston were not included (Armstrong & Stratford 2004). Younger people tend to “hang out” in the main street, their anti-social behaviour (riding of skateboards, other small wheeled vehicles and bicycles on footpaths, vandalism and being offensive to tourists) impacting upon other Geeveston people and visitors to the town. These activities broadly described as vandalism may represent attempts by young people in Geeveston ‘to establish territories within an otherwise unsatisfying environment’ (Guppy 2000, p.16). Some members of the group wanted to develop inclusive strategies to help Geeveston’s young people

become respected, respectful and valued members of the community. However, the majority of GSRG members decided that trying to ‘fix’ what they constituted as ‘the youth problem’ is beyond the capacity and mandate of the GSRG given the complexity of the issues involved (intergenerational unemployment, limited educational and employment opportunities, drug and alcohol abuse). As explained by one GSRG member (2003),

at 4.05 on Monday morning in my house I could hear the kids out in the park sitting in the BBQ shelter... [The reason] the kids are sitting in the BBQ shelter at that hour is because it's probably a better place to be than being at home... and I'm not sure that we can do anything about that. So when people come to our streetscape meetings and want to take us there we have a real resistance to that.

At numerous meetings I observed significant conflict among GSRG members over youth issues in particular the extent to which GSRG members should attempt to work with young people on the streetscape project. Many GSRG members who did not want to get involved in youth issues expressed profound anger over the behaviour and attitudes of young people in Geeveston, whom they described as ‘riff raff’, ‘street urchins’, ‘notorious’ and ‘abusive’ (recorded during observations of GSRG meetings 25.9.02 & 20.11.02). These members strongly supported the active policing of young people and their behaviour in the township. Other GSRG members were anxious to find ways to include these already marginalised community members in the place-making activities of the group. Concerned about the risk of further polarising GSRG members and young people in Geeveston, the then Manager of Community Development Services and the Youth Development Officer worked together to provide some mediation between the two groups. The riding of skateboards in the main street of Geeveston was the main focus of these discussions. Originally intent on Council declaring Church Street a no-go zone for skateboards and having this rule rigidly enforced by local police, the GSRG was persuaded to enter into discussions with Geeveston’s young people to make them aware of GSRG members’ concerns and to encourage them to utilise their skateboards in the skate park rather than in the town centre (Doyle 2002). Notwithstanding these efforts, GSRG members resolved to request the Huon Valley Council declare Church Street

a “No Go Zone” for skateboards and other small wheeled vehicles from 9.30am to 5.30pm, 7 days a week (Huon Valley Council 2002: 11 December). The Huon Valley Council supported this recommendation and signs were erected in Church Street in July 2003 (Huon Valley Council 2003: 16 July). With the introduction of this measure people who contravene these rules can be issued with on-the-spot fines, may be summonsed to Court and/or may have their skateboard confiscated by Tasmania Police for up to seven days. Thus these young people have been further alienated from the town centre by the actions of some members of the GSRG. GSRG could have elected to use language such as ‘carry only’, requiring skaters and small-wheeled vehicle users to carry their ‘gear’ while moving through the main street instead of the negative and alienating language of ‘no-go zone’. It is noteworthy that while a dedicated skate park has been provided in Heritage Park (see Figure 6.14), adjacent to the Geeveston town centre, no shelter has been provided and one gets the sense that the space is not particularly welcoming. Indeed, there is little evidence in the main street of Geeveston of the value of or contribution by young people to creating a sense of place in Geeveston.



Figure 6.14: Skate Park in Geeveston (Note the lack of shelter).

The concern over skating in Geeveston is indicative of broader issues of ‘how public space—and particularly the space of the footpath and the street—is designed, appropriated, used and managed’ (Stratford & Harwood 2001, p.62). It also highlights ‘the complex politics of identity and space, citizenship and access’ (Stratford & Harwood 2001, p.63) evident in the (re)production of place through activities associated with township revitalisation. In Geeveston, the spaces of the main streets have been ordered and behaviour disciplined in ways that ensure the

safety of non-skaters, but also to ensure the main streets are presentable and marketable to visitors and tourists. According to Stratford and Harwood (2001, p.68), most skaters are aged between 12 and 25 years and many 'are still experimenting with their level of commitment to, and accommodation of, institutional order'. Stratford and Harwood (2001, p.68) highlight that prior to the introduction of the new road rules, which recognised skating as a legitimate form of transport, skating in non-dedicated skating areas was illegal. The status of skating as illegal contributed to a widespread conception of skaters as delinquent and placed them in a marginal position compounded by the fact that in order to skate they had to break the law (Stratford & Harwood 2001).¹⁰⁵ This situation provided others with opportunities to suggest that skaters 'are incapable of committing to and accommodating civic norms' (Stratford & Harwood 2001, p.68). Arguably, in Geeveston, the delinquent status of skaters (and youth in general) has persisted among GSRG members, and the negative and distrustful attitude towards young people in Geeveston may be compounded by common knowledge of the use of drugs and consumption of alcohol and associated anti-social behaviour—theft, violence, and drink driving—among some young people in Geeveston.¹⁰⁶

The division within the GSRG over youth issues, described above, led some members to develop a separate group, the Red Bank Community Cooperative to work on youth issues. The purpose of the Cooperative was to provide young people in Geeveston with opportunities for training in retail and hospitality and build cultural and social capital among participants. The Cooperative members hoped to develop a vacant building known as the Red Bank in Church St in to a cafe and retail outlet, which would be run by the young people in Geeveston. Cooperative members were also interested in developing other projects with youth including a community

¹⁰⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the politics of regulating the use of small wheeled vehicles see (Stratford & Harwood 2001).

¹⁰⁶ In May 2002 a meeting to discuss youth issues in Geeveston was organised and hosted by the Geeveston Community Centre. The minutes from this meeting record the concerns of those attending including that some young people are drinking and taking drugs, were not getting on at home and/or came from families where drinking and taking drugs was the norm. It was also noted that unemployment, lack of acceptable, affordable options and a lack of motivation contribute to drug and alcohol use among young people (Geeveston Community Centre 29 May 2002).

bus service and an urban planning project to develop further the skate park as a complement to the work of the GSRG and as a means to building a sense of place for young people. In the end Cooperative members decided that it was not possible to establish a viable design, retail and food business incorporating a training venue. They did however establish a Junior Streetscape Committee with a group of year seven, eight and nine students from the Geeveston High School. The Cooperative also became a member of the Huon Stronger Communities Partnership and proposed to develop a pilot “doodling to planning” project with students at Huonville High School. With focus moving beyond the main streets of Geeveston, the group changed their name to the Huon Valley Cooperative for Community Development.

Future of the Streetscape Reference Groups

The SRG model didn’t translate well to all townships demonstrating what is seen more broadly as the ‘contingent nature of place-based community mobilisation’ (Raco & Flint 2001, p.595). In a report to the executive committee MANEX,¹⁰⁷ the Manager of Community Development raised a number of concerns about the functioning of each of the SRGs. The problems identified with SRGs include a loss of focus, lack of vision, fluctuating membership, ongoing maintenance issues, a lack of representativeness and there being too many members in each group. The Manager of Community Development expressed concern that SRGs had become “dumping grounds” for a whole range of issues not relevant to township presentation, creating extra work for the Community Liaison Officers on matters not related to streetscape development (Smee 2004, p.3). This loss of focus was thought to be a factor of there being no end point to SRGs and thus no pressure to complete tasks within a given timeframe (Smee 2004). The degeneration of committee meetings into complaint forums or their becoming dominated by single issue groups was also experienced in another Tasmanian municipal area where precinct committees has been developed (Martin 2003). This tendency was attributed to the confused purpose and expectations of the precinct program among council and community participants,

¹⁰⁷ MANEX is a management committee of the Huon Valley Council consisting of managers, the executive officer and the executive support officer. The committee is convened each week to discuss management and organisational issues (Local Government Board 2000).

both of which contributed to a lack of focus (Martin 2003). The key purpose of SRGs was to develop and implement a strategic vision for township revitalisation. Yet, according to the Manager of Community Development, many SRG members lacked a vision for their towns.

Some attend because they have an axe to grind over a particular issue; others because they have an idea to present and others simply want to make a contribution. However few people can see the big picture for their town and it is unrealistic to expect that the average person would have such a vision (Smee 2004, p.3).

Engaging consultants to bring together community ideas and develop overall plans for the townships was not thought to have adequately solved this problem (Smee 2004).

Issues with the membership of SRG—fluctuating membership, lack of representativeness and number of members—had also been identified as problematic. While SRG membership was not such a problem in Geeveston, in other SRGs it tended to fluctuate widely from one meeting to the next resulting in inconsistent decision-making. In some cases decisions made at one meeting were overturned at the next and time spent by council officers ‘preparing plans, obtaining quotes and identifying resources’ was wasted (Smee 2004, p.3). This problem was particularly evident in the township of Cygnet where the SRG suffered from the influence of local politics, conflict and differences, resulting in the resignation of many of the original members of this group. The open membership of SRGs contributes to this lack of continuity and consistency in membership and also created opportunities for ‘meeting stacking to overturn decisions’ (Smee 2004, p.3). It has also been thought that there are too many members of each group, which have typically consisted of 15 or more members, making it difficult to control meetings and to reach consensus on decisions (Smee 2004).

Projects to revitalise townships in the Huon Valley were also leading to the creation of a new set of assets that required ongoing maintenance, raising questions about who would be responsible for such maintenance. As noted by Smee (2004, p.3), ‘with the exception of Geeveston, there is very little voluntary labour and ongoing

maintenance provided by streetscape members'. There are different expectations of the roles of community and council actors as noted by one council manager:

Geeveston's pretty different in that they [the GSRG members] are very much actively involved in a hands on manner in implementing plans where as the others don't lift a finger, they just work up the plan and then that's it, they're just decision-makers, not implementers (HVCO 03, 2003).

However, as noted above, there is concern that the current levels of volunteer input with maintenance in Geeveston are not sustainable in the long term given the age of most GSRG members (Smee 2004). There was also reluctance among employees of the Huon Valley Council's to take on responsibility for maintaining streetscape projects. A solution to the problem of ongoing maintenance was originally proposed by members of the Huonville SRG who offered to contribute \$5000 of their annual allocation to allow Council to employ a contractor to undertake streetscape maintenance there (Smee 2004). The GSRG agreed to contribute an equivalent sum and a contractor was appointed in December 2004 to undertake streetscape maintenance in Franklin, Geeveston, and Huonville (Huon Valley Council 2004: 22 September & 2004: 15 December).

On the strength of these concerns, the Manager of Community Development recommended that

Streetscape Groups be wound up by 2005, groups be required to submit a detailed action plan to Council for approval prior to receipt of an allocation in the 2004/05 budget, consideration be given to the ongoing maintenance of streetscape projects by Council employees, consideration be given to the ongoing development of streetscape projects beyond 2005, and the two Community Liaison Officer positions currently largely dedicated to streetscape projects be refocused in 2005 to provide greater emphasis on community and cultural developments (Smee 2004, p.5).

The criticisms of the SRGs (in particular the GSRG) and the suggestion that these groups be wound up were not received well by the chairman of the GSRG, Cr. Dillon, who defended the capacity of GSRG members to continue to provide voluntary labour and to function as a successful SRG (Dillon 2004b). Cr. Dillon

pointed to the fact that the GRSG had secured an investment of \$400, 000 from the State Government to support its projects, funds he considered the Huon Valley Council would not have been able to access had the GSRG not been formed (Dillon 2004b). According to Cr. Dillon (2004b, no page no.), the GRSG

has been magnificent and has a role to play in the community. We get ambushed at times but that is part of the rough and tumble of the consultation process. If there is a desire to wind back administrative support for the groups then please put it forward. But please do not discredit or destroy the groups as they have a future and have a wonderful past.

Ultimately, the recommendation for the SRGs to cease was defeated and SRGs continue to operate in the Huon Valley, although (with the exception of the GSRG) all under a new structure. In Cygnet, Dover, Franklin and Huonville the original SRGs have been replaced with Township Development Committees (TDCs); a change partly driven from the bottom-up when members of the Franklin and Dover SRGs lobbied the Manager of Community Development to widen the terms of reference of the groups to include whole of township strategic development issues rather than just main street issues. The restructuring of these four SRGs also provided council with the means to have more control over the operation of these groups and reduce opportunities for community actors to use a range of strategies to influence the outcomes of decision-making processes at SRG meetings. GRSG members reportedly felt threatened by the changes occurring in the other groups and maintained that their group was working well under the existing structure and should not be changed. The township development committees are special committees of Council constituted under and subject to the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993*, while the GRSG remains a volunteer community group only.¹⁰⁸ Unlike the GSRG, township development committees are not allocated a budget to manage. According to one participant, this decision has contributed in part to the new groups

¹⁰⁸ Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, ‘a council may establish, on such terms and for such purposes as it thinks fit, special committees ... consisting of such persons appointed by the council as the council thinks appropriate’ (Government of Tasmania 1993, s.24(1-3)). It is up to the council to determine the procedures relating to meetings of any special committees they create.

being less issue driven and reactive and more focused on strategic matters. In contrast, in the GRSG, where members still manage their own budget, there is a greater focus on how to spend that budget allocation at the expense of strategic issues.

TDCs are comprised of nine community members appointed by Council and chaired by a councillor. To become a community member of these committees, interested persons put forward an expression of interest to Council and the Council then determines who will be on the committee. TDCs are appointed to provide advice and direction to Council on township presentation and amenity, implementation of township plans, pedestrian and traffic management, individual and community safety and other projects identified as a priority in the development of the respective township (Huon Valley Council 2009). Residents who are not committee members are still welcome to attend meetings, however, unless they make a formal application to the responsible council officer to make a representation, they may only participate as observers (Huon Valley Council 2009). As a result, decision-making there is more solid and predictable than in former SRGs. Yet, while there is no opportunity for meeting stacking, the new model is still vulnerable to political interference and an idea or project may be opposed simply because it is perceived as being supported by a competing group within the township.

Summary

Community and local government actors in Geeveston and the Huon Valley municipal area have responded in different ways to those changes in local governing processes given effect by the neoliberal technologies that adhere to government, governance, and the constitution of identity in place. These actors have variously invested in, accommodated, resisted, adapted and sought to use these shifting local governing processes to provide opportunities for the creation of enduring, strong and viable local futures, however conceived. In some cases these actions have resulted in different governing practices, the GRSG being a particular example. In other cases there has been a concerted attempt by local government actors to protect their decision-making authority by resisting the demands from some community actors to open up local governing processes to their participation. In the Geeveston case the deployment of more inclusive (although at times exclusive) governing practices has

contributed to a re-shaping (tidying up) of Geeveston's streetscapes; a process that required GSRG members to evaluate and manipulate the physical elements that make the Geeveston township function as a place for active human occupation. A renewed townscape has emerged from these efforts; one that is more legible, comfortable and usable for (most) residents and visitors alike. The renewed townscape celebrates the main streets as a locus for social life and as sites for the reconstitution of a particular sense of place and identity with Geeveston reinvented as *Tasmania's Forest Town*. The actions of the GSRG and their effects in Geeveston draw attention to the utopian potential of the 'spatial form as a container of social processes and as an expression of moral order' (Harvey 2000, p.174). They also reveal tension, differences, conflict and contradictions.

The extent to which the GSRG was able to achieve its goals depended on numerous factors, many unique to Geeveston, highlighting the contingent nature of place-making and community capacity building activities. First, the homogeneity (like-mindedness) of the core group members minimised the need for them to accommodate and work with difference. Indeed, group members who attempted to steer streetscape revitalisation projects in directions different from those supported by core members were effectively expelled from the group. Thus, while according to the terms of reference, group membership was open to all Geeveston people; in practice it was conditional on the conduct-of-conduct (conformity) of individual members.

Second, the GSRG was able to mobilise the resources of local and State governments, Forestry Tasmania and Gunns Ltd. However, the extent to which GSRG members were able to mobilise these resources may have been contingent on the following factors: the political climate of the day; Geeveston's position in relation to the State economy (and broader still); Geeveston people's tendency to support the dominant faction in the Huon Valley Council; and Geeveston's location within the State electorate of Franklin, represented at that time by MHA Paul Lennon who readily used this opportunity to foster support among constituents and who, along, with his Labor government colleagues held a position on forest industries agreeable to many Geeveston people.

Third, Forestry Tasmania's investment in developing the Tahune AirWalk enabled State Government actors to justify their investment in Geeveston by developing the township as a gateway for the increasing numbers of tourists drawn to the area by the new tourist attraction. In so doing, the State Government perpetuated the significant role of forest industries in the regional character, politics and survival.

Fourth, lack of resistance among other Geeveston people allowed GSRG members a free hand in township revitalisation activities, smoothing the processes involved in changing the fabric of the town's main streets. This situation was not experienced in other towns. Especially in Cygnet, for example, contests have been ongoing over the appropriate processes involved and the direction for streetscape revitalisation within that settlement.

Fifth, by restricting the group's activities to township revitalisation projects using specific terms of reference, group members stayed focused and were successful in achieving the goals encompassed within the Geeveston Community Plan, with support from local government and key people in Geeveston.

Finally, coupled with their hands-on approach, GSRG members were able to mobilise local resources and that was a critical factor in progressing the revitalisation of the township: the extent to which self-help was apparent is noteworthy in this regard.

The actors that formed the GSRG accepted what I describe as a certain *problematisation* or specific conception of, analysis of and preferred solution to a problem (Selman & Wragg 1999); that township beautification would improve the social and economic well-being of Geeveston, by reinvigorating local pride and making the town more attractive to tourists (Huon Valley Council 2000). In accepting the problem of township presentation certain movements and detours were accepted and certain alliances forged, such as among Geeveston people and Huon Valley Council staff and councillors. These alliances helped those involved achieve desired goals. The resulting partnership has enabled GSRG members and council officers to develop creative responses to the economic, social and environmental challenges being experienced in Geeveston. However, partnerships such as the

GSRG may also represent an example of how governing practices constitute material sites for the exercise of governmental technologies of agency and citizenship that structure and limit community participation to ensure their activities are compatible with the goals of government.

Chapter 7

Local government, community actors, local futures: summary, discussion and future research

In this thesis I have examined how local government and community actors are managing change in local governing processes where such change is given effect by a range of technologies of government, governance, and the constitution of identity in place. In a context of increasing demands for community actors to take greater responsibility for local futures, this research provides a significant body of new empirical work that critically examines the relationships between governance processes, community change and subject building and sits within a growing body of research that critically examines the effects of neoliberal governmentality. In my examination of how governing *is* practised and the *effects* of those practices in the specific context of Geeveston and the Huon Valley Council, I have identified the limitations and potential tokenism of place-making strategies for township revitalisation in building community capacity and citizen engagement in local government. The research provides a critical evaluation of one approach to promoting positive change in communities of place and its impacts for community development. As such the work contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the constitution of community in public policy and processes of community transformation. I have sought to examine what can be learnt from this particular case study, and contemplated how and with what effects community and local government actors could govern differently. In pursuing this task I have remained mindful of the normative aspects of such an exercise.

The key findings of this in-depth-case study and contribution to knowledge on the topic of managing change in local government are as follows, with each discussed in more detail below:

- The outcomes intended by the insertion of participatory processes into representative systems of government have only been partially realised and have

generated significant tensions between representative and participatory democracy.

- Democratically legitimate representation is a product of free and fair elections and claims about representativeness can be used legitimately (if nevertheless unreasonably) as a means to foreclose on opportunities for participation.
- Conflict is a necessary part of democracy. To attempt to eradicate conflict is to deny the inherently political nature of local government decision-making processes.
- Partnerships such as the GSRG suggest evolving collaborations in governance that may provide opportunities to build civic and institutional capacity. However, they may also represent an example of how governing practices constitute material sites for the exercise of governmental technologies of agency and citizenship that structure and limit community participation to ensure their activities are compatible with the goals of government.

Recall that the purpose of this research has been to apprehend the materiality of governing at the local level under neoliberal governmental regimes in order to comprehend *what happens and what is at stake* when people govern and are governed in particular ways. This project has been underpinned by an interest in everyday practices and the particular experiences of individuals within communities of place and interest. It is also informed by my interest in asking how governing practices constitute material sites for the exercise of governmental technologies, and in knowing how these effects pertain to the spaces of the individual-in-community, the local(e), and the rural region. These spaces are both targets for reform and sites of resistance; they are constituted by the effects of governmental technologies while at the same time acting as vehicles of their articulation (Foucault 1980).

Recall, too, that I have explored specific questions throughout the work. How have community and local government actors, among others, invested in, accommodated, resisted, adapted and sought to use shifting local governing processes to provide opportunities for enduring, strong and viable local futures, however those futures might be conceived? What do their responses to different situations and challenges (and to my questions on such matters) reveal about how they understand

representation, citizenship and participation in governing? How did these understandings change over time or under the influence of diverse factors, and did they result in different governing practices? How do their various governing practices give effect to community capacity building through place-making? Embedded within these questions is an assumption that when community and local government actors govern *what is at stake* for them are normative ideas about local futures.

The work has been broadly informed by governmentality and an understanding of governing as the conduct of conduct. This theoretical toolkit was chosen for its capacity to highlight the strategies and tactics of government; to show how governing practices constitute subjects and objects of government; and to demonstrate how this process involves both practices of government and practices of the self. For these reasons, the approach is well suited to investigations about how community and local government actors are managing change in local governing processes through actions related to place.

In chapter one I provided an overview of the context within which the research is situated, including the shift from government to governance, regions in transition, the power of place and place-making and community capacity building. I highlighted how, in most western liberal democratic states, community has been constituted as a new space through which to govern individuals in terms of their personal and collective allegiances and active responsibilities. This approach to governing emphasizes new relations of mutual obligation between ethical citizenship and responsible community: individuals in relation to their communities of place and interest are now responsible for managing their own risks and their own futures. In this way, government constitutes different locales (for example, the Huon Valley Council) as authoritative and powerful, different domains (for instance, community) as governable and administrable and assembles different agents (for example individuals-in-community) with specific powers.

Of significance to (and beyond) this research is the importance to this new space of community of a profound shift in governing practices that has occurred in which

networks, partnerships, and markets have become increasingly important as government redefines its role from controlling and regulating to steering, guiding and enabling the governed. The boundaries of responsibilities between public and private spheres have become blurred as formal government decision-makers increasingly draw upon the knowledge and resources of multiple actors outside government to tackle collective problems. At least two effects of these changing conditions of governing are noteworthy for community capacity building: a rise in concern among community and government actors about accountability, legitimacy, mandate, inclusiveness and representativeness (O'Toole & Burdess 2004); and the deployment of new tools by government to steer, guide, enable, facilitate, catalyse, coordinate, regulate, lead and provide opportunities (Stoker 1998).

I explained how public sector reforms have been given effect by the spread of technologies of NPM that combine micro-economic theory with managerialism and emphasis economic efficiency and the separation of policy development from policy administration and implementation. The technologies of NPM have been used extensively to restructure local government and its engagement with community, accentuating community empowerment, customer responsiveness and citizen participation. Indeed community has become the new territory of government where normative ideas of community have become key regulatory elements of policy practices in governance. It is of some concern that such valorisation of community in public policy may obfuscate an ongoing commitment in government to economic fundamentalism and an attempt to depoliticise social problems.

I described how rural regions in Australia have experience rapid social, economic and environmental changes since the 1970s, largely driven by neoliberal governmental policies that emphasized economic deregulation and rural restructuring. The cumulative effects of these changes steadily eroded strong and viable local futures in many small rural locales, Geeveston being just one example. Paralleling these trends was the steady in-migration of sea-changers and tree-changers to rural areas, accompanied by an increase in conflict over resource management. Government responses to this 'rural crisis' focused on community empowerment, community capacity building and partnerships with an emphasis on self-help, self-reliance and volunteerism.

I also highlighted the importance of place to sense of identity, community and humanity. Places are unique and influence the character and quality of lives. Places are also relational and contingent. I have worked from the premise that places are significant sites embedded in and reflections of the intersections of myriads socio-spatial relations and the relation of power evident at a particular time. Attempts to modify place are inherently political and imbued with relations of power, and place-making as expression of power to and power over are core to the GSRG case study.

Then in chapter 2, the research design was explained and the ontological and epistemological underpinnings made explicit. This research has been based on a case study approach and has examined the particularities of people's experiences, requiring a great deal of attention to descriptions, constitutions and interpretations of everyday life experiences. Accounts of these experiences were sought in narratives (text, talk and practice) and the discourses that arise from them.

Through the research process I have unsettled taken-for-granted understandings of governance, analysing how these understandings are produced and how they change. To achieve such ends, I have drawn on ideas about the critical role of discursive practices in producing the subjects and objects of government and their historical and cultural specificity.

I also provided a detailed account of the specific methods used to select the case study, work with participants, collect information and insights from them and from other primary and secondary sources, and analyse data for their meaning.

Throughout, I have remained cognisant of the relations of power that interleave the research process and, where possible, I have minimised the effects of power by applying standard ethical rules of engagement and critical reflexivity in relation to my own conduct. Data collected using observational and interviewing techniques have been analysed using a hybrid approach indebted to traditions in hermeneutics and discourse analysis broadly indebted to Foucault and those – such as Dean or Hajer – who work with Foucauldian frames. Using this approach allowed me to extend the boundaries of hermeneutics and explore the particular contexts of human

action in everyday life while remaining sensitive to the historical operation of discourse, discursive practices and structures.

The work as a whole represents the crystallization of a multifaceted qualitative research design. It is based on an understanding that the production of knowledge is relative, relational, and context-dependent. Importantly, the conduct of the research has generated findings about the cultural and political geographies of specific places, people and processes which have wider salience for how to understand representative and participatory democracy and how to appreciate their effects on community capacity building through place-making.

Consistent with the practice of qualitative research and cultural geography in chapter three I described three key moments in the originary story of the Huon Valley's GSRG—the restructuring of the apple and pear growing industry, the contraction of forest industries and the modernisation of local government. I explained how these events were instrumental in the decline of Geeveston and ennui among members of its community, and I documented how that complex history came to inform the present day character of the locale, giving effect to the conduct of conduct of Geeveston people, and to certain political subjectivities and modes of participation.

Conflicts over forest industries were particularly significant in Geeveston and the Huon Valley. Deep seated antagonisms between environmentalists and those supporting forest industries contributed to unproductive, damaging and polarised relationships, which dominated decision-making processes in the Huon Valley Council. The Southwood development proposal illustrates the depth of these conflicts and the extent to which local government processes are challenged by differential exercise of power and strategies and tactics used by various actors in their attempts to influence the outcomes of decision-making processes.

The cumulative effects of the changes described in chapter three resulted in a dramatic decline in social wellbeing and economic prosperity in Geeveston. Many Geeveston people characterised the changes experienced as negative and described feeling demoralised by their perceived poor treatment at the hands of government, business and the media; all of which contributed to their defensiveness and anger.

Those Geeveston people positioned themselves as victims; their capacity to give effect to positive local futures diminished and their perception of self and/or community competence and confidence eroded. Thus, it is noteworthy that the first SRG formed in Geeveston, rather than one of the other towns in the Huon Valley, where socio-economic conditions were arguably more favourable.

Importantly for Geeveston and for the formation of the GSRG, a few of the town's people—community leaders and champions—consistently worked to improve the prospects of realising economic security and social wellbeing in the face of, and in response to, change. Two interrelated activities were instrumental in triggering a shift in Geeveston and highlight the importance of catalytic agents and events in promoting change. The development of Heritage Park and subsequent capacity to host the Taste of Tasmania there provided Geeveston people with the opportunity to reconstitute a collectively positive identity and to recast the future in a positive light. Those two activities also contributed to some Geeveston people accepting that change in the town had to be led from within. In that way some Geeveston people surfaced as self-managing individuals, enterprising persons and active citizens capable of managing their own risks and the risks typifying life in the locale. This attitude of self-help among a selection of Geeveston people provided a group of already active community actors with whom the Huon Valley Council could readily engage on issues of common concern, not least among them township presentation – a highly visible and broadly uncontroversial project.

In chapter four, I elaborated upon the geo-political context within which the GSRG emerged as one example of how community and local government actors invested in, accommodated, resisted, adapted and sought to use shifting local governing processes to provide opportunities for enduring and viable local futures. The purpose of that chapter was to map a reformed governmental landscape shown to have had significant impacts and effects upon the constitution of Geeveston as a place and on Geeveston people who, through the GSRG, sought to engage in governing practices on their own terms.

To satisfy such ends, I provided an account of national and state governmental and political contexts within which local government reforms were developed and implemented in Australia from 1970 onwards, paying particular attention to their effects in Tasmania. Changes to the local government sector occurred gradually until the 1990s when, driven by national concerns with micro-economic reform, the sector was subjected to major projects of modernisation and rationalisation in all states. The changes were profound and involved the comprehensive transformation of local government management, legislation and structure. Central to those reforms was the introduction of a range of governmental technologies designed to improve local government economic efficiency and overall effectiveness, and meant to make councils more accountable, transparent, fair, open and inclusive. The key mechanisms of change included the integration of managerialist principles into local government organisational procedures, the reform of local government legislation and structural reform through amalgamations.

The modernisation process shifted the emphasis of local government from the administration of prescriptive processes (rowing) to governing in the best interests of constituents with a focus on performance and outcomes (steering), reflective of the spread of managerialism throughout the sector. Fundamental to that shift were legislative changes designed to give local government greater autonomy and flexibility via the granting of general competence powers complemented by mechanisms intended to improve accountability, transparency and responsiveness. The clarification of the roles and responsibilities of state and local governments and of elected members and council employees was a further important aspect of those changes, and one designed to improve efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.

Of particular relevance to this case study – and of wider salience to students of several disciplines – was the recognition of the importance of citizen participation to achieve effective local government and to offset democratic deficits that arose from structural reforms – and particularly amalgamations. Support for that goal was reflected in the inclusion of requirements for enhanced opportunities for citizen participation in new local government and resource management and planning legislation. Participation in strategic planning processes was considered the

predominant mechanism to achieve such ends. Other changes considered important to enhancing citizen participation included reinforcing the representative role of councillors by clarifying their roles as distinct from council employees, opening council meetings to the public, and providing greater public access to relevant documentation. It was noted that despite such emphases on the importance of citizen participation to effective local government, many councils have taken a passive approach to citizen involvement in decision-making processes.

In chapter five I examined how the spread of neoliberal discourses and practices of government challenged longstanding ideas about how to govern and be governed in the Huon Valley, and in that work I focused particularly on responses to pressures for enhanced citizen participation. My analysis highlighted the reluctance of many local government actors to actively include citizens in decision-making processes and underscored their preference that decision-making authority should remain firmly located at the centre with councillors, the general manager and specific delegated council managers. The opinions of those local government actors may have been fuelled by the pronounced conflicts that arose as community and local government actors worked to constitute the identity and membership of the Huon Valley political community. Managing the increasingly diverse interests and values of constituents presented significant challenges for the Huon Valley Council, where the expression of multiple political identities was viewed as a destabilizing, undermining and weakening force rather than one that augments and strengthens the capacity to govern. While diversity was considered a key characteristic of the Huon Valley community, Council's capacity to make space for different voices and values was circumscribed by the power effects generated by an apparent desire among the majority faction to *fix* the identity of the Huon Valley political community in particular ways. Indeed many local government actors appear to have sought to discipline, manipulate and control the diverse interests of residents—especially those who challenged the status quo—in order to better administer, regulate and monitor them for ends considered to be in the best interests of the majority.

Significantly, local government actors in the Huon Valley were challenged by participatory processes. Citizen participation was frequently reactive, adversarial and

focused on single issues, and there was a sense among some residents that the Huon Valley Council lacked openness, transparency and inclusiveness in making decisions. While the Huon Valley Council provides many opportunities for community actors to provide input to local government matters, the mechanisms to achieve this engagement tend to be based on consultation rather than active participation, thus limiting the extent to which participants can influence final decisions. It was evident that the majority of councillors have considerable faith in the efficacy of narrow forms of representative democracy and argued firmly that community actors should not be involved in decision-making. Their opinions were underpinned by a strong belief in councillors' electoral mandate, coupled with concerns about the representativeness, accountability and transparency of participatory processes. Conversely, some councillors expressed concerns about the desire to eradicate conflict and de-politicise processes of decision-making often evident among most councillors. It appears that some structural and functional changes resulting from local government reforms have actually undermined democratic processes by providing significant power to Council and especially to the General Manager.

In chapter six I described the formation, activities and achievements of the GSRG. I examined the extent to which actors involved in the group were able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them. I also analysed the effects of the group's activities for community capacity building through place-making in Geeveston. The GSRG partnership represents a different mode of engagement between Geeveston people and the Huon Valley Council, and highlights the benefits of partnerships for community and local government. The activities of the GSRG significantly improved the presentation and amenity of the town's physical environment; strengthened and externalised a sense of local identity; built the administrative, entrepreneurial and political capacities of group members; and partially improved social wellbeing in Geeveston. The group's activities also contributed to other local and State Government projects aimed at improving the economic prosperity in Geeveston, thus adding value to council investments with in-kind support from community actors and financial support from external actors and organisations. As well, the group contributed to building positive relations between the council and community actors. Significantly, the extent to which the GSRG was able to achieve its goals depended on numerous factors, many of which were unique

to Geeveston. Similar results were not generated in other towns where the SRG model was applied.

While the activities of the GSRG generated substantial positive change in Geeveston, there were some significant limitations of the partnership. Of particular concern was the extent to which the GRSg (and other SRGs) were representative and inclusive. For example, the GSRG failed to attract and/or hold the participation of a wider cross section of Geeveston people in the group. This situation was partly due to the general problem of community apathy, but equally problematic was the tendency for the group's core membership to be closed and members to be antagonistic to newcomers and their ideas. Establishing how to best engage young people in GSRG activities was particularly problematic for group members, where negative and distrustful attitude towards young people prevailed. Such experiences in Geeveston highlight the importance of thinking through how to structure participatory processes in order to provide for greater inclusiveness and bring more sections of the community into decision-making processes.

In examining such matters, I also highlighted the contingent nature of place-based community mobilisation and empowerment demonstrated by the fact that the SRG model did not translate well to all Huon Valley townships. That finding was particularly evident in towns where there were strong, active, vocal groups of people with disparate views about how townships should be improved, resulting in meetings being stacked and decisions being overturned from one meeting to the next. Council officers also identified numerous other problems related to the structure and function of SRGs that ultimately led to a restructuring of SRGs in all towns except Geeveston.

Having summarised the work presented thus far, I now return to the primary question of this thesis and ask what happens and what is at stake when we govern in particular ways? In coming back to this query, I also discuss a number of key issues about representation, participation and capacity building, that have arisen from my own reflections on the research and which result, in large measure, from the ways in which insights have changed my own thinking. In this sense, what follows is partly conclusive, partly speculative – and intended to be so.

Complexity in local governance: a discussion of key findings

Thus far, I have shown how local government and community actors addressed local futures and the process of capacity building through place-making. However, in undertaking the research I now have a different set of questions that particularly relate to the nature of democracy. Here, then, I reflect on how the aspirations embedded in local government policy and legislation are inherently contradictory for the simple reason that democracy is messy and complex. In particular, I unpack a range of statements about democracy organised around the following issues: the dynamic and complex relationship between representative and participatory democracy; claims to representativeness; the challenge of conflict and governing through community. The imposition of these categories onto the discussion should not distract from their interconnectedness.

This research has been empirically grounded in the Tasmanian context and thus the conclusions drawn from the work are necessarily relevant to the Tasmanian situation. Notwithstanding such specificities, the insights gained from the case are applicable to other places in Australia where there have also been extensive local government reforms. The work is additionally relevant to other places in parts of the western world, where programs of local government reform are complete, in train or anticipated. Of particular interest in this regard is local governance in Prince Edward Island, Canada, where I have examined issues of municipal reform in that province (Armstrong 2004, 2005 & 2007; Armstrong & Stratford 2009).

The dynamic and complex relationship between representative and participatory democracy

The outcomes intended by the insertion of participatory processes into representative systems of government have only been partially realised and have generated significant tensions between representative and participatory democracy.

The reform of local government in Tasmania was one response to the identification of a problematization of government in which the activity of governing was called into question, and through which the problem of how to govern at the local level was reconstituted. The case studies of the GSRG and the Huon Valley Council provide an

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account of the specific consequences for community and local government actors of the extension of neoliberal technologies of government throughout the public sector, giving effect to far-reaching governmental structural and functional reforms at all levels. That account demonstrates that the effects of local government reforms are juxtapositional and unpredictable, and they illustrate inevitable failures of governance arising from the 'necessary partiality or incompleteness of governing practice' (Malpas & Wickham 1997, p.94). Thus, how governing is practised is necessarily a contested and ongoing activity from which emerge multiple successes and many unexpected outcomes and unintended consequences, as Malpas and Wickham (1997, p.97) explain.

The space within which governance operates is ... a contested space and indeed, the fact of such contestation is what makes governance necessary as well as productive. It is because objects are not compliant, and our projects are continually disturbed, that governance arises as an ongoing activity. In this respect governance is a continual struggle against the failure of governance, against its dissolution, and hence against that dissolution of that differentiation which grounds the possibility of objects and of practices. But, inasmuch as governance is called forth by such contestation, contestation is called forth by systems of governance. Governance thus sets the stage for its own failure, just as failure sets the stage for governance.

Two key aspects of local government reforms typified the case studies: the integration of managerial technologies aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the local government sector; and legislative reforms designed to make councils more accountable, transparent, fair, open and inclusive while reaffirming the democratic values of local government (*vide* Chapter 4). The reforms emphasised enhanced community involvement in local governing processes and attempted to ensure that councils became more accountable and responsive to the communities they serve. In the Huon Valley those interrelated goals have been partially realised. However, there remain significant challenges (and opportunities) for local government and community actors as they work through when, how and to what extent community actors can be more active participants in local government processes. In this regard, the formation of the GSRG was a bold experiment in direct democracy and participation in a governance environment characterised by conflict

about the role of citizens in local government decision-making processes, in particular those related to resource management and development. However, findings suggest that simply augmenting representative systems of government with more direct forms of democracy will not necessarily deliver ‘better citizens, better decisions and better government’ (Cornwall 2004). Indeed it seems deeply problematic to make claims about the capacity of new techniques of legitimisation, such as partnerships and other participatory processes, to ‘ensure accountability, reconcile competing interests and transcend the harmful split between state and society’ (Rose & Polis 2000, p.1405). To be avoided is a tendency to romanticise participatory processes as necessarily able to deliver better outcomes or decisions, or as a panacea for the challenges in democratic processes. Interest groups continue to seek dominance, participatory processes continue to be difficult to provide, and the capacity of local government and community actors to engage productively with conflict continues to be called into question.

The fact that the Huon Valley Council has struggled to accommodate the call for enhanced citizen participation also suggests that a dynamic and complex dialectic typifies representative and participatory democracy. During the time I was conducting my research in the Huon Valley, numerous concerns became apparent as community and local government actors worked through whether, how, to what extent, and for what ends, they could or should integrate opportunities for participation into a representative system of government. These concerns related to the representativeness, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and legitimacy of participatory processes. Their existence forced an examination of the extent to which non-elected citizens can claim the mandate, authority, and capacity required to make decisions that potentially affect the quality of life of all other municipal residents. These are fundamental principles, the interpretation and realisation of which underpin the extent to which a system of government can be considered democratic and the extent to which conflicts arise and are effectively managed – that is managed for sound (rather than merely expedient) outcomes.

The tendency to foreclose on opportunities for active citizen participation also underscores the conflicts that accompany attempts to make or claim space for different voices and values in local government decision-making processes (*vide*

Chapter 5). The conduct of particular local government actors demonstrates a distinct reluctance to embrace those aspects of local government reform designed to reaffirm the democratic values of local government. It also reflects the relations of power evident in the Huon Valley Council and woven throughout the municipality's communities of place and interest. Indeed, as noted by Buchy and Race (2001), power is a central aspect of participatory processes, affecting the nature and extent of participation by various stakeholders in decision-making processes—both between and within the different groups participating in the process.

A further and related effect of the exercise of power in participatory processes relates to the extent to which trust among participants is fostered or damaged. Certainly a degree of trust was developed between some Geeveston people and the Huon Valley Council as a result of their joint participation in the GSRG. Of note is the extent to which the formation and activities of the GSRG contributed to building positive relations between local government actors and GSRG members, and also with other Geeveston people who could see tangible outcomes from the council's investments in Geeveston. In this sense, the GSRG provided an intersubjective learning process, where (most) participants were able to express their concerns and learn about other points of view, and thus could come to better know, understand and even trust groups that previously had been considered adversaries (Buchy & Race 2001). As a result, the GSRG experience inspired among councillors some change in attitude towards the potential benefits of participatory processes as described in Chapter 6.

Significantly, the capacity of the GSRG to realise these achievements was contingent on the homogeneity of the group (which was vehemently defended and protected), as well as on their support for and alignment with the dominant faction on council. It was also contingent on a general lack of resistance to the changes the Group made to the town from amongst other Geeveston people. Thus, the council was able to build a level of support among GSRG members unachievable in other towns where the development of SRGs was more problematic for council and residents alike.

Even in Geeveston, neither positive relations or bridging capital were built between the GSRG and others with an interest in the activities of the group. Instead the divisions evident in Council were replicated in the practises of GSRG members who

actively excluded people whose values and ideas challenged those of the majority or who threatened to take the group in a direction with which they were not comfortable. The experiences of all SRGs, then, highlight the risk that ‘participation initiatives may reinforce existing patterns of social exclusion and disadvantage’ and emphasize the need to use different methods of participation to reach different citizen groups (Lowndes, Pratchett & Stoker 2001, p.453). The problems of exclusionary practices are revisited in more detail below.

Claims to representativeness

Democratically legitimate representation is a product of free and fair elections and claims about representativeness can be used legitimately (if nevertheless unreasonably) as a means to foreclose on opportunities for participation.

In the GSRG and Huon Valley more generally, the insertion of participatory processes into representative systems of government unsettled various claims to representativeness or lack thereof. Most councillors and many local government key informants made strong arguments against participatory processes on the basis of that the participants failed some putative or implicit test of representativeness. They also deemed as unacceptable various apparent risks associated with powerful minority groups influencing their discussions and decisions. Yet, their arguments may also be a defensive strategy to maintain control over decision-making in the face of significant challenges to Council from a perceived minority of articulate and politically skilful community actors, in the main distinguished from Council by adherence to deeply different values. These tactics also draw on the idea of an electoral mandate but their material expression—block voting, constraining debate on motions, caucusing—points to behaviours more appropriate to delegates and defenders of sectional interests than to representatives.

Recall that one aspect of the modernisation of local government was to strengthen the democratic role of local government by reinforcing the representative role of councillors. That goal was to be achieved via amalgamations which substantially reduced direct representation since the proportion of councillors per head of population declined. In Tasmania, the system of election by ward was removed to

reduce the tendency of councillors to act as advocates for the interests of individuals or groups in a particular area. Instead, councillors, now elected ‘at large’, are expected to represent and act in the best interests of the whole municipal population, and to deliberate and make judgments about a proper course of action by drawing on a wide range of information from within and beyond government. This process is not straightforward and, in the Huon Valley, it is apparent that many councillors struggled with the requirement that representatives act independently of the represented while, at the same time, safeguard constituents’ rights to hold representatives accountable. As noted above, these councillors tendency to act as defenders of sectional interests, meant that the deliberative benefits which supposedly inhere within democratic decision-making processes were not realised. That failure raises questions about the extent to which amalgamations really do deliver a system of government that is more representative and democratic than the system/s it replaces¹⁰⁹. In fact, the subsequent creation of numerous SRGs and locally-based consultative committees in municipalities across Tasmania and elsewhere in Australia suggests the importance of more localised, place-based decision-making processes and organisations to address democratic deficits resulting from structural reforms.

These dilemmas over representation, representativeness and the conduct of conduct highlight the problematic nature of representation. In so doing they open opportunities to unpack taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of representativeness, and to rethink who and what constitutes representative authority. Saward’s work (see that from 2000, 2003, 2006, & 2009) provides some insightful propositions about how to rethink representation as a set of claims involved in ‘actually constituting identities and issues rather than merely reflecting pre-existing ones’ (Saward 2005, p.180). He critiques traditional understandings of the meaning and practice of political representation as the sole domain of electoral representation

¹⁰⁹ In fact, research conducted by Dollery and Crase (2004) amongst others, suggests that not even the economic benefits that were supposed to flow from local government amalgamations have been realised. Furthermore, amalgamation as a means for structural reform is no longer viewed as the ‘most efficacious method of enhancing operational efficiency in local councils’ (Dollery, Byrnes & Crase 2007, p.15). Instead, Australian local government policy makers are looking to alternative models of council cooperation, for example via shared service provision arrangements.

and seeks to understand whether, how, and to what extent a transformed notion of political representation may be emerging as a result of the shift in styles of governing from government to governance. For him, this shift in styles of governing

from state-centric and more formal modes to plural and often informal modes of engagement with citizens at local, national and supranational levels raise important new questions about the scope and legitimacy of traditional notions of political representation. In the spaces of public-private partnerships, stakeholder involvement and new, more direct forms of engagement, is there a transformed notion of political representation emerging? Can more groups, people and styles of activity count as 'representative' and, if so, what does this mean for the way in which we understand the term and more broadly for the legitimating role that representation plays in democracy? (Saward 2005, p.179)

Saward's interest in whether more groups, people and styles of activity can be counted as representative and the implications of doing so, has particular resonance with the concerns about representativeness that became evident during the course of my research in the Huon Valley and Geeveston. His work on 'the representative claim' is particularly helpful in unpacking claims made by and about Councillors that the only legitimate representatives are those who are elected (see for example Saward 2000, 2005 & 2006). In thinking through representation as a set of claims, such assertions of legitimacy can be questioned, indeed refuted, on the basis that

no would-be representative can fully achieve 'representation', or be fully representative. Facts may be facts, but claims are contestable and contested; there is no claim to be representative of a certain group that does not leave space for its contestation or rejection by the would-be audience or constituency, or by other political actors' (Saward 2006, p.302).

It is also evident that numerous councillors take for granted that they understand the character of the Huon Valley constituency and think that the interests of this constituency are *stable* and readily *knowable*. Such assumptions are problematic and it is equally to be posited that the interests of constituents are far from being predictable and constant, especially given substantial governmental, political and demographic changes since the 1970s. Furthermore, as Saward (2006, p.301) argues, assumptions about the stability and knowability of interests fail to account for the

fact that ‘constituencies can be ‘read’, inevitably, in various ways’. Indeed, the very act of representing involves depicting ‘a constituency as this or that, as requiring this or that, as having this or that set of interests’ (Saward 2006, p.301). In this sense representation is less about reading *off* and more about reading *in*, ‘the ‘interests’ of a constituency; it is an active, creative process, not the passive process of receiving clear signals from below’ (Saward 2006, p.310).

These observations highlight the unavoidable partiality of claims to representation and require one to think about how power relationships are created and exploited through governmental practices that claim legitimacy on the basis of their representativeness. The exploitation of claims to representativeness is clearly demonstrated in the Huon Valley case study, where attempts by (minority) councillors to represent perspectives of those constituents who hold different values from (majority) councillors were severely constrained. For most councillors, acting in the best interests of the community as a whole meant making decisions that satisfied the interests of ‘*the (numeric voting) majority*’ of Huon Valley residents. Their interests were constituted as more legitimate than the interests other community actors, whose voices were silenced and concerns dismissed. This situation supports the observation that electoral representation ‘in some circumstances, [can] act to restrict the nature and range of representative perspectives and voices, and that these restrictions can be democratically troubling’ (Saward 2009, p.2).

From this discussion above it would appear that my research confirms the importance of Saward’s questions about whether more groups, people and styles of activity could be counted as ‘representative’ and what this might mean for how we understand the role of representation in democracy. The research also reinforces the need for further empirical research in this area in order to develop responses to these ideas and their implications in a practical and grounded sense.

The challenge of conflict

Conflict is a necessary part of democracy. To attempt to eradicate conflict is to deny the inherently political nature of local government decision-making processes.

Conflicts and acts of resistance and counter-resistance dominated decision-making processes in the Huon Valley Council during the period within which this research was conducted. These modes of being were indicative of deep and long-standing divisions within the Valley, between

(a) conservationists and developers, (b) right- and left-wing political groups and (c) those who would enlarge the brief of local government to embrace social and environmental planning and those who would constrain local governments' role to asset management (Stratford, Armstrong & Jaskolski 2003, p.463).

So apparently entrenched were these divisions, and so defensive the tactics used by those adopting various and conflicting positions that it seemed that many of the Valley's constituents and elected representatives were at war, engaging in conflicts over power, with power and for power (Foucault 1982a, p.90). Indeed, one local informant described the Valley as the west bank, east bank and Gaza strip (Stratford, pers.comm., 2001). These struggles have been as much about (political) identity as local futures. Actively engaged in the contest, many councillors nevertheless expressed a clear preference for governing in an environment in which the need to make choices between conflicting alternatives was greatly reduced. Doubtless, when there is minimal conflict and debate, decision-making is often less stressful, easier, and more efficient. The desire among councillors to eradicate conflict may suggest optimistic (blind) faith in the rightness of liberal democracy and the utilitarian precept that what is good for the majority is good for all. Indeed, the situation in the Huon Valley highlights the challenges involved in accommodating and adapting to a new system of governance based on performance and outcomes, where much is open to interpretation. For example, what does it mean to represent 'the community' and to act in its members' 'best interests'? And so on. Indeed, it is in the very challenge over meaning that ideas about how to govern are constantly re(de)defined and, in theory, such processes of refinement and definition should result in better decision-making. However, in practice, governing in an environment where many of the roles

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and functions of council and councillors are open to contested interpretation requires skills that may be insufficiently developed among community and local government actors alike – and this matter of capacity is not the exclusive problem of either local government or the Huon Valley. Nevertheless, a palpable unwillingness to embrace the contestation inside the politics of local government decision-making is, in my view, highly problematic because real spaces and places (domains in which local government is heavily implicated) are shaped, given meaning and experienced via intrinsically political activities and processes, some of which are characterised by conflict (Massey 1996; Mouffe 2000). Here, perhaps, is the nub of the problem: the very constitution of conflict *as a problem to be eradicated* in the vain search for consensus at the centre may in fact contribute to the destabilisation these local government actors are so keen to avoid.

It also noteworthy that the development of frameworks to advance participatory processes through organisations such as the SRGs, did not provide alternative legitimate spaces for *different / dissenting* voices to be heard in considered and respectful ways. Arguably, direct (and deliberative) forms of democracy are supposed to deliver inclusive decision-making processes; instead, SRGs at best replicated (and even entrenched and exacerbated) divisions, conflicts and practices of exclusion more broadly evident in Council and among Huon Valley residents.

In analysing the challenges articulated above, I have found Mouffe (1992, 1999, 2000) helpful. In particular, Mouffe's development of the concept of agonistic pluralism provides a means to think through how different communities of interest and values might be made compatible with their common belonging to a political community. In developing her model of agonistic pluralism, Mouffe's purpose is to offer an alternative to both liberal democratic theories that privilege aggregation and deliberative models that seek to eliminate power in favour of a rational consensus. Both models, Mouffe argues, fail adequately to grasp the nature of the political; that is, the always present possibility of antagonism—a struggle between enemies—that exists in human relations (Mouffe 2000). Mouffe (in Miessen 2007, p.3) envisages the

task of democracy in terms of creating the institutions that will allow for conflicts, which will necessarily emerge, to take an agonistic form, i.e. to be a conflict between adversaries. Not between enemies. If that agonistic form is not available, it is very likely that, when conflicts emerge, they are going to take an antagonistic form.

Such a project, according to Mouffe (1992), requires a reconceptualisation of political community and citizenship (or how we belong to the political community), and necessitates a rejection of a substantive idea of the good life. For Mouffe, the political community should be conceived as a discursive surface, where a multiplicity of demands is inscribed, rather than an empirical referent. Taking this view, politics is understood as constituting the political community, rather than an activity that occurs inside it. The aim of politics is to create accord in a context of conflict and diversity, and involves 'drawing a frontier between 'us' and 'them', those who belong to the 'demos' and those who are outside it' (Mouffe 2000, p.4). The constitution of the demos requires a correlative idea of the common good, but rather than see that as something substantive, Mouffe conceives the common good as a social imaginary or vanishing point—something that must constantly be referred to but can never be reached. Thinking about the constitution of collective identities in such terms highlights the impossibility of realizing a fully inclusive political community.

There will always be a "constitutive outside", an exterior to the community that is the very condition of its existence. It is crucial to recognize that, since to construct a "we" it is necessary to distinguish it from a "them", and since all forms of consensus are based on acts of exclusion, the condition of possibility of the political community is at the same time the condition of impossibility of its full realization (Mouffe 1992, p.30).

Building on this understanding of political community, for Mouffe citizenship becomes a form of political identity created by identifications with the ethico-political principles of modern pluralist democracy, that is, the assertion of liberty and equality for all.

A citizen is not, in this perspective, as in liberalism, someone who is the passive recipient of rights and who enjoys the protection of the law. It is a common political identity of persons who might be engaged in many different communities and who have differing conceptions of the good, but who accept submission to certain authoritative rules of conduct. Those rules are not instruments for achieving a common purpose—since the idea of a substantive common good has been discarded—but conditions that individuals must observe in choosing and pursuing purposes of their own (Mouffe 1992, pp.30-31).

The capacity to make space for different / dissenting voices and values in the Huon Valley has been constrained by local government and other actors who seek to stabilise a (single / homogeneous / majoritarian) political identity for the Huon Valley. However, as Mouffe explains, such a search for a consensus ‘is—and will always be—the expression of a hegemony and the crystallization of power relations’ (Mouffe 2000, p.48). As my colleagues and I have noted elsewhere,

while agonistic pluralism makes explicit the power differentials in society and acknowledges the productive potential of conflict and democratic compromise ... it does not yet resolve the problem of power in practical terms that are accessible to members of local communities (Stratford, Armstrong & Jaskolski 2003, pp.469-70).

In this light, a distinct challenge for local government and community actors in the Huon Valley will be finding ways to engage with each others’ different values and with subsequent conflicts in a productive manner, and to determine the extent to which participatory democracy can be put into constructive practice. The development of clearly defined and widely communicated participatory strategies may be central in this task. Such a project will challenge the Huon Valley Council where, at best, the majority of local government actors view participation in instrumental terms—something to be used as a tool for specific ends such as information gathering and dissemination. Some regard participation as an obstacle to be overcome or better still, avoided. Few embrace the idea of participation as a transformative process and a mechanism for social change (Buchy & Race 2001). Indeed, evidence from the Huon Valley Council suggests that local government actors do not embrace a ‘politically vocal or politically active public’ (Kearns, A

1995, p.160). Instead, it appears that they want to leave behind the politics of advocacy and of protest ... and replace it with 'a politically uninterested public' (Kearns, A 1995, p.160) whose energies are diverted into relatively safe projects such as township beautification rather than any real political engagement with, or involvement in, the core business of governing the municipal area.

Governing through community?¹¹⁰

Partnerships such as the GSRG suggest evolving collaborations in governance that may provide opportunities to build civic and institutional capacity. However, they may also represent an example of how governing practices constitute material sites for the exercise of governmental technologies of agency and citizenship that structure and limit community participation to ensure their activities are compatible with the goals of government.

In Chapter 6 I demonstrated how the SRG partnerships have been used by the Huon Valley Council to unify, control, mobilise and regulate interactions between formal government and individuals in communities of place and interest (Gibson & Cameron 2001; Kilpatrick & Falk 2003). These partnerships represent an assemblage of heterogeneous elements or a network of relations through which power is exercised, and have provided an opportunity for local government *and* community actors to 'structure the possible field of action of others' (Foucault 1982b, p.221). In forming the SRGs, actors in the Huon Valley Council used various strategies, tactics, and mechanisms to make governable various issues (such as participation), domains (such as community) and problems (such as township revitalisation). The formation of the GSRG is one example of what has been described as the re-territorialisation of government in terms of community where the focus of governing practices has shifted from acting upon the totalising space of the social to the fragmented, diverse and overlapping spaces of communities of place and interest (Rose 1996b). Key to this process in Geeveston has been the willingness of GSRG members to reconstitute

¹¹⁰ Substantial parts of this section have been drawn directly from research previously published in a co-authored paper (see Armstrong and Stratford 2004). The work in that publication is based on and forms part of the research reported in this dissertation. A signed declaration from the co-author recognising my use of this work has been provided at the front of this thesis and a copy of the paper is provided in the appendices.

themselves as self-motivated, self-responsible, and self-reliant and in so doing to subject themselves to those 'multiple techniques of self-esteem, of empowerment and of consultation and negotiation' (Dean 1999, p.168) that were used in the formation and stabilisation of the GSRG as a self-governing local centre. In the process the political subjectivity of some Geeveston people moved from dependency and victimhood to a point where they were 'active citizens, capable, as individuals and communities, of managing their own risk' (Dean 1999, p.168) and linked to the development of conditions necessary for a particular conception of stronger local futures in Geeveston.

What is most evident from this research though is that the SRG partnerships were enabling in some cases and disabling in others and, as such, their creation should not be uncritically read as an act of empowerment. Instead, it has become very clear in this research that any activities proposed by community actors were tightly governed by terms of reference designed to ensure they were compatible with the goals of Council: that is, to improve the presentation of one or other of the major towns in the municipality and to provide the conditions for economic regeneration. In Geeveston, the GSRG satisfied those goals. However, in other townships some community actors sought to challenge the appropriateness of both the means and the ends of these partnerships for township revitalisation. In these other cases, the original SRGs were subsequently replaced with township development committees, ensuring that Council had more control over their operation by limiting opportunities for community actors to participate too actively in, or to present too many serious challenges to, decision making processes. The action of Council in this regard reveals what appear to be attempts to control and regulate the flow and distribution of power, which is consistent with the desire evident among a majority of councillors to exclude citizens from the detail and finality of decision making.

Such acts of closure and exclusion were also evident in the GSRG where members who expressed values different from the (conservative) norm were made to feel unwelcome and in some cases these people stopped attending meetings. While observing GSRG meetings I witnessed the sometimes rude and often defensive dismissal of ideas put forward by some group members. At one GSRG meeting a

request made by one member to change the meeting time of the group so that community members who work could be more actively involved was dismissed with the comment *if xxxx can't come because she is working that's her hard luck* (GSRG member 2003). When asked in private about how they felt about their treatment in meetings these group members expressed disappointment and frustration that their ideas were not received with more equanimity. Some of these people formed another group (the Redbank Community Group) to address issues not directly within the ambit of the GSRG. Engaging young people in the community is one such issue.

One might read these tensions or disjunctures within the SRGs and between community and council as reflecting a failure to understand power as a consequence and not a cause of action. Thus any 'sense of power' experienced by councillors may actually depend on a complex web of interrelations among actors and only be as stable as the networks that constitute it. This tension may also be read as reflecting a failure within Council to comprehend fully the complexities of government (Stoker, 1998), the structures, processes, mechanisms and techniques of governing, and the interconnections and interdependencies among government, civil society, economy and place in these new environments of collective governance (see also McGuirk, 2001; Rose, 2000). The GSRG case study thus illustrates how strategies that seek to govern through community, especially in reconstituting governmental problems around particular issues where citizens are posed as moral subjects, can contribute to the intensification of relations of power. As explained by Rose (2000, p.1409),

Rather than recognizing the possibilities and ethical dilemmas presented by the contemporary pluralisation of culture and ethics, this version of the politics of community seeks to foreclose the problems of diversity by propagating a moral code justified by reference to values that purport to be timeless, natural, obvious and uncontestable.

Thus the GSRG case study highlights the significant challenges for community and local government. It also signals how those advocates here of participatory democracy have failed, perhaps, or at least still need to articulate and materialise more fully and accessibly a range of mechanisms to open, flatten and radicalise systems of government and practices of governance so that they become more inclusive and equitable for all.

The formation of SRGs as a means to promote community-led township revitalisation (and economic regeneration) may also be illustrative of how technologies of agency can, in some circumstances, reconnect citizenship with *place*. However, what is also demonstrated as a result of this research is that place-based community mobilisation creates uneven geographies of local action because the capacity for active citizenship is contingent on the particular characteristics of place—‘institutional infrastructure, historical and geographical context, social and economic composition and so on’ (Desforges, Jones & Woods 2005, p.441). New structures of local governance such as the SRGs, exploit and at the same time, are challenged by the politics of those extant concerns, interest groups and power relations that are all brought to bear at the level of the locale. In this sense, then, the politics of place (and related issues of local futures) are ‘both a condition and a consequence of local governance’ (Kearns 1995, p.173). In other words, governing practices in Geeveston and the Huon Valley are seen here to have been shaped by the particular place in which they emerge but also to have further fashioned the political identities there of the individuals-in-community (and issues of concern for communities of interest as well as of place). As material sites for the exercise of governmental technologies these subjects and spaces have become both targets for reform and sites of resistance. As such they raise enduring critical questions about notions of identity, ethics and representation in relation to governing practices and the politics of participation in place.

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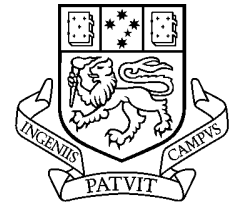
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letters, information sheets and other documents provided to participants

Appendix 1.1: Letter of invitation to participate: Huon Valley Councillors



University of Tasmania

Denbeigh Armstrong
Doctoral candidate
School of Geography and Environmental Studies
University of Tasmania
GPO Box 252-78
HOBART 7001
Ph: wk (03) 6226 2832
Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

28 January 2002

Dear _____,

I am writing to you to arrange an extended conversation with you about issues of local sustainability and local government in the Huon Valley.

As you may remember, I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies under the supervision of Dr Elaine Stratford. In 2000, during my honours year I undertook research in the Huon Valley on issues of community and sustainability, with the townships of Cygnet and Geeveston as my case studies. Numerous questions and areas of further research emerged from this work, encouraging me to continue my research in the Huon Valley over the next three years, in particular with the Geeveston community.

My current research interest involves exploring the relationship between local sustainability and local governance and how this relationship enables small rural settlements, such as Geeveston, to manage the effects of global economic change.

The specific **objectives** of this research are:

- to critically re-examine concepts of governance, citizenship and power in society with particular reference to rural areas and islands in Australia and Canada;
- to determine how the changing processes of governing at the local level are contributing to the sustainability of small rural settlements;

- to critically examine strategies for citizen participation in decision-making at the local level and assess the civil and civic capacities of members of small rural communities; and
- to undertake a comparison of changes in local governance and strategies for local sustainability in Tasmania, Australia and Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Sustainability discourses emphasize citizen and local authority partnerships, a blurring of responsibility between formal government and civil society that in turn presents a number of significant issues for governance. What is the role of the citizen? What is the role of government? How can local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries effectively manage these changing roles and concomitant responsibilities?

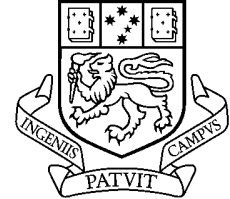
I would like to discuss these questions with you to gain a greater understanding of what you perceive to be the opportunities and constraints to community participation in decision-making processes in the Huon Valley and how you view the respective roles of Councillors, the local authorities and citizens in pursuing sustainable futures for the Huon Valley.

As this is a three-year project, it would be useful to talk to with you more than once. Each conversation is likely to last for 1 hour and with your permission I would like to tape each. All information collected will be confidential and your anonymity will be protected. I have included with this letter an information sheet that explains how this will be achieved. I will follow this letter with a phone call to confirm your willingness to participate and to organize a time and location that is convenient to you.

Yours sincerely,

Denbeigh Armstrong

Appendix 1.2: Letter of invitation to participate in focus group: GSRG



University of Tasmania

Denbeigh Armstrong
Doctoral candidate
School of Geography and Environmental Studies
GPO Box 252-78
HOBART 7001
Ph: wk (03) 6226 2832
Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

21 March 2002

To the members of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group
C/O
Mr Glen Doyle
Manager Community Services
Huon Valley Council
PO Box 210
Huonville 7109

Dear All,

I thought I would put in writing my request to work with the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group as part of my research into local sustainability and local governance. The Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group offers an excellent example of how people at the local level in partnership with the Huon Valley Council are participating in developing local solutions to local problems in an effort to revitalise your township.

As I was explaining at the meeting, what I would like to do is run 2-3 focus groups over the next 2 years. Each focus group would take from between 1-2 hours. During the first focus group session I would like to cover issues such as how and why the group developed; why you participate; how you participate; what you get from participating; what problems you have faced; how you have overcome these problems; whether the group could become a first point of contact for council to involve the wider Geeveston community in local government decision-making processes (e.g. consultation on the strategic plan); what future you see for the group, in particular how to involve a broader cross section of the community (esp. youth); and whether through your participation you have gained a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local government and governing processes in general.

I have asked Glenn to include this letter and the information sheet with the Minutes of the March meeting so that you have time to reflect on my request. I will be in Canada for 4 months from the 7th of April 2002 speaking to numerous professionals and members of the community on Prince Edward Island. On my return I would be more than happy to provide you with a presentation of what I discovered during my travels.

Yours Sincerely,
Denbeigh Armstrong

Appendix 1.3: Letter of invitation to participate: Key Informants



University of Tasmania

Denbeigh Armstrong
Doctoral candidate
School of Geography and Environmental Studies
GPO Box 252-78
HOBART 7001
Ph: wk (03) 6226 2832
Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

4 June 2003

Dear _____,

I am writing to you to request a meeting with you to talk about issues of local sustainability and local government in Tasmania.

I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies under the supervision of Dr Elaine Stratford. In 2000, during my honours year I undertook research in the Huon Valley on issues of community and sustainability, with the townships of Cygnet and Geeveston as my case studies. Numerous questions and areas of further research emerged from this work, encouraging me to continue my research in the Huon Valley, in particular with the Geeveston community. I have been working on my current research since 2001.

The aim of this research is to examine the ways in which governing processes facilitate or hinder the uptake of sustainability practices at the local level. As such I am most concerned to answer this question about governing in relation to local government and communities of place and interest in the Huon Valley, Tasmania and West Prince, Prince Edward Island. I am concerned not only with the governmental practices of the institutional form of government, but also with the practices of individuals—how they regulate their own behaviour, the behaviours of others—and the interactions between formal government and individuals-in-community.

The specific **objectives** of this research are:

- to critically re-examine concepts of governance, citizenship and power in society with particular reference to rural areas and islands in Australia and Canada;
- to determine how the changing processes of governing at the local level are contributing to the sustainability of small rural settlements;

- to critically examine strategies for citizen participation in decision-making at the local level and assess the civil and civic capacities of members of small rural communities; and
- to undertake a comparison of changes in local governance and strategies for local sustainability in Tasmania, Australia and Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Sustainable development has become an important issue for local government in particular as it emphasizes the need for citizen and local authority partnerships, which blur areas of responsibility between formal government and civil society. This situation presents a number of significant issues for governance. What is the role of the citizen? What is the role of government? How can local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries effectively manage these changing roles and associated responsibilities?

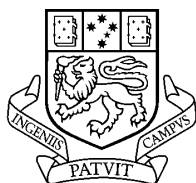
I would like to discuss these questions with you to gain a greater understanding of the opportunities and constraints to the uptake of sustainable practices at the local level.

Our conversation is likely to last for approximately 1 hour and with your permission I would like to tape the conversation. All information collected will be confidential and your anonymity will be protected. I have included with this letter an information sheet that explains how this will be achieved. I will follow this letter with a phone call to confirm your willingness to participate and to organize a time and location that is convenient to you.

Yours sincerely,

Denbeigh Armstrong

Appendix 1.4: Information sheet for community members and councillors



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Information Sheet

This information sheet is yours to keep. It provides you with the details of the research and persons to contact for further information and or any concerns you may have about the conduct of the research.

Title of investigation

“Local Sustainability and Local Governance: A Case Study of Two Small Island Rural Settlements”.

Name of Chief investigator: Dr Elaine Stratford

Name of primary researcher: Denbeigh Armstrong

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. It is intended to be an important part of the overall research examining the relationship between local governance and local sustainability and to explore how this relationship can enable small rural settlements to manage the effects of global economic change. I will be comparing these issues in two small island rural settlements: Geeveston, Tasmania, Australia and Tignish, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Who is being interviewed?

People who are being selected to participate in this research include those who live in the community of Geeveston as well as representatives from the Huon Valley Council, local governing authorities as well as other planning and policy professionals.

What kinds of questions are being asked?

You will be asked questions about the opportunities and constraints to community participation in decision-making processes. You will also be asked about your personal participation in your community and how you participate in local decision-making processes. Additional questions include how you view the role of the local authorities and how you view your own role as a citizen in pursuing a sustainable future for your community.

How will the interview proceed?

The primary researcher, Denbeigh Armstrong will contact you by telephone to make an appointment to interview you. This research involves 2 interviews approximately 1 year apart, each expected to last for 1-2 hours. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed later. If you do not want me to tape record your interview, please notify me and I will take written notes instead. The interview will be conducted where it is most convenient for you.

Will there be any risk or discomfort?

I do not anticipate that there will be any risk above the everyday norm for persons participating in this research project. However, I acknowledge that you are members of a small community and that confidentiality and anonymity is very important to protect you from any social harm, embarrassment or legal implications. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured as per the procedures outlined below.

Will my comments be anonymous?

Yes. Your comments may appear in the final report, but to ensure your anonymity, they will not be associated with your name. If after the interview you have any concerns about your comments you are encouraged to contact the interviewer should you wish them removed from the interview notes.

Can I withdraw if I want to?

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. To withdraw, simply inform the researcher. Before you are interviewed, you will be asked if give your informed consent to participate in the interviews and to sign the attached form. If you agree, that will be taken as your consent by demonstrating your willingness to participate.

When will the report be available?

The final report will be available in 2005 at the completion of my degree. A copy of this report will be placed with the Geeveston branch of the State Library of Tasmania.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Denbeigh Armstrong
Primary researcher
Phone: (03) 6226 7675 at work
0428 327 830
Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

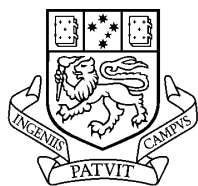
Dr Elaine Stratford

Chief Investigator
Phone: (03) 6226 2462 at work
Email: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which this research is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer, Amanda McAully (03 6226 2763) or the Chair, A/Prof Gino DAL Pont (03 6226 2078), of the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee. This research has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 1.5: Information sheet for key informants



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Information Sheet Key Informants

This information sheet is yours to keep. It provides you with the details of the research and persons to contact for further information and or any concerns you may have about the conduct of the research.

Title of investigation

“Local Sustainability and Local Governance: A Case Study of Two Small Island Rural Settlements”.

Name of Chief investigator: Dr Elaine Stratford

Name of primary researcher: Denbeigh Armstrong

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. It is intended to be an important part of the overall research examining the relationship between local governance and local sustainability and to explore how this relationship can enable small rural settlements to manage the effects of global economic change. I will be comparing these issues in two small island rural settlements: Geeveston, Tasmania, Australia and Tignish, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Who is being interviewed?

People who are being selected to participate in this research include those who live in the community of Geeveston as well as representatives from the Huon Valley Council, agencies responsible for local governing authorities as well as other planning and policy professionals.

What kinds of questions are being asked?

You will be asked to give your professional and personal opinions on issues related to local government, community participation and local sustainability. I will be asking you questions about the role of local government and the role of the citizen, how these roles are changing and how local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries can effectively manage their changing roles and concomitant responsibilities.

How will the interview proceed?

The primary researcher, Denbeigh Armstrong will contact you by telephone to make an appointment to interview you. This research involves 1 interview expected to last for 1 hour.

Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed later. If you do not want me to tape record your interview, please tell me before I start the interview and I will take written notes instead. The interview will be conducted where it is most convenient for you.

Will there be any risk or discomfort?

I do not anticipate that there will be any risk above the everyday norm for persons participating in this research project. However, I acknowledge that you are members of a small community and that confidentiality and anonymity is very important to protect you from any social harm, embarrassment or legal implications. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured as per the procedures outlined below.

Will my comments be anonymous?

Yes. Your comments may appear in the final report, but to ensure your anonymity, they will not be associated with your name. If after the interview you have any concerns about your comments you are encouraged to contact the interviewer should you wish them removed from the interview notes.

Can I withdraw if I want to?

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. To withdraw, simply inform the researcher. Before you are interviewed, you will be asked if give your informed consent to participate in the interviews and to sign the attached form. If you agree, that will be taken as your consent by demonstrating your willingness to participate.

When will the report be available?

The final report will be available in 2005 at the completion of my degree. A copy of this report will be placed with the Geeveston branch of the State Library of Tasmania.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Denbeigh Armstrong
Primary researcher
Phone: (03) 6226 7675 at work
0428 327 830
Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

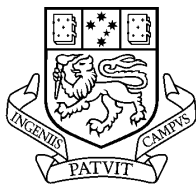
Dr Elaine Stratford

Chief Investigator
Phone: (03) 6226 2462 at work
Email: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which this research is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer, Amanda McAully (03 6226 2763) or the Chair, A/Prof Gino DAL Pont (03 6226 2078), of the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee. This research has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 1.6: Information sheet for key informants



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Information Sheet Focus Group

This information sheet is yours to keep. It provides you with the details of the research and persons to contact for further information and or any concerns you may have about the conduct of the research.

Title of investigation

“Local Sustainability and Local Governance: A Case Study of Two Small Island Rural Settlements”.

Name of Chief investigator: Dr Elaine Stratford

Name of primary researcher: Denbeigh Armstrong

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. It is intended to be an important part of the overall research examining the relationship between local governance and local sustainability and to explore how this relationship can enable small rural settlements to manage the effects of global economic change. I will be comparing these issues in two small island rural settlements: Geeveston, Tasmania, Australia and Tignish, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Who is being asked to participate?

People who are being selected to participate in this research include those who live in the community of Geeveston as well as representatives from the Huon Valley Council, local governing authorities as well as other planning and policy professionals.

What will be discussed?

The group will be asked to discuss what they feel are the opportunities and constraints to community participation in decision-making processes. You may also wish to contribute your personal experiences of participation in your community and how you participate in local decision-making processes. Additional topics of discussion include how members of the group view the role of local authorities and how you each view your own role as a citizen in pursuing a sustainable future for your community.

How will the focus group proceed?

The primary researcher, Denbeigh Armstrong will contact you by telephone inviting you to participate in a focus group discussion. This research involves one focus group session expected to last for about 2 hours. The focus group discussion will be tape recorded and transcribed later. The focus group will be conducted in a place that is most convenient to the majority of participants

Will there be any risk or discomfort and will my comments be anonymous?

I do not anticipate that there will be any risk above the everyday norm for persons participating in this research project. However, I acknowledge that you are members of a small community and that confidentiality and anonymity is very important to protect you and other members participating in the focus group from any social harm, embarrassment or legal implications.

It is important that you realise that in participating in a focus group, your comments will be known to all other members of the focus group. Therefore, there is a risk that your comments may become known to others outside the group. Because of this risk it is essential that all members of the focus group ensure that any comments made “in confidence” by any member of the group remain confidential by not discussing what was said outside of the group. If after the focus group there are issues that you felt uncomfortable about raising during the focus group, that you consider important, please feel free to contact the primary researcher to discuss these issues in private. As well, if after the focus group you have any concerns about your comments you are encouraged to contact the interviewer should you wish them removed from the focus group notes.

The comments of the focus group may appear in the final report, but to ensure as far as is possible, the group member’s anonymity, comments will not be associated with any group member’s name.

Can I withdraw if I want to?

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. To withdraw, simply inform the researcher. Before members of the focus group meet, you will be asked if give your informed consent to participate in the focus group and to sign an informed consent form. If you agree, that will be taken as your consent by demonstrating your willingness to participate.

When will the report be available?

The final report will be available in 2005 at the completion of my degree. A copy of this report will be placed with the Geeveston branch of the State Library of Tasmania.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Denbeigh Armstrong (Primary researcher)

Phone: (03) 6226 7675 at work or 0428 327 830

Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

Dr Elaine Stratford (Chief Investigator)

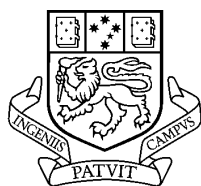
Phone: (03) 6226 2462 at work

Email: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which this research is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer, Amanda McAully (03 6226 2763) or the Chair, A/Prof Gino DAL Pont (03 6226 2078), of the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee. This research has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 1.7: Information sheet for group interview



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Information Sheet – Group Interview

This information sheet is yours to keep. It provides you with the details of the research and persons to contact for further information and or any concerns you may have about the conduct of the research.

Title of investigation

“Local Sustainability and Local Governance: A Case Study of Two Small Island Rural Settlements”.

Name of Chief investigator:

Dr Elaine Stratford

Name of primary researcher

Ms. Denbeigh Armstrong

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. It is intended to be an important part of the overall research examining the relationship between local governance and local sustainability and to explore how this relationship can enable small rural settlements to manage the effects of global economic change. I will be comparing these issues in two small island rural settlements: Geeveston, Tasmania, Australia and Tignish, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Who is being asked to participate?

People who are being selected to participate in this research include those who live in the community of Geeveston as well as representatives from the Huon Valley Council, local governing authorities as well as other planning and policy professionals.

What will be discussed?

The group will be asked to discuss what they feel are the opportunities and constraints to community participation in decision-making processes. You may also wish to contribute your personal experiences of participation in your community and how you participate in local decision-making processes. Additional topics of discussion include how members of the group view the role of local authorities and

how you each view your own role as a citizen in pursuing a sustainable future for your community.

How will the focus group proceed?

The primary researcher, Denbeigh Armstrong will contact you by telephone inviting you to participate in a focus group discussion. This research involves one focus group session expected to last for about 2 hours. The focus group discussion will be tape recorded and transcribed later. The focus group will be conducted in a place that is most convenient to the majority of participants.

Will there be any risk or discomfort and will my comments be anonymous?

I do not anticipate that there will be any risk above the everyday norm for persons participating in this research project. However, I acknowledge that you are members of a small community and that confidentiality and anonymity is very important to protect you and other members participating in the focus group from any social harm, embarrassment or legal implications.

It is important that you realise that in participating in a focus group, your comments will be known to all other members of the focus group. Therefore, there is a risk that your comments may become known to others outside the group. Because of this risk it is essential that all members of the focus group ensure that any comments made “in confidence” by any member of the group remain confidential by not discussing what was said outside of the group. If after the focus group there are issues that you felt uncomfortable about raising during the focus group, that you consider important, please feel free to contact the primary researcher to discuss these issues in private. As well, if after the focus group you have any concerns about your comments you are encouraged to contact the interviewer should you wish them removed from the focus group notes.

The comments of the focus group may appear in the final report, but to ensure as far as is possible, the group member’s anonymity, comments will not be associated with any group member’s name.

Can I withdraw if I want to?

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. To withdraw, simply inform the researcher. Before members of the focus group meet, you will be asked if give your informed consent to participate in the focus group and to sign an informed consent form. If you agree, that will be taken as your consent by demonstrating your willingness to participate.

When will the report be available?

The final report will be available in 2005 at the completion of my degree. A copy of this report will be placed with the Geeveston branch of the State Library of Tasmania.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Denbeigh Armstrong

Primary researcher

Phone: (03) 6226 7675 at work

(03) 6224 5194 at home

Email: Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

Dr Elaine Stratford

Chief Investigator

Phone: (03) 6226 2462 at work

Email: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which this research is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer (03 6226 2763) or the Chair, Dr Janet Vial (03 6226 4842), of the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee. This research has received ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 1.8 Statement of informed consent



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Statement of informed consent

Local sustainability and local governance: a case study of two small island rural settlements.

In agreeing to participate in this research I acknowledge that I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study and that the nature and possible effects of this research have been explained to me.

I understand that the study involves the following procedures:

- Two interviews approximately a year apart of 1-2 hours duration each during which I will be asked about my personal experiences and attitudes towards a number of issues related to community participation and the future of my community.
- That these interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed later
- That if I do not want my interview to be tape recorded the interviewer will turn it off and take notes instead

I understand that there will be no risk above the everyday norm by participating in this research, as any information I provide will be treated as confidential and that my anonymity will be protected.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask any questions about the research and these questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.

I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name of subject

Signature of subject Date

Statement of the investigator

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of investigator

Signature of investigator Date

Appendix 1.9: Letter requesting permission to observe GSRG meetings



University of Tasmania

15 October 2001

Dear _____,

I am writing to you seeking permission to attend a number of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group meetings as part of my research. As you are already aware, in 2000, during my honours year I undertook research in the Huon Valley on issues of community and sustainability, with the townships of Cygnet and Geeveston as my case studies. Numerous questions and areas of further research emerged from this work, encouraging me to continue my research in the Huon Valley, over the next three years. In particular I am hoping to continue to work with the Geeveston community.

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. It is intended to be an important part of the overall research examining the relationship between local governance and local sustainability and to explore how this relationship can enable small rural settlements to manage the effects of global economic change. I will be comparing these issues in two small island rural settlements: Geeveston, Tasmania, Australia and Tignish, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

I am interested in attending the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group meetings to gain an understanding of how a currently active and focused community group is attempting to redress the decline of its community. By observing the meetings, I hope to gain an insight into the opportunities and constraints community groups may experience in trying to influence local government, business, and other organisations and institutions whose activities impact upon the local community.

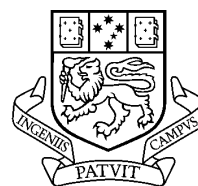
Observations of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group meetings will complement data collected from a number of other sources. These include observations of Huon Valley Council meetings and interviews with those who live in the community of Geeveston as well as representatives from the Huon Valley Council, local governing authorities as well as other planning and policy professionals.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Denbeigh Armstrong
School of Geography and Environmental Studies,
GPO Box 252-78, Hobart TAS 7001
6226 2832 (tel)
Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

Appendix 1.10: Letter requesting permission to observe Huon Valley Council meetings



University of Tasmania

Denbeigh Armstrong
Doctoral candidate
Geography and Environmental Studies
GPO Box 252-78
HOBART 7001
(03) 6226 2832
Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

22 June 2001

Dear _____,

I am writing to you regarding my desire to regularly attend the Huon Valley Council meetings as part of my research. I am concerned that the Huon Valley Councilors are aware of my intentions in attending council meetings and thus am providing an overview of my intended research.

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies under the supervision of Dr Elaine Stratford. In 2000, during my honours year I undertook research in the Huon Valley on issues of community and sustainability, with the townships of Cygnet and Geeveston as my case studies. Numerous questions and areas of further research emerged from this work, encouraging me to continue my research in the Huon Valley, over the next three years. In particular I am hoping to continue to work with the Geeveston community.

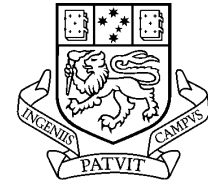
My current research interest involves exploring the relationship between community sustainability and local governance and how this relationship enables small rural settlements, such as Geeveston, to manage the effects of global economic change.

To understand the connections between community sustainability and local governance it would be very useful to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the processes of local government. Attending council meetings to observe proceedings would provide a valuable insight into the dynamics of local government decision-making procedures. I intend to augment this with an analysis of literature on local government, including planning schemes, strategic plans, legislation etc.

Although only a brief summary of my area of research, I hope this provides you with enough detail of my intentions for the Councillors to feel comfortable with my presence in council meetings.

Yours sincerely,
Denbeigh Armstrong

Appendix 1.11: Example of letters sent to participants updating them on the progress of the research



University of Tasmania

Denbeigh Armstrong
Doctoral candidate
Geography and Environmental Studies
GPO Box 252-78
HOBART 7001
(03) 6226 2832
Denbeigh.Armstrong@utas.edu.au

10 October 2003

Dear _____,

I am writing to update you on the progress of the doctoral research on *local sustainability and local governance in Tasmania, Australia and Prince Edward Island, Canada*. As you may remember I am working with community members in Geeveston, Tasmania and in Tignish, Prince Edward Island Canada.

The research is now in its third year. During the past 2 years—in addition to the work in Prince Edward Island—I have interviewed many people, attended many meetings of the Huon Valley Council and Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group and read an enormous quantity of literature on local governance and local sustainability. I am now at the point of analysing the interviews and writing up my findings.

What happens now?

Once I have done a preliminary analysis of the interviews I will carry out an extensive process of reporting on the research to all those who have participated. There are two parts to this follow-up process. One will be to report and receive feedback on the major findings of the research in part so that I can address any gaps in the knowledge that emerge during the analysis. Another involves seeking permission from those participants to whom I would like to attribute direct quotes.

Seeking participant and wider community comments on my work is an essential part of ensuring the validity and reliability of my interpretations. During the process of following-up with participants I hope to clarify issues and questions about themes, ideas, concepts and events that have emerged during the preliminary analysis of the interviews. This process involves participants commenting on my interpretations to see if they make sense to them, that is, if they match *their* understanding of issues of governance and sustainability in Tignish and Prince Edward Island.

In undertaking this process it is my intention to provide all participants the opportunity to enter into conversation about how they are represented in the research and thus about how they may continue to be represented through the publication of research results in books, academic journals and the popular media. An important point in this regard is that your

feedback may not *necessarily* mean that I will completely re-write that aspect of the work (unless what I have said is wrong). What I will do is include such comments, both positive and negative, into the final report and any subsequent publications.

Due to seasonal constraints I need to return to Prince Edward Island for two months from the middle of January 2004, as it is important to experience the social and economic challenges associated with life in Tignish in winter. In so doing I hope to gain a more complete understanding of this community and the conditions under which its members have become economically dependent on the Federal financial subsidy, employment insurance. To meet this deadline I must analyse and write up the Canadian case study before the Tasmanian case study.

How will the process work and when will it happen?

I anticipate that the follow-up process in Tasmania will occur in **March/ April 2004**. I plan to use three methods to seek feedback, including one-on-one conversations, presentations and group meetings. These three approaches have been chosen in order to account for the needs and issues of the variety of participants involved. What works for key informants, may not be suitable for community members, and some people may feel uncomfortable about speaking up in more public environments such as focus groups or presentations.

One-on-one conversations will be held with participants from whom I need to seek permission to attribute quotes, and with any participant or member of the groups identified below who requests a meeting with me. I will also have private conversations with those participants who would rather not participate in a group forum. To ensure that the protection of participant confidentiality and anonymity is honoured, I will seek permission to attribute quotes prior to reporting the research to the wider group of participants.

Presentations to report findings and seek feedback will be made to the following groups:

1. Elected members and professional officers of the Huon Valley Council
2. The Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group
3. Members of the Local Government Board, LGAT and the LGMA
4. Interested members of the wider Geeveston community

I will contact you again prior to my leaving for PEI to ask if you would be willing to provide feedback on the research findings and if so in what way you would like to do so. Participation in follow-up sessions is entirely voluntary and there is no obligation as an original participant of the research to participate in this next stage. If you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact me by mail, email or telephone. I am looking forward to sharing my findings with you and would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for sharing your time knowledge and ideas with me.

Yours Sincerely,

Denbeigh Armstrong

Appendix 2: Interview Schedules

Appendix 2.1: Issues covered during group interview with Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group members

- How and why the group developed
- How group members participate
- What group members get from participating?
- What problems group members have faced
- How group members have overcome these problems
- What future group members see for the group, in particular how to involve a broader cross section of the community (esp. youth)
- Whether through their participation group members have gained a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local government and governing processes in general.
- Whether the group could become a first point of contact for council to involve the wider Geeveston community in local government decision-making processes (e.g. consultation on the strategic plan);
- The group was formed in Oct 1999 to “harness community energy and appropriately utilise council resources to improve the presentation, amenity and community well-being of the Geeveston township – do group members think they have achieved this
- How important has state government and Forestry Tasmania support been in achieving the goals of the group
- Sub-committees, why did the group decide to use sub-committees as an approach to problem solving – did the idea evolve over time

Appendix 2.2: Interview Schedule for the Mayor and Councillors, Huon Valley Council

- The role of local government, the Mayor, Councillors and general staff is set down in the Local Government Act, 1993. Do you think that what you and your colleagues actually do as elected representatives reflects what is set out in the Act?
- What do you do as Mayor? [prompt]
- What do you do as a Councillor? [prompt]
- How important is the office of General Manager in local government? Other staff?
- How would you describe, in general terms, the working relationship between elected representatives and Council staff? Between elected representatives and the municipal population?
- Who do you consider to be a citizen in the Huon Valley? [ratepayers, non-rate paying residents, people below the age of 18?] Does one of these take priority in your representation?
- What is the role of the citizen as you define it in local governing processes?
- How do you involve people in local government decision-making processes?
- Do you think the way you involve people should change with different issues?
- Should Council help people to become involved in local government decision-making processes? How? Why? What risks exist in doing this? What benefits?
- Do you feel constrained by the legal-political system within which you work?
- Streetscape reference groups – do you see these as a way of involving people in decision-making processes at scales smaller than Council; i.e. townships, neighbourhoods? Is that a better scale for such involvement?
- What do you understand by the word community?
- Acknowledging that power can be both official and unofficial, who do you think has power in this Council?
- How is Council changing the organisation's terms of reference and agenda to respond to 'grassroots' aspirations as well as the mandates of sustainability? (draft strategic plan - if Tony thinks it is OK to mention it)
- There are a diverse range of interests in the Huon Valley that often lead to conflict. In what ways is Council working to manage these diverse interests and the conflicts they often produce?

- Issues related to policy: Do you think that local government has the necessary status and resources to be a full partner in the governing process with both State and Federal government?

Additional questions for new councillors, Huon Valley Council

- What inspired you to run for council?
- What do you hope to achieve as a councillor?
- What do you think the role of a councillor is?
- Who do you represent?
- What do you think the role of the people you represent is?
- Did you attend any of the sessions for potential councillors run by LGAT? If yes, how did you find them?
- Were you inducted to your new role? If so what did that involve?
- Have you been involved in local/council issues prior to being elected? If yes in what way?
- Are you familiar with the Local Government Act? Have you read any of it? If yes, which parts and why did you read those?

Appendix 2.3: Interview Schedules for Council Section Managers,

Manager Community Development Services (original manager)

- Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group: how did the group/concept develop? How has it expanded? Importance of leadership?
- What do you think about the proposed terms of reference for the streetscape reference groups?
- Do you envisage Streetscape reference groups as becoming the principle way of involving people in local decision-making processes about their townships/neighbourhoods? Is this a better scale for such involvement – rather than at the municipal level?
- Do people have enough control over decisions that affect their lives and the future of their communities? Value of local knowledge/input?
- Who do you consider to be a citizen in the Huon Valley? [ratepayers, non-rate paying residents, people below the age of 18?]
- What is the role of the citizen as you define it in local governing processes?
- How can council involve people in local government decision-making processes?
- Are the process and strategies for involving the public in decision-making processes sufficient?
- What do you think are appropriate forms of citizen involvement? Consultation or participation?
- What do you understand by the term empowerment?
- In your experience is there a relationship between participation and empowerment? Are people empowered [that is building their capacity] through participating in local decision-making processes?
- Do you think the way you involve people should change with different issues?
- Do you think that council has an obligation to build the capacity of its citizens to effectively participate in local governing processes? What risks are involved in doing this? What benefits?
- Do you feel that capacity building is solely an issue for citizens or is this also an issue for Councillors?
- How would you describe, in general terms, the working relationship between elected representatives and Council staff? Between Council staff and the municipal population?

- Acknowledging that power can be both official and unofficial, who do you think has power in this Council? What about influence?
- In your opinion are Councillors reluctant to engage in genuine power sharing with the public in decision-making processes?
- Do you think that participatory approaches at the local level adequately address the issues of power and representation?
- How is Council changing the organisation's terms of reference and agenda to respond to 'grassroots' aspirations as well as the mandates of sustainability?
- There is a diverse range of interests in the Huon Valley that often lead to conflict. In what ways is Council working to manage these diverse interests and the conflicts they often produce? How could they do it better?
- Issues related to policy: Do you think that local government has the necessary status and resources to be a full partner in the governing process with both State and Federal government?

Manager Community and Development Services (new manager)

- Your background
- Sustainable development has become an important issue for local government in particular as it emphasizes the need for citizen and local authority partnerships, which blur areas of responsibility between formal government and civil society. This situation presents a number of significant issues for governance.
- What is the role of the citizen in local governing processes? Citizenship – passive or active?
- What is the role of government in general? Local government in particular?
- How can local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries effectively manage these changing roles and associated responsibilities?
- What do you perceive to be the opportunities and constraints to community participation in decision-making processes in the Huon Valley?
- How do you view the respective roles of Councillors, local authorities and citizens in pursuing sustainable futures for the Huon Valley?
- What do you think about the streetscape reference groups?

- How do you envisage the Streetscape reference groups evolving [can they become the principle way of involving people in local decision-making processes about their townships/neighbourhoods?]
- What other processes and strategies can council use to involve people in local government decision-making processes?
- Are the process and strategies for involving the public in decision-making processes in the Huon Valley sufficient?
- What do you think are appropriate forms of citizen involvement? Consultation or participation?
- What do you understand by the term empowerment?
- In your experience is there a relationship between participation and empowerment? Are people empowered [that is building their capacity] through participating in local decision-making processes?
- Do you think that council has an obligation to build the capacity of its citizens to effectively participate in local governing processes? What risks are involved in doing this? What benefits?
- Do you feel that capacity building is solely an issue for citizens or is this also an issue for Councillors?

Manager Planning and Development Services

- What are the roles of local government in furthering the objectives of sustainability?
- What hinders the uptake of sustainable practices in the Huon Valley Council?
- Do councillors have a sufficient level of sustainability literacy? What about council employees? What about the community? How is council building the sustainability literacy of these groups?
- Are there tensions between local government's role as a planning authority and its democratic/representative role?
- Do Councillors fully understand the role of the council as a planning authority?
- Having consideration for the principles of sustainability is a legal requirement under the RMPS and LUPAA, should it also be a legal requirement under the Local Government Act? Is the RMPS sufficient? Role of strategic plans and planning schemes in ensuring the implementation of sustainability?
- What are the key "sustainability" documents in the Huon Valley Council? Strategic Plan? Planning Scheme? RMPS?

General Manager

- You've been GM of this council since 1994; in that period what are the key challenges the Huon Valley Council has had to deal with?
- Organisational – roles and functions of local government
- What do you think makes for a good council? Are there any other councils that you would name as being models for the way you run this council?
- As an institution do you the Huon Valley Council has the following characteristics – resilience, robustness, flexibility, innovative, reflexive (continual improvement)?
- What are the most important governance documents in the Huon Valley Council?
- How do you define best practice?
- What do you think is the role of local government in general? – corporate and governance
- What do you think is the role of the Mayor?
- What do you think is the role of Councillors?
- Are the roles of councillors, Mayor and GM adequately delineated in the Local Government Act?
- In what ways does the council help to build the capacity of councillors to fulfil their roles and obligations as elected representatives? (induction, ongoing councillor skills development)
- How important is the office of General Manager in local government? Other staff?
- How do you feel about the legal-political system within which you work?
- What are the relationships between politics and statutory obligations of local government? What are the implications/ impacts of such relationships? How do you manage them?
- As a GM and being responsible for the administration of the Huon Valley Council as an organisation – what is your philosophy on organisational management? Organisational change? Structure of organisational management? Portfolio system

- How would you describe the working relationship between the councillors and yourself as GM? Council staff? Do you have any issues with the way councillors operate?
- Between council staff and the municipal population?
- There are diverse interests in the Huon Valley that often lead to conflict. In what ways is Council working to manage these diverse interests and the differences they may produce? Is there strong enough leadership within the council to do this?
- Divisions over forestry and development – do those divisions colour all decisions? Do the allegiances between councillors on these issues affect the way in which all issues are debated and then how decisions are made?
- Should local government play a leadership role in the municipality? If so on what issues?

Citizenship and Participation

- Who do you consider to be a citizen in the Huon Valley? [ratepayers, non-rate paying residents, people below the age of 18?]
- What is the role of the citizen as you define it in local governing processes?
- How do you involve people in local government decision-making processes?
- What decisions should the community be involved in?
- Do you think the way you involve people should change with different issues?
- Should Council help people to become involved in local government decision-making processes? How? Why? What risks are there in doing this? What benefits?
- Citizen participation in decision-making processes blurs the boundaries of responsibilities between formal government and civil society – any issues, thoughts on this – challenges, opportunities, constraints?
- What do you understand by the term community?
- Does the community have a role in developing an agreed direction for the use or development of resources and the appropriate parameters to achieving that? (does this include the preparation of planning schemes and strategic plans)
- Public Gallery - impact / influence of the public gallery on the way in which councillors behave and vote on an issue? Public Question Time?

Streetscape Reference Groups

- What do you think about the Streetscape reference groups?

- Do you see these as a way of involving people in decision-making processes at scales smaller than Council; i.e. townships, neighbourhoods?
- Is that a better scale for such involvement?
- What future for Streetscape groups once they have landscaped their towns?
- How much responsibility do you think council can and should devolve to local communities? What resources should communities be accountable for? How should council facilitate such local initiatives, including resourcing and capacity-building?
- What do you think about the idea of local area planning or the Glenorchy precinct model as ways to cater to the local community needs and aspirations?

Power

- power can be both official and unofficial – given this, how is power exercised in this Council?, by whom? To what ends?
- What are some the strategies and tactics you see used by councillors that contribute to the exercise of power? What about citizens? And Council staff?

Sustainability

- What do you understand by the term sustainability or sustainable development?
- What are the roles of local government in furthering the objectives of sustainability?
- Is sustainability/sustainable development core council business? Do you think it should be?
- How are you managing the organisation of the Huon Valley Council in accordance with long-term sustainability objectives?
- What is the key to the success of the Huon Valley Council? How do you (personally) measure that success? Do you think that sustainability is the key to success for the Huon Valley Council?
- How can you/ do you ensure integration in decision-making processes (a) within council, (b) between council and the community/stakeholders and (c) between various agencies of State and Federal Government?
- What do you think about the capital assets model around which the strategic plan is structured? Numerous councillors when asked have said that they don't really understand the capital assets model; do you think this is a problem? How do you think you can address this situation?

- Do you think that councillors have high levels of sustainability literacy? What about council employees? What about the community? How is council building the sustainability literacy of these groups?

Intergovernmental relations

- Issues related to policy: Do you think that local government has the necessary status and resources to be a full partner in the governing process with both State and Federal government?
- Does the Huon Valley Council have sufficient control over/input into decisions that are made that impact upon the Huon Valley by government and/or businesses outside the Huon Valley
- What intergovernmental issues are there – partnership agreements – perhaps this could be the subject of a second interview

Appendix 2.4: Interview Schedules for Key Informants Tasmania

Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT)

- I am interested in LGATs position on the role of local government in facilitating the uptake of sustainable practices at the local level.
- Is sustainability considered to be core council business? If not should it be?
- What are the roles of local government in furthering the objectives of sustainability? What roles can they play – leadership?
- In what way does LGAT facilitate the integration of the principles of sustainability in Local Government – leaders in sustainability training? Feedback from that?
- Is there support for sustainability principles in local government?
- Having consideration for the principles of sustainability is a legal requirement under the RMPS and LUPAA, should it also be a legal requirement under the Local Government Act? Is the RMPS sufficient? Role of strategic plans and planning schemes in ensuring the implementation of sustainability?
- Sustainability discourses as well as discourses on local governance such as the Declaration of the role of Australian Local Government promotes a number of desirable characteristics of local governing authorities. Local Government should be: inclusive, innovative, adaptable, flexible, transparent, accountable, be enablers, facilitators, advocates and leaders.
- Are these characteristics being fostered in local governments in Tasmania? How?
- Sustainability discourses mandate increased citizen participation in local decision-making processes.
- What does this mean for local government in Tasmania?
- How can/are local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries effectively manage the changing roles and associated responsibilities?
- Should local governments help people to become involved in local government decision-making processes? How? Why? What risks are involved? What benefits?
- Does the community have a role to play in developing an agreed direction for the use and development of resources and the appropriate parameters to achieving that?

- What are the relationships between politics and statutory obligations of local government? What are the implications/ impacts of such relationships? How can local governments manage them?
- What are some of the key issues confronting local government today? Constitutional recognition, national competition policy, devolution of responsibilities, clarification of roles and responsibilities, resourcing, cost shifting.
- Do you think that local government has the necessary status and resources to be a full partner in the governing process with both State and Federal government?
- What is the relationship like between local and state government in Tasmania?
- What do you think about the partnership agreements? The Premier's council on local government?
- What about forestry and local government? Issues, concerns, problems

Local Government Managers Association

- I am interested in the issues GMs face in local government today, in particular those in relation to sustainability. I am concerned with how local governing processes facilitate or hinder the uptake of sustainable practices at the local level.
- What do you think GMs understand by sustainability?
- Is sustainability considered to be core council business? If not should it be?
- What are the roles of local government in furthering the objectives of sustainability? Leadership?
- Should it be a legal requirement under the Local Government Act to take into account the principles of sustainability? Is the RMPS sufficient?
- Are there tensions between local governments' role as a planning authority and its democratic/representative role?
- Sustainability discourses as well as discourses on local governance such as the Declaration of the role of Australian Local Government promotes a number of desirable characteristics of local governing authorities. Local Government should be: inclusive, innovative, adaptable, flexible, transparent, accountable, be enablers, facilitators, advocates and leaders.
- Are these characteristics being fostered in local governments in Tasmania? How?
- Sustainability discourses mandate increased citizen participation in local decision-making processes.

- What does this mean for local government in Tasmania?
- How can local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries effectively manage the changing roles and associated responsibilities?
- Should local governments help people to become involved in local government decision-making processes? How? Why? What risks are involved? What benefits?
- Does the community have a role to play in developing an agreed direction for the use and development of resources and the appropriate parameters to achieving that?
- From a GMs perspective
- How important is the working relationship between the elected members and the GM to the effective functioning of local government?
- Could you explain some of the problems GMs face in relation to the lack of clear definition of roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, councillors and the GM
- What things undermine a good working relationship between the elected members of council and the GM?
- What are the relationships between politics and statutory obligations of local government? What are the implications/ impacts of such relationships? How can they be managed?

Local Government Board (State Government of Tasmania)

- I am interested in the Local Government Board's position on the role of local government in facilitating the uptake of sustainable practices at the local level.
- Is sustainability considered by the Local Government Board to be core council business? If not should it be?
- What are the roles of local government in furthering the objectives of sustainability? Leadership?
- What hinders local government's ability to be a leader in the sustainability?
- Does the Local Government Board have a role to play in facilitating the integration of the principles of sustainability in Local Government? If so, how do you do that? If not why not?
- Is there support for sustainability principles in local government?

- Should it be a legal requirement under the Local Government Act to take into account the principles of sustainability? Is the RMPS sufficient? Local government must further the objectives of the RMPS when they act as a planning authority – shouldn't this be extended to all their functions?
- Sustainability discourses as well as discourses on local governance such as the Declaration of the role of Australian Local Government promotes a number of desirable characteristics of local governing authorities. Local Government should be: inclusive, innovative, adaptable, flexible, transparent, accountable, be enablers, facilitators, advocates and leaders.
- Are these characteristics being fostered in local governments in Tasmania? How?
- Sustainability discourses mandate increased citizen participation in local decision-making processes.
- What does this mean for local government in Tasmania?
- How can/are local authorities and the citizens who reside within local jurisdictional boundaries effectively manage the changing roles and associated responsibilities?
- Should local governments help people to become involved in local government decision-making processes? How? Why? What risks are involved? What benefits?
- Does the community have a role to play in developing an agreed direction for the use and development of resources and the appropriate parameters to achieving that?
- Governance
- What are the relationships between politics and statutory obligations of local government? What are the implications/ impacts of such relationships? How can local governments manage them?
- What are some of the key governance issues confronting local government today? Constitutional recognition, national competition policy, devolution of responsibilities, clarification of roles and responsibilities, resourcing, cost shifting.
- Do you think that local government has the necessary status and resources to be a full partner in the governing process with both State and Federal government?
- What is the relationship like between local and state government in Tasmania?
- What do you think about the partnership agreements? The Premier's council on local government?
- What about forestry and local government? Issues, concerns, problems

- What do you think of a decision by the Huon Valley council to delegate to the GM the ability to approve tenders up to \$250 000 without bringing it back before the council for approval

Local Government Division (State Government of Tasmania)

- I am interested in the Local Government Division's position on the role of local government in facilitating the uptake of sustainable practices at the local level. To that end I have a number of questions to ask of you.
- How does the Local Government Division define sustainability? Do they have a policy on sustainability/sustainable development?
- Does the Local Government Division consider sustainability to be core business for local government? If not why not? If yes, why isn't it enshrined in the LGA?
- What are the roles of local government in furthering the objectives of sustainability?
- Who and what are driving the sustainable development agenda in local government?
- How can local government take a leadership role in implementing sustainability?
- Does the Local Government Division have a role to play in facilitating the integration of the principles of sustainability into Local Government? If so, how do you do that? If not why not?
- What is the relationship like today between State and Local Government?
- How has this relationship changed over time, in particular post – modernisation?
- How is the Premier's Local Government Council working?
- Do you think that local government has the necessary status and resources to be a full partner in the governing process with both State and Federal government?
- How does the Local Government Division develop community understandings of the role of local government?
- What is meant by a whole of government approach to local government?
- Sustainability discourses as well as discourses on local governance such as the Declaration of the role of Australian Local Government promotes a number of desirable characteristics of local governing authorities. Local Government should be: inclusive, innovative, adaptable, flexible, transparent, accountable, be enablers, facilitators, advocates and leaders.

- Do you think these characteristics being fostered in local governments in Tasmania? How?
- Sustainability discourses mandate increased citizen participation in local decision-making processes.
- What does this mean for local government in Tasmania?
- What role can citizens have in local government decision-making processes?
- How are local governments and their communities managing the changing roles and associated responsibilities?
- Should local governments help people to become involved in local government decision-making processes? How? Why? What risks are involved? What benefits?
- How is the local government division working to enhance inclusive open and democratic local government?

Appendix 3: Terms of reference of the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group

GEEVESTON STREETSCAPE REFERENCE GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Preamble

1. The Huon Valley Council has established the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group.
 - (a) The Reference Group will consider the following in relation to Main Street (and immediate locality) of the Geeveston township:
 - Presentation
 - Amenity
 - Landscaping
 - Main Street Design
 - Thematic considerations
 - Street Furnishings
 - Township Development
 - (b) The Reference Group may also develop recommendations relating to other issues for consideration by Council relating to the Geeveston township.
 - (c) Council may also refer any issue it considers appropriate to the Streetscape Reference Group for consideration and/or advice from time to time.
 - (d) The Reference Group will have authority to expend funds from the streetscape allocation provided by Council in each annual municipal budget. Such expenditure is to be facilitated by Council staff and expended in accordance with established administrative procedures.
 - (e) The Streetscape Reference Groups' considerations will be restricted to those issues listed above (a to d) unless these Terms of Reference are specifically modified by a resolution of the Huon Valley Council.

2. Definitions

In these Terms of Reference the words mean:

"Streetscape Reference Group" means the Geeveston Streetscape Reference Group established by the Council.

"Council" means the Huon Valley Council.

"Councillor" means a current serving elected member of the Huon Valley Council.

"General Manager" means the General Manager of the Council.

"Council Staff" means officers currently employed by the Huon Valley Council.

"Dover Township" means the Main Street and immediate surrounding area of Dover.

3. Membership of Streetscape Reference Group

- Membership of the Streetscape Reference Group shall extend to all who live, or have a direct interest in the Geeveston township, and attend the Reference Group meetings. Strong representation from those with commercial operations within the township is encouraged.
- Membership shall continue until such time as the individual indicates otherwise.
- The Streetscape Reference Group membership shall include a minimum of one Councillor (who may or may not have a direct interest in the township) and who shall be the Chair person. Other Councillors are welcomed and encouraged to attend Streetscape Reference Group meetings.

4. Officers of the Streetscape Reference Group

- (a) **Chairperson** The Chairperson of the Streetscape Reference Group shall be the Councillor appointed to the Reference Group by Council. In the event of the death, resignation or removal from office of Chairperson by the Council, the Council shall appoint a replacement as soon as practicable and the appointee shall take office as soon as the appointment is made by the Council.
- (b) **Deputy Chairperson** The Streetscape Reference Group may appoint a Deputy Chairperson from amongst its own members. In the absence of the Chairperson the Deputy preside over the meeting.
- (c) **Acting Chairperson** In the absence of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson (if one is appointed) an Acting Chairperson shall be elected by the Members present at any duly and properly constituted meeting of the Streetscape Reference Group for the purpose of presiding over that meeting.

5. Secretarial support

Staff of Huon Valley Council shall provide Secretarial and administrative support for the operation of the Streetscape Reference Group.

6. Sub-committees

The Streetscape Reference Group has the capacity to establish sub-committees of members to undertake specific, time defined projects as the Group sees fit. All decisions arising from the sub-committee in relation to the specific project must, however, receive formal approval by the Streetscape Reference Group prior to enactment.

7. Meetings

The Streetscape Reference Group shall meet at least every second month. Meetings may be held more regularly if the Group so decides.

8. Quorum

The Quorum of the Streetscape Reference Group shall be five members of the local Geeveston community.

9. Speaking and voting rights

Each Member shall have full rights to discuss and vote upon any matter before the Streetscape Reference Group provided that all members of the Streetscape Reference Group, whether members of the Group or not, are subject always to the provisions of the Interests Section of the Local Government Act 1993, and should not vote or take part in any discussion on any issue in which he or she has a pecuniary interest.

10. Decisions

Decisions should be reached by consensus wherever possible. When voting is required, however, all motions shall be determined by a majority of the votes of those members present at the meeting.

11. Conduct of debate

The provisions of Council's By-Law "Proceedings at Meetings" shall insofar as they are practicable and with such adaptations as are necessary apply to meetings of the Streetscape Reference Group.

12. Minutes

Minutes will be prepared within thirty days of any meeting being held. The Minutes will be circulated to all present and any other interested members of the local community.

13. Publicity/promotions

The Streetscape Reference Group is encouraged to publicise its activities and create community awareness. All press releases and publicity is to be under the hand of the Reference Group Chair and authorised by the Chair prior to publication.

14. Annual report

The Streetscape Reference Group is required to prepare an annual report for the consideration of Council. The annual report is to be provided to Council by 31 March each year.